PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 163

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

THIRD SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
THIRTY-EIGHTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1989-90

COMPRISING PERIOD
4 DECEMBER—15 DECEMBER 1989

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4 December 1989

THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE THIRD SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT OF THE
UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 25 JUNE 1987]

THIRTY-EIGHTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 163**

SECOND VOLUME OF SESSION 1989-90

House of Commons

Monday 4 December 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL (No. 2) BILL

BROMLEY LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL (CRYSTAL PALACE) BILL

Orders for consideration read.
To be considered on Thursday 7 December.

CARDIFF BAY BARRAGE BILL *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 7 December.

SEAMOUNT LTD.

Resolved,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, That she will be graciously pleased to give direction that there be laid before this House a Return of the report of Mr. Stewart Boyd QC into the affairs of Seamount Limited.—*[Mr. Hurd.]*

Oral Answers to Questions

TRANSPORT

Licensed Motor Vehicles

1. **Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the number of licensed motor vehicles on the roads today; and what was the number in 1979.

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Robert Atkins): A census taken at the end of September showed 24 million licensed vehicles of all classes on the roads in Great Britain. The comparable figure for 1979 was 18·6 million. This substantial increase can be attributed to the improvement in personal prosperity caused by the success of Government policies.

Mr. Ashton: If there is such prosperity, why are extra motorway miles not being built to accommodate the increased traffic? Is the Minister aware that it now takes an hour longer to drive here from Bassetlaw, or Yorkshire, than it did 10 years ago? Is he further aware that some of the horrendous accidents that took place in the fog recently, were caused by dangerous overcrowding on the motorways? When will we have the kind of motorway standards and systems that are operated in France and Germany?

Mr. Atkins: I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman supports our policy of improving and extending existing roads and building new ones. That is the policy which we intend to implement. As the hon. Gentleman will know from the Chancellor's Autumn Statement, there is to be a substantial increase in the moneys available to do the very things that he wishes. The present Government are doing that, but the Labour Government supported by the hon. Gentleman were unable to provide that sort of resource.

Mr. Higgins: Given the enormous increase in traffic levels, especially in central London, will my hon. Friend examine seriously the so-called traffic management schemes which in many places—for example, the Aldwych and south of Westminster bridge—are unnecessary, counter-productive and extremely expensive? Will my hon. Friend reconsider whether the Government should not reallocate responsibility for the overall control of London's traffic to the Department of Transport?

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. Friend is extremely knowledgeable in these matters and I am grateful to him for his constructive approach. I assure him that I will consider the matters that he has raised as quickly as possible.

Mr. Leadbitter: Despite the Minister's main answer, and despite his interest in the A19 problem, there are persistent problems which need urgently to be resolved. Will the Minister tell us, perhaps not today but later, the cost of the flyover on the A1 at Middlesbrough and the number of months of work already attributed to it? How long will that project take to complete?

Secondly, will the Minister—

Mr. Speaker: Order. One supplementary question is enough.

Mr. Atkins: I am delighted to tell the House that my Department is committed to improving a number of roads, one of which the hon. Gentleman has mentioned. I will write to the hon. Gentleman in response to his detailed question.

Mr. David Howell: My right hon. and hon. Friends must be congratulated on the enormous amount of work being undertaken, but is it not true that most of the roads in the south-west and south-east of this island are jammed most of the time, especially during peak hours? Has not the time come for a comprehensive statement on strategy, perhaps in a White Paper, setting out exactly how we are to develop high-speed links, dedicated transport, inner city restrictions, a vast increase in tunnelling and sub-service provision, and new car designs to make life possible in the next 10 years?

Mr. Atkins: In a very short question, my right hon. Friend has raised enough matters of substance for a major debate. He will know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I—indeed, all the Ministers in the Department—are spending a great deal of time and money trying to address the problems to which he refers. I hope that in due course he will be able to accord us the plaudits which his experience will allow us to receive with considerable gratitude.

Ms. Ruddock: Does the Minister accept that, whatever the size of the programme, his Department's projections of an increase in road traffic of between 83 and 142 per cent. in the next 25 years will result in a massive increase in emissions of the greenhouse gas, carbon dioxide? Will he tell us today whether he accepts the advice of his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, who said that

"such growth would wreck any attempt to control pollution"?

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport and I are entirely in agreement with our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment that the problem of emissions must be addressed. We have already taken a number of steps, not least through our support for the Commission directive which aims to do something about catalytic converters by 1992.

I remind the hon. Lady that the figures to which she has referred are forecasts and not the Department's targets. I for one am not prepared to be a member of a Government who would not allow individuals to be free to buy the cars that they want, but apparently that does not apply to the hon. Lady.

Railways

2. **Mr. Irvine:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for increasing spending on the railways over the next three years.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Cecil Parkinson): This Government are making possible investment in the future of our railways on a scale not seen for 25 years. Investment in British Rail is planned to rise to £3·7 billion over the next three years, a 75 per cent. real increase over the previous three.

Mr. Irvine: Is my right hon. Friend aware that there is great concern in Ipswich about the service on the railway to London—both the overcrowding and the bad timekeeping? Can he assure me that a reasonable proportion of the welcome increase in spending on railways that he has announced will be devoted to improving the standard of service on the Ipswich to Liverpool Street line?

Mr. Parkinson: I can give my hon. Friend the assurance that he seeks. The programme includes £60 million to be spent on improving the signalling system on that very line.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Does the Secretary of State recognise that although improved investment in British Rail is welcome, his responsibility relates to the whole country? Will he give particular attention to the electrification of the east coast line between Aberdeen and Edinburgh, especially in view of the need to develop industry and commerce because of the Channel tunnel?

Mr. Parkinson: Yes, I want to see that fast east coast link electrified from London straight through to Aberdeen. The electrification to Leeds has already been a great success and we wish that to be carried further.

Mr. Adley: No one with the interests of the railways at heart could do other than warmly welcome the Government's investment in the new railway, and in railway modernisation. Will my hon. Friend confirm, however, that cleanliness, punctuality, safety, the length of trains and, indeed, the overcrowding to which my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Irvine) referred, must all be dealt with through the public service obligation grant, which the Government have cut in half—and boast about having cut in half—since 1983? Should we not look at PSO grant and investment in new railways simultaneously?

Mr. Parkinson: I am sorry if my hon. Friend is going to join the Opposition in measuring the Government's commitment to the railways by the amount spent on subsidy. We believe that our objective should be to have not the most subsidised but the most efficient and modernised railways, and that is what we are seeking.

Mr. Snape: Is the Secretary of State aware that he does not know what he is talking about? He has no plans to increase spending on the railways; indeed, as his hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) has just told him, he plans to reduce the public service obligation grant—already reduced by 50 per cent.—even further in the next three years. All that he is doing is allowing the railways to borrow more money, which will have to be repaid through higher fares, more overcrowding and even wider passenger dissatisfaction. The Secretary of State should stop trying to kid his hon. Friends that anything has changed.

Mr. Parkinson: It is a great disappointment to the hon. Gentleman that we are making sure that our railway system is modernised. Last year more money was invested in modernising the railways than for 25 years. In the next three years we shall spend 75 per cent. more in real terms. That is bad news for the hon. Gentleman, but good news for the railways.

British Rail

3. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he expects to meet the chairman of British Rail before 31 December to discuss reopening of existing lines closed to passenger traffic; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: The reopening of freight railway lines to passenger services is a matter for the British Railways Board. British Rail will generally look favourably on any opening where there is a commercial case or where others are willing to give support.

Mr. Madel: As motor traffic congestion is now so serious in the Dunstable-Luton area, with no sign of early relief, will my right hon. Friend join me in urging British Rail to reopen the Dunstable-Luton railway line to passenger traffic at the earliest opportunity?

Mr. Parkinson: As my hon. Friend knows, a number of proposals, ranging from a light railway system to the reopening of the line, are under consideration. I understand that a decision will be announced in January.

Dr. Marek: Will the Minister draw the attention of British Rail's chairman to the need to reopen the railway line in north Wales from Bangor to Caernarfon? Before he does that, however, will he make sure that after 11 years of Conservative rule there is enough rolling stock? In Wrexham we have buses instead of trains and more trains cancelled than ever before.

Mr. Parkinson: I know of no plans to reopen the line that the hon. Gentleman mentioned, but if he cares to write to me I will put the matter to the chairman of British Rail. As for the hon. Gentleman's second point, at the end of the next two years more than 80 per cent. of all the rolling stock on provincial lines will be less than five years old. There is a massive programme under way to modernise all the rolling stock on the provincial lines. I hope that the hon. Gentleman agrees that that is good news, as his hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) does not seem to agree.

Mr. Trotter: Does my right hon. Friend accept that it is essential for the prosperity of the northern half of the country that there should be through freight and passenger trains from the Channel tunnel at the earliest possible time? Does he also accept that British Rail management has assured us that it is essential that the international station at King's Cross should go ahead without any delay and that initially, whatever the route through Kent and the south-east, we should use the existing lines under London?

Mr. Parkinson: My hon. Friend knows that the King's Cross development is a matter for this House. There is a Bill before the House, on which the House will take a decision. There is a later question on the Order Paper about the link to the Channel tunnel. We believe that it is essential for all the regions to have good access to the Channel tunnel. British Rail will be coming forward with proposals before the end of the year.

River Severn Crossing

4. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what date he has set for the invitation of tenders for the second crossing of the River Severn.

Mr. Atkins: Tenders for the second Severn bridge were invited on 27 April and were received on 2 October. The assessment process is well under way.

Mr. Wardell: I welcome the fact that at last there is to be a second crossing of the River Severn. It will get rid of the dreadful bottleneck that has strangled the Welsh economy. However, even at this late stage in the tendering process, is the Minister able to say whether the day has gone when a combination of energy generation and the road crossing would still be possible? The advantage of generating 7 per cent. of Britain's electricity combined with road crossing seems a sensible option which the Government should pursue.

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that questions about energy are for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy. However, my Department is committed to going ahead as quickly as possible with the second crossing. My right hon. Friend and I assure him that we shall do our level best to ensure that it is brought into being as quickly as possible.

Mr. Stern: Is my hon. Friend aware of the success of the recent exhibitions in Pilning and Avonmouth in my constituency on the southern routes for the second Severn crossing? Will he do all in his power to reach a final decision on the route as quickly as possible?

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend frequently raises this matter to protect his constituents' interests and I know how deeply he feels it to be at the forefront of his political agenda. I assure the House that I shall do what I can to speed up the process.

British Rail

5. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce the new chairman or chairwoman of British Rail.

Mr. Parkinson: I expect to announce the name of the new British Rail chairman shortly.

Mr. Rooker: Is not the Secretary of State at all worried about the long delay in making this announcement? The right hon. Gentleman must accept that that cannot be good for the management and future of British Rail, its workers and employees. Can he give an assurance to the House that the Department's advisers and the headhunters who are responsible for finding someone to carry out this top management task have had a trawl of the incredibly mature, experienced, good top management females in British industry and commerce, and that they are not to be excluded from consideration because it might be thought by some males that just because one woman cannot run the country a woman is not fit to run British Rail?

Mr. Parkinson: I can tell the hon. Gentleman that the person whose name I announce will be a man.

Miss Widdecombe: When my right hon. Friend has appointed the chairman, or preferably chairwoman, of British Rail, will he undertake to ask that person to exercise wide discretion about the restrictive compensation rules for those suffering due to the Channel tunnel rail link?

Mr. Parkinson: That is a matter not for the new chairman of British Rail but for the House.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Speaking as a mature woman, may I ask the Secretary of State whether in his talks with the present chairman he has been told that the constant cutting of the public service obligation grant is putting at risk the safety of the railways and that whoever is in that position must make that his or her first absolute priority?

Mr. Parkinson: I entirely agree with the hon. Lady about safety. There is absolutely no truth in the newspaper report yesterday that the Government were not prepared to contribute to the costs of meeting the recommendations in the Hidden report. I have not had any discussions of the kind suggested with the chairman of British Rail.

Mr. Gerald Bowden: When my right hon. Friend appoints the new chairman of British Rail, will he urge the chairman to look again at the Channel tunnel rail link proposals and consider the alternatives which centre on Stratford, which provides far more direct and better access for the whole United Kingdom than King's Cross does? The Ove Arup route, in particular, envisages King's Cross as one of the London destinations.

Mr. Parkinson: I am sure that my hon. Friend has noticed that a recent poll shows that a substantial majority of the Members polled prefer the BR Eurorail option.

Mr. Snape: Is the Secretary of State surprised that he has had to hawk the job of chairman of British Rail around the City when accepting the job means waiting years for his Department to allow British Rail to spend its own money and when the new chairman or chairwoman will suffer constant interference in terms of how that money is spent, whether on safety, cleanliness, modernisation or punctuality? When it comes to implementing the Government's impossible rail policies, one Bob Reid will be just like another.

Mr. Parkinson: I am sorry to have to disappoint the hon. Gentleman again. He is incredibly ill-informed. We have had no shortage of candidates. In fact, I am surprised at the number of people who have written to me commending themselves. [HON. MEMBERS: "Name one."] There are too many to name, and none is in the House. I believe that we have found an excellent chairman, and I look forward to informing the House shortly of his appointment.

School Buses

6. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures are being taken to make school buses more recognisable.

The Minister for Aviation and Shipping (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): We attach high priority to improving the safety of school children. Among other points, school buses should be easier to recognise. We are proposing that they should be marked with a distinctive sign and we shall shortly be consulting in the usual way. I will ensure that my hon. Friend receives a copy of that document.

Mr. Braizer: That wi[illegible]e welcome news to many of my constituents, whose chil[illegible]n have to travel a considerable distance on busy roads to school. What is the Government's attitude to seat belts on school buses?

Mr. McLoughlin: We already require seat belts to be fitted to the front seats of coaches and minibuses, and we aim for that provision to be extended to all seats on minibuses and coaches. However, it is mainly a matter of education and in some ways, it is up to parents, too, to emphasise the importance of taking care when using public transport.

Mr. Madden: Will the Minister accept that it is not good enough for his Department to attempt to shuffle off safety considerations on to teachers or parents? Will he accept that there is mounting concern about the safety of children—who often pay fares on school buses—arising from the absence of supervision or seat belts? Will he announce at the earliest opportunity legislation requiring supervision and seat belts for children riding on such vehicles?

Mr. McLoughlin: The operation of supervision on those coaches is surely a matter for local authorities, as it falls wholly within their remit. The hon. Gentleman implied that we were trying to push the subject off on to parents. It is every parent's responsibility and duty to ensure that children understand safety procedures. The Department of Transport cannot do that, so parents need to do it.

Miss Emma Nicholson: A child in my constituency named Lee Kelly died while alighting from a school bus and crossing the road. As a result, I went to see my hon. Friend the Minister and I am grateful for his speedy understanding and sensitivity. I am delighted to say that on 1 January Devon county council is to initiate a pilot scheme with clear bus signs and flashing lights to see what the effect will be on traffic. My hon. Friend will know that I have put to him a 10-point school bus safety code, which I urge all hon. Members to back and the Department to adopt.

Mr. McLoughlin: I congratulate my hon. Friend on the way in which she led the campaign. I and the Department also congratulate Devon county council. There is nothing to stop county councils taking such imaginative intiatives as Devon has already taken and we shall watch that experiment with great interest.

Mr. Allen: Is the Minister aware that in the United States, most school buses are yellow and that there is a regulation that those buses should not be overtaken by drivers who come up behind, so that the kids can cross in safety? Having heard about the success of the experiment in Devon, will the Minister consider extending that experiment, or encouraging its extension, and will he look with an open mind at the similar scheme in the United States?

Mr. McLoughlin: The answer to all three questions is yes. To require traffic not to overtake when a school bus is stopping would mean a major change in driver understanding of roads, but we shall look at the possibility of introducing such a measure.

Stansted Rail Link

7. **Mr. Haselhurst:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will investigate the adequacy of capacity on the Liverpool Street/Cambridge line before the commencement of the Stansted airport rail link.

Mr. McLoughlin: The efficient operation of the railways is a matter for British Rail, but my hon. Friend the Minister of State has agreed to meet my hon. Friend to discuss his concerns and those of his constituents.

Mr. Haselhurst: Will my hon. Friend in his own responsibility for aviation share the concern of our hon. Friend the Minister of State to ensure that the airport rail link gets off to a good start? Is there not some cause for worry when the resignalling of the Bethnal Green to Stansted section will not be in place by 1991 and there is no provision for any extra tracks? Is my hon. Friend aware that the service currently offered by British Rail within those constraints is not good? How can he expect it to be successful unless further action is taken?

Mr. McLoughlin: I agree with my hon. Friend about the need to provide an efficient service from Stansted. The development there is most impressive and I congratulate the British Airports Authority on that project. I hope that my hon. Friend's points can be covered in his meeting with the Minister of State.

Mr. Batiste: Before work on the Stansted rail link commences, will my hon. Friend ensure that British Rail is as receptive to proposals for rail links to regional airports?

Mr. McLoughlin: I am sure that every case that comes before British Rail will be judged on its merits.

London Regional Transport

8. **Sir Rhodes Boyson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport by how much spending on London Regional Transport will be increased over the next three years.

Mr. Parkinson: Investment by London Regional Transport is at a record level. It will rise to £2·2 billion over the next three years—up no less than 93 per cent. on the three years to April 1990.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: I welcome that statement by the Secretary of State, but is he aware that it is generally felt in London that massive capital expenditure on the London Underground is required if London is not to come to a stop? Is he aware that people of all political opinions are weary of delays, breakdowns, inaudible announcements, the greatest concentration of broken-down escalators in discovered space, beggars, tramps and children selling lavender, all of which are a disgrace in a national capital?

Mr. Parkinson: I am sure that my right hon. Friend will have noted that until four years ago London Transport was controlled by the Labour-run GLC. During that time, subsidies rose to a record level, investment plummeted and the net result was a declining system in which there was inadequate investment. We have been putting that right and in the next three years massive investment will take place. The Central line will be renewed, with new trains and modernised stations. There are also plans afoot to start work on the Northern line and that work should be completed towards the middle of the next decade.

Mr. Cartwright: Is the Secretary of State aware of the considerable concern among London pensioners that the extent of their concessionary travel arrangements may be reduced as a result of the current negotiations with London boroughs? In view of the obvious benefits of the present scheme, not only to pensioners but to London Regional Transport, will the right hon. Gentleman assure us that the scheme will be continued after next April, and without damaging cuts?

Mr. Parkinson: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has raised that point because there has been quite a lot of scaremongering about it. Negotiations are indeed taking place, but there is no question of that scheme being threatened.

Mr. Squire: Is my right hon. Friend aware that many people who travel on the Underground find it overcrowded, unpleasant and at times unbearable? We welcome wholeheartedly his commitment to improve the Central line and the announcement about the Jubilee line, but those who come from my part of the world hope that, in time, improvements will also be made to the District line.

Mr. Parkinson: I think that the whole House agrees that the London Underground system is in need of massive investment. The difference between London Underground in the past and London Underground now is that it is now receiving that investment, and the travelling public can look forward to a better service in the years ahead.

Ms. Abbott: Is the Secretary of State aware that even if spending on the London Underground is at record levels, dissatisfaction with the London Underground is also at record levels? When will the Government put aside their doctrinaire aversion to investment in the public sector and spend the money that is required to give the people of London the public transport system that a capital city deserves? In particular, when will he introduce schemes for investment to make possible the Chelsea-Hackney line and the building of a tube station in my constituency—the only London constituency that lacks its own tube station?

Mr. Parkinson: I am sure that it will be a matter of pleasure to the hon. Lady that, in the eight years that end next April, £8 billion will have been invested in the transport infrastructure as a whole—that is to say, in rail, underground and roads. In the next three years, more than £6 billion will be invested in the public sector alone. The investment for which the hon. Lady calls will thus be made under this Government.

A Chelsea-Hackney line is one of two lines being considered with a view to relieving congestion in central

London. As I have already said, all being well, London Underground will be introducing a Bill this time next year to make possible one of the lines.

Mr. John Marshall: Is my right hon. Friend aware that a previous chairman of London Transport described the Northern line as "an abomination" on which trains are dirty, infrequent and regularly graffiti-ridden? Will my right hon. Friend speed up investment in the Northern line so that improvements can be made before the mid-1990s?

Mr. Parkinson: London Transport is working hard on those plans. I have just inaugurated the modernisation of Angel station at a cost of £55 million and that work is now in hand. Plans will be introduced for the full modernisation of that entire line and I recognise that the House wants to hear about them as soon as possible.

London Underground

10. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on his plans to relieve current levels of congestion on London Underground.

Mr. Parkinson: As I have recently announced, I have already put a great deal of action in hand on the recommendations of the central and east London rail studies. With my approval London Regional Transport has just deposited a Bill for the extension of the Jubilee line; subject to the outcome of further work I expect to authorise a Bill for another major new line next year; and a good start has been made on a major upgrading programme of the existing underground network.

Ms. Ruddock: Has the Secretary of State forgotten that his central London rail study suggested that the extension of the Jubilee line was the least likely option to relieve congestion in central London? Surely his main tool for relieving overcrowding is the increase in fares? Will he acknowledge that his Department is predicting a 46 per cent. increase in fares on the Underground in the next 11 years? Does he agree that that will simply put people on the roads, add to road congestion and lead to further traffic accidents in our capital city?

Mr. Parkinson: I am not sure that the hon. Lady really meant what she said about 46 per cent. over 11 years. If that were so that percentage would represent the lowest increase ever and probably lower than that in any one year under the Labour party. During the past 10 years London Transport fares have not increased in real terms. Investment in the London Underground system is massive and we have already announced the extension of the Jubilee line. I hope that the hon. Lady, whose constituents stand to benefit from that line, will not complain about the fact that south London will get a decent Underground service in the years ahead from the Jubilee line, as will east London. We are coming forward with a proposal for another line. I am sorry to disappoint the hon. Lady, but we are tackling problems which she and her friends just moan about.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend accept that there would be no extra congestion on London Underground if travel passes for the elderly, the disabled and blind were confirmed at their present level—that is, at no cost to their holders? Can he tell me when pensioners and others can expect an announcement to be made?

Mr. Parkinson: I cannot give the date, but I can repeat the assurance that I gave earlier—that the travel concession is not threatened. The negotiations are simply in hand between the parties. It is not the elderly or the disabled who are the cause of London's congestion—no one would suggest that. The plain fact is that, in the past five years, the number of people using the Underground has increased by 35 per cent. in the rush hour. and by 85 per cent. at off-peak times. There is a massive demand for the service that Opposition Members say that we should subsidise.

Disabled People

11. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to improve transport facilities for the disabled.

Mr. Atkins: Our plans are set out comprehensively in the document "Transport and Disability—a Statement of Aims and Priorities".

I pay great attention to my disablement advisory committee, which represents many disabled organisations that perform excellent and independent work.

Mr. Fearn: Is the Minister aware that 6 million disabled people are potential travellers on public transport and that we should do a great deal for them? No disabled person can travel across London by bus because of the steps, bars or barriers, nor can he go down to the Underground. It is absolutely appalling that no disabled person can be allowed down on the Underground because, I believe, of disasters. Is he also aware that in rural areas, as a result of deregulation, the bus services have gone for the cheapest option and, in the main, they do not cater for disabled persons? In the Minister's answer—

Mr. Speaker: Briefly.

Mr. Fearn: What immediate action will the Minister promise as a result of his answer?

Mr. Atkins: As I said, my Department has a great deal of interest and concern in matters affecting the disabled. There have been many changes to benefit disabled people in all aspects of transport, but there is always room for improvement. As I said, I pay great heed to my advisory committee which is very independent. It tells me exactly what needs to be done, and I endeavour to do it.

Mr. Thurnham: Will the Minister conduct an inquiry into the transport of the disabled to and from day centres? The special bus that collects my constituent Mark Horrocks takes more than three and a half hours each day for a four-mile journey. Will he give guidance to local authorities about how to improve such grossly inadequate services?

Mr. Atkins: I am not familiar with the details of this case. My hon. Friend is known for his concern and interest in these matters. If he will be kind enough to write to me with the details, I shall be more than happy to see what I can do to help.

Mr. Alfred Morris: When can we expect a definitive statement on the future of the orange badge scheme which grants parking concessions for disabled drivers and passengers? Is any consideration being given to increasing the penalties for abuse?

Mr. Atkins: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, a wide variety of topics related to this issue are being considered. We are endeavouring to prevent abuse so that those who need the orange badge scheme are able to use it, and to do so more effectively. I am considering all the points that he has raised as matters of considerable urgency and I hope to be able to report in the near future.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Court Hearings

94. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Attorney-General what percentage of court hearings in 1988 were unable to proceed on the day for which they were listed as a result of *(a)* prisoners not delivered to the court, *(b)* police officers not in court to give evidence, *(c)* probation service reports not available and *(d)* Crown prosecution service delays.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): The Crown prosecution service and the Home Office have carried out a number of surveys into causes of delay in the criminal justice system. While the precise statistics sought by my hon. Friend are not available, responsibility for adjournments is spread amongst a variety of agencies in the system and the Crown prosecution service is certainly not the major cause of such requests.

Mr. Bennett: Is my hon. and learned Friend aware that there is considerable concern among lawyers and lay people at the delays taking place in hearing cases, and the fact that the administration of justice is being hindered as a result? What action are the Government taking to try to speed up hearings?

The Solicitor-General: The Crown prosecution service tries to liaise with the different agencies—my hon. Friend referred to the police, the probation service and the courts —to ensure that the system speeds ahead as much as possible. Inevitably, its review duties cause some extra time, but the interests of justice make this well worth while.

Mr. Vaz: Does the hon. and learned Gentleman share my concern following last Thursday's publication of a report into the operation of the duty solicitor scheme? Does he accept that the scheme's operation is just as important as the operation of the Crown prosecution service and court delays in terms of the proper administration of justice? What additional resources are the Government prepared to put into the operation of the duty solicitor scheme? Are they prepared to step back and allow the scheme to be destroyed?

The Solicitor-General: My right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor is studying the report with great care. We attach great importance to the proper working of the duty solicitor scheme which, among other things, puts great pressure on solicitors. My right hon. and learned Friend will keep the matter closely under review.

Mr. Hind: Is my hon. and learned Friend aware of the case of Mr. Lorrain Osman who has been awaiting extradition proceedings while in custody for the past four years? Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that this is a great strain on our British justice system? Will he look into the matter with a view to involving the official solicitor so that this man may be released pending proceedings?

The Solicitor-General: I have had the opportunity to look in some considerable detail at the background to Mr. Osman's case. My hon. Friend will wish to bear in mind that Mr. Osman, who is an extremely wealthy man, is entitled to exhaust every one of his legal remedies in this country before my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary can take the decision on whether to extradite him to Hong Kong. Inevitably, those legal remedies take time to pursue, but my hon. Friend should also bear in mind that the question of bail in the interim is a matter for the independent judiciary and has been before it on several occasions.

Mr. Archer: To revert to the original question, is it not false economy to leave these services under-resourced? Does the hon. and learned Gentleman agree that delays involve loss of time for the judiciary, the court service, defence witnesses and the other services involved? Would it not be sensible to fund a proper legal system in the first place?

The Solicitor-General: It can be false economy to leave services under-resourced. The problem faced by the criminal justice system is by no means solely, if indeed largely, due to financial resources. It is also a question of human resources. As the right hon. and learned Gentleman will know, at the moment the pool of lawyers is seriously overfished by a number of different agencies, such as the City and large firms of solicitors. As I emphasised earlier, it is important that the different agencies work carefully together to make the best use of resources and that we should seek to recruit to bring the Crown prosecution service up to strength.

Mr. Barry Porter: Is my hon. and learned Friend aware that the big company firms do not recruit people who are involved in criminal law? Does he accept that the Crown prosecution service is under-resourced in human and financial terms? Does he agree that it is quite unacceptable that simple shoplifting trials in Merseyside should take between six and nine months to come before the courts? That cannot be right for the law or for the people who are being charged. I am not a great public expenditure man, but it is clear to me that we have to get the proper people in the Crown prosecution service and that they must be properly rewarded and have a proper career structure in a properly funded service.

The Solicitor-General: My hon. Friend has great knowledge of the scene on Merseyside. I urge him to look carefully at the statistics on who is asking for adjournments. In a significant proportion of cases it is the defence that asks for repeated adjournments.

Civil Servants (Disclosures)

95. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make it his policy to institute criminal proceedings against any civil servant who improperly discloses the advice given by the Law Officers to the Government.

The Attorney-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew) : No, Sir.

Mr. Dalyell: Does the Attorney-General believe Sir Leon Brittan when he asserts that Mr. Powell and Mr.

Ingham quite improperly abused his letter? Why do they remain so powerful in the government of Britain unless, as probably on Rover and certainly in the dismissal of her Chancellor and the nature of the Chancellor's leaving the Government, the Prime Minister did that which if I were so indelicate as to mention it, Mr. Speaker, you would suspend me for five days?

The Attorney-General: I responded to a similar question on 8 May and on subsequent occasions, and there is nothing that I can usefully add to what I said to the hon. Gentleman then. Nothing that I can say will influence the hon. Gentleman, but I question whether there is anything to be gained by sending his pitcher to that well again.

Mr. Latham: Is it not about time that we had a statute of limitations on this question?

The Attorney-General: A statute of limitations is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor, but the statute of limitations has been amended so often that it is almost incomprehensibly complicated as it is.

Mr. John Morris: In terms of criminal proceedings, will the Attorney-General consider the application of the law of corruption and bribery as it may apply to the giving of concealed sweetners on the authority of an ex-Government Minister? Bearing in mind that corruption does not mean dishonesty but merely doing an act which the law forbids as tending to corrupt—including the offering of an inducement for doing or forbearing to do anything in respect of a transaction in which a public body is concerned—and that the Attorney-General's consent is necessary for a prosecution, will he refer to the Director of Public Prosecutions the involvement of any person in the giving of concealed incentives to British Aerospace to ascertain whether there is a prima facie case for prosecution?

The Attorney-General: I am sorry to disappoint the right hon. and learned Gentleman who asked such a carefully prepared and learned question, but it does not arise out of the question on the Order Paper. If it did, I should deny every one of the premises upon which it is based.

Serious Fraud

96. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Attorney-General when he next expects to meet the Director of Public Prosecutions to discuss serious fraud; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Matters of serious fraud are generally the responsibility of the independent serious fraud office, whose own director I frequently meet for discussions.

Mr. Skinner: When the Attorney-General meets that officer, will he tell him that it is high time that the serious fraud office investigated the sweetner from the Government to British Aerospace in order to get rid of Rover? Will he also say—as the Attorney-General of this country ought to say—that he believes that the Government are guilty of fraud and that they have probably been fiddling certain tax concessions and subsidies? There should be one law which applies to the Government in the same way as it applies to an old lady in the supermarket who might get away with a tin of pilchards. If the right hon. and learned Gentleman were a real Attorney-General that is the way that he would address the Director of Public Prosecutions and the serious fraud squad instead of covering up for his friends on the Government Front Bench.

The Attorney-General: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry made a full statement on Thursday and there is nothing that I wish to add to that. I am sorry that the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris)—I will not say shot his fox in his previous question—but slightly peppered it. Questions of this nature are not made any more persuasive, and the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) does not make his case, by yelling.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Speaker: Question No. 107.

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to answer this question and question No. 113 at the end of Question Time, as you have so advised.

Third World

108. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of whether more funds could be provided to United Kingdom non-governmental organisations for work in the Third world; and whether any such increase is planned.

Mrs. Chalker: On 26 October I announced an increase in our joint funding scheme, under which we support non-governmental organisations' agreed long-term development projects by 25 per cent. next year to £20 million. I am also increasing support for the United Kingdom volunteer recruiting agencies—most notably the Voluntary Service Overseas—by 10 per cent. to £14·3 million. We will also consider sympathetically requests for assistance from non-governmental organisations for disaster and emergency relief measures.

Miss Widdecombe: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for those increases. Has she suggested that special attention should be paid to small projects, which in return for a modest outlay—such as the installation of water tanks—can have tremendous consequences for the welfare of women in the Third world?

Mrs. Chalker: As my hon. Friend knows, we are keen to use not only the joint funding scheme for the non-governmental organisations, but the heads of mission gift scheme and the heads of mission small projects scheme. Those three ways can help women in development, particularly through the provision of water storage, so saving them the awful problem of carting heavy water urns for many miles.

Ms. Armstrong: I recognise the important contribution of VSO. I should like to thank the Minister and ask whether she will have discussions with her right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science to ensure that the implementation of the student loans scheme does not affect the financial ability of young people to work for at least two years in the Third world with VSO and to work when they get back?

Mrs. Chalker: Yes, Sir.

Sir Charles Morrison: Although the Government have a good record, does my right hon. Friend agree that more should be done to assist NGOs with population programmes? Is it not a fact that at the moment less than 1 per cent. of all aid is used on population programmes? Does my right hon. Friend agree that if that percentage were increased, the effectiveness of the rest of the programme would be greater? Does my right hon. Friend agree that if that percentage were increased the effectiveness of the rest of the programme would be greater?

Mrs. Chalker: I agree with my hon. Friend. At the meeting that we had with Population Concern in Harrogate on 14 November, we agreed on how valuable those contributions that we are already making, and those that we shall make, to Population Concern and other agencies concerned with population planning are in the general development of those countries.

Mrs. Clywd: In the league table of all 18 western aid givers, why has Britain dropped to 14th place when we were in sixth place in 1979?

Mrs. Chalker: The hon. Lady knows that the cuts made in the overseas aid programme under the last Labour Government had to go through. We are now increasing our aid programme and intend to go on spending it wisely and getting the best value for money out of every penny of taxpayers' money.

Mr. Soames: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on this welcome increase. Will she join me in paying tribute to the send-a-cow scheme? What further steps can she take to give that excellent organisation and endeavour more money?

Mrs. Chalker: I shall look into what my hon. Friend says. While send-a-cow is a good scheme, many other schemes deserve our support.

El Salvador

109. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current level of United Kingdom support for El Salvador.

Mrs. Chalker: British bilateral aid to El Salvador is running at about £40,000 to £50,000 a year. In addition, we contribute to European Community assistance: in 1988 our share was about £240,000. We also provided £300,000 recently in emergency aid—£100,000 through the International Committee of the Red Cross and £200,000 as our share of European Community emergency aid.

Mr. Clarke: In view of those contributions, have the Government responded to the El Salvadorian Government's request that they should provide a specialist commission of inquiry to consider the killings of the six Jesuits, their cook and her daughter? If that commission reaches the conclusion that the Salvadorian military was responsible for this dastardly act, will the Government influence the United States Government to stop military aid to El Salvador forthwith?

Mrs. Chalker: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that we condemned the murder of the six Jesuit priests, their cook and her daughter and appealed for restraint on both sides. Resolving this problem is very much a political question and one for the Government of El Salvador as well as those in America concerned with the issue.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Should not the Government be commended for giving emergency assistance to El Salvador, particularly at a time when the democratically elected Government of that country are having to cope with insurgency, which is causing considerable difficulty to the civilian population?

Mrs. Chalker: I am grateful for what my hon. Friend has said. The Government's position is that the FMLN guerrillas should end their offensive and negotiate. For obvious reasons, we would not be able to add to United Kingdom personnel deployed in El Salvador, but we hope that the task that the Red Cross is undertaking will be facilitated, that the wounded will be evacuated, and that supplies to hospitals and the follow-up of those captured on both sides will now take place.

Mr. Foulkes: It is all very well expressing concern about the horrific murders of the six Jesuit priests, but does the Minister accept that she could have some effect by making British aid conditional on bringing the killers to justice, and on an improvement to human rights in El Salvador?

Mrs. Chalker: The hon. Gentleman is aware that I believe in human rights, wherever they may be at risk across the world. He will also know that humanitarian aid for those who are wounded and those who are without facilities such as medical facilities should not be conditional on such premises.

Mr. Barry Porter: I welcome the aid that has been given to El Salvador, but should we not take into account those countries that are greater friends of the United Kingdom and especially, in west Africa, the small but very friendly country of Sierra Leone?

Mrs. Chalker: We send about 70 per cent. of our bilateral aid to the poorest 50 countries in the world. We help the country that my hon. Friend mentioned and we are doing better than other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development donors in that respect.

Hungary

111. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what economic aid is currently given to Hungary.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. Friend the Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major) announced assistance of £25 million over five years for Hungary in October. The programme now being planned gets under way substantively next April.

Mr. Howells: I am grateful to the Minister for that comprehensive reply. Does the Minister envisage neighbouring countries within the eastern bloc applying to Britain for further financial aid? What plan does she have in mind if they do?

Mrs. Chalker: The hon. Gentleman may be right. Countries other than Poland and Hungary may in due time want assistance from western European countries. However, it is not solely Britain which should give that assistance. Discussions with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank are taking place in Washington.

We are aware of the needs developing in eastern Europe as it moves towards democracy, which we hope will happen with all speed.

Horn of Africa and Ethiopia

The following questions stood on the Order Paper:

107. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to discuss the situation in the Horn of Africa with other Governments and non-governmental organisations.

113. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, in the light of reports of famine in rebel-held areas of Ethiopia, how Her Majesty's Government will ensure that food supplies they provide will get through to those who need them.

Mrs. Chalker: Discussions with other Governments and non-governmental organisations are continuing. First, I will explain the actions which have already been taken.

As the House is aware, well over 3 million people are threatened by famine in northern Ethiopia. It is estimated that about 600,000 tonnes of food aid will be needed, especially in the early months of next year. The House also knows that this appalling problem is the result of crop failure, worsened by the continuing civil war.

The Overseas Development Administration constantly monitors the food situation in Ethiopia. On 31 August I discussed our deep concern with non-governmental organisation and then on 26 October with the Save the Children Fund, by which date it was clear that famine would result from the lack of September rains. I had already announced in August 6,850 tonnes of food aid for Eritrea.

A senior ODA official reported directly to me on 31 October on his return from Ethiopia. Immediately I stepped up our continuing diplomatic efforts with the United States, the Soviet Union our European Community partners, certain Arab countries, the Ethiopian Government and both the Eritrean People's Liberation Front and the Tigre People's Liberation Front.

Our overriding priority is to get food to the starving. To do this we must first persuade the Ethiopian Government to allow the passage of food across the lines. Secondly, we must work for an end to the conflicts in Ethiopia.

On 14 November, in Rome, I discussed our assessment of need with representatives of the Food and Agriculture Organisation and the world food programme, and received their latest estimates from the early warning system of the likely severity of the famine.

On 21 November in Brussels I underlined to our Community partners the severity and urgency of the situation, and on 27 November at the Foreign Affairs Council the Commission and our partners agreed to my request to reinforce our diplomatic and humanitarian efforts. The £2 million of relief aid that I announced last week brings to nearly £13 million Britain's help for those in need in Ethiopia this year.

The aid that we continue to make available will meet real humanitarian need, but there can be no lasting relief to suffering in Ethiopia unless there is an end to the civil conflict. This requires a negotiated solution involving all parties. We have been, and will continue to be, very active in every possible forum to bring that about. I shall be raising the whole issue at the OECD in Paris tomorrow and my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary will also be doing so with the EC presidency.

Let the House and the nation be in no doubt that we are doing all that we reasonably can to get food to the starving and to bring peace to the people of Ethiopia.

Mr. Shaw: I am sure that the Whole House welcomes my right hon. Friend's statement. I hope that, as a result of it, there will be great relief over the long term for the people of the Horn of Africa, and of Ethiopia in particular. Can my right hon. Friend confirm that she has recently attended talks in Washington on this subject? Can she give us some detail of what was discussed there?

Mrs. Chalker: Last week I met the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, the Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian Affairs and the acting Director of United States Aid for International Development, to discuss the problems in Ethiopia. I sought their assistance on contacts with the Soviet Union and anyone else who can bring the right sort of influence to bear on the Ethiopian Government and the rebel movements so that we may get the food supplies which are being donated to the people who need them so urgently. I cannot say that we have yet received the responses we want, but I assure my hon. Friend that we are in constant touch with all those who might be able to bring about a free passage of the food to the people who really need it.

Mrs. Gorman: Does my right hon. Friend think that there is any hope of establishing a food corridor through which this food can be transported to those who need it?

Mrs. Chalker: I would love to be able to give my hon. Friend a positive response to that question. The difficulty is that the Ethiopian Government have refused to discuss the free access of food. To get a corridor such as we all want will obviously take much more diplomatic discussion, in which we are fully engaged.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does the right hon. Lady agree that the most appalling thing in Ethiopia is the continuing conflict? Would it not be helpful if all of those who supply arms to either side in the dispute were persuaded to stop doing that? What steps are the Government taking to bring pressure to bear on those who supply arms? Is it not appalling that we should be sending arms while humanitarian aid is desperately needed to save lives?

Mrs. Chalker: Those who supply arms know that that can only prolong the conflict. I have no doubt that all the representations being made at a variety of levels across many Governments are to the effect that we need peace in Ethiopia before there can be any long-term solution for the starving people there.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Does the right hon. Lady agree that the £2 million that was allocated, or so-called allocated, last week is geared towards the open-roads policy, which the Minister herself says is extremely hard to establish? Does she agree that the Government simply ran a high-profile public relations exercise last week, although they have been told about the problem repeatedly this year and have repeatedly refused to go to the Soviet Union, who are the only people capable of moving the Ethiopian Government?

Mrs. Chalker: I do not think that the hon. Member can have listened to a word of my statement, It is difficult, and it will be difficult, to establish an open-roads policy. The most efficient and direct route to take to provide food for the people of Tigré and Eritrea would be through the established channels of distribution from the Government-held ports, but that will happen only when the Ethiopian Government listen to all those to whom we have made representations, not just in the past week but during the past months. We shall go on making representations. Whether it be to the Soviet Union, the United States or any of our European partners, I hope that the Ethiopian Government will respond so that starvation can be stopped.

Mr. Bowen Wells: In contradistinction to what the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) said, is it not true that my right hon. Friend has taken very early action to try to provide food for the millions of people who are in danger of starvation in Ethiopia, and that she has made real contact with the Soviet Union, which has a great deal of influence in Ethiopia? I am sure that the whole House and the nation join me in congratulating my right hon. Friend on the actions that she has taken.

Has the European Economic Community, which supplied much of the food aid when there was last starvation in Ethiopia, taken adequate and good action to provide food? Is there any chance of getting the Ethiopian Government to agree to open one of the two ports, without which we shall have great difficulty feeding people in the Asmara-Wello corridor?

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend is right. We shall be extremely grateful for the efforts of all our Community partners and, indeed, the European Commission to get food to the people of Ethiopia. So far we have not persuaded the Ethiopian Government to open either of the ports but it is an urgent matter on which we are working.

Mr. Mullin: Given that the overriding priority is to get food to the starving, and in view of the intransigence of the Ethiopian Government, would it not be best to send food by the overland route through the Sudan and to provide aid to the NGOs capable of using that route? Is that not the key?

Mrs. Chalker: I am sure that the best way to send food to the people who need it is through the NGOs. They have good experience and seem to be the best channel. Resources sent through them and other international agencies seem to assist people. We are working on that.

Mr. Harris: As an hon. Member who represented you, Mr. Speaker, at the opening session of the national assembly in Addis Ababa, does my right hon. Friend agree that there is no hope for Ethiopia unless and until the wretched civil war is brought to an end? Will she give an assurance that the Goverment will continue to play their part along with other powers to bring about a settlement and, in particular, to pursuade Russia, which probably holds the key, to bring the utmost pressure to bear on the Mengistu regime?

Mrs. Chalker: We are already doing that. We shall continue to do everything necessary through every channel open to us to persuade the parties to the conflict to end it.

Mr. Michael Welsh: I agree with the Minister that the war is causing starvation. If the war ceased, we could get food to millions of dying people. Some children in Ethiopia die even before they reach the age of one. Something must be done. Does the Minister agree that, even though an open-roads policy is not possible at present because of the fighting, we must continue to seek such a policy so that even if the war continues we can get food to the people? Has she considered the supply and use of lorries? Is she aware that Tigré is short of lorries to take food from A to B? Will she consider whether aid is needed to help provide lorries?

Mrs. Chalker: It is likely that the additional £2 million that I announced last week, bringing our total aid this year to £13 million, will be used for urgent transport requirements. As the hon. Gentleman knows well, one has only to hold in one's arms a small child who is just skin and bone to know how bad the position is.

Miss Emma Nicholson: Does my right hon. Friend recall that 60 per cent. of the fertile land in Ethiopia is not under production and that the gross domestic product of all the sub-Saharan African countries is equivalent only to that of Belgium? Does she agree that we must for ever continue to try to help the unfortunate people in those countries and not seek the immediate solutions that some Opposition Members believe exist?

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend is right to refer to the need for sustainable development. We must put in place agricultural schemes that can produce food for the future on a long-term basis. Until the conflict is brought to an end we have little chance of moving ahead with any agricultural scheme in Ethiopia. Only in countries which are prepared to undertake considerable agricultural production can we povercome future famine.

Mr. Lofthouse: Does the Minister know whether President Bush discussed this matter with President Gorbachev last weekend?

Mrs. Chalker: I regret that I do not know, but I can tell the hon. Gentleman that I raised the matter with two Assistant Secretaries of State in the State Department in Washington on Thursday before they left, together with the President, fcr Malta. I believe that the message may well have got through.

Mr. Baldry: As former chairman of the Anglo-Ethiopian Society, may I tell my right hon. Friend that no one who has any knowledge of Ethiopia could dissent from her analysis? May I support the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) and others who have said that there are two tragedies in Ethiopia the famine and the civil war? Will my right hon. Friend do what she can to support the NGOs' efforts to get food aid to the various areas of Ethiopia in the knowledge that it is not only the Ethiopian Government but others who have used food aid as a political and military weapon in the past? May I inform my right hon. Friend how sad some of us were that some NGOs were taking her to task? In fairness, in recent months she and the Government have been making considerable efforts to help Ethiopia.

Mrs. Chalker: Food aid should never be used as a weapon of war. Regrettably it often is. It is remarkable that we saw a letter from Save The Children Fund last week when the discussion which led to a whole series of new actions took place in the office of the director of Save The Children Fund in October.

Mrs. Clwyd: May I say how pleased I am that the Minister is back, as the whole of last week I was trying to get a Government statement on this important issue?

Does the Minister accept that as we speak people are dying in Ethiopia? Will she explain why, despite being repeatedly warned by the aid agencies of this potential danger back in July, it took last week's dramatic television pictures to propel the Government into giving a paltry £2 million in food aid, which is only 1 per cent. of the total food aid required? While we accept that it must be right to attempt through international pressure to persuade the Ethiopian Government to open up roads to rebel-held areas, does the right hon. Lady accept that meantime, as my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) said, there must be co-operation with the two local organisations that can effectively and quickly distribute the food to the people in need?

Mrs. Chalker: If I had not been in Washington last week for talks with the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the State Department, I would not have got through to a number of people whom the hon. Lady's hon. Friends keep asking me to contact. We are concerned that people, especially small children, are dying. It was not in July that we started action. My predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Bath (Mr. Patten), worked continually when he was at the ODA to get the right preparations taken should the crops fail, as they were known to have failed after the September rains were known to have failed. It did not take a Michael Buerk film to bring the Department into action. I have been in action since the first day I arrived at the ODA and my right hon. Friend before me.

The hon. Lady may think that £2 million is paltry. I made it clear that that was on top of nearly £11 million which we have already given this year. Since the beginning of 1987 we have spent some £54 million and since the beginning of 1984 £139 million in direct aid to Ethiopia. We shall ensure that assistance in this terrible disaster goes through the NGOs and that the food and transport that are required will be available to the people who need it so badly.

Points of Order

3.48 pm

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Those of us who were here on Friday and listened to an interesting debate on eastern Europe are rather surprised to see that the *Official Report* has missed out from the report at least three speeches. One was an interesting speech by the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall) in praise of Leon Trotsky. Is there a Stalinist in the *Hansard* office who has declared the hon. Gentleman a non-person?

Mr. Speaker: I have received an apology from the Editor of *Hansard* to say that a technical malfunction of Hansard Press resulted in most of the speech of the hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) all the speeches of the hon. Members for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall) and for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) and the beginning of the speech of the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) being omitted. A correction will be made in the text of *Hansard* today. The Editor expresses his regret.

Mr. Pat Wall (Bradford, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. On Saturday morning, Radio 4 referred to my speech as odd. I thought that I had given an even-handed description of both Stalinism and capitalism. I ask you, Mr. Speaker, whether my speech exists—I understand that all our speeches, interventions and even interjections are reported in *Hansard.* If my speech does not exist, is there a technical case for saying that Radio 4 is in breach of privilege?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman's speech exists. Hansard Press made a mistake. I am glad to know that the hon. Gentleman's speech was referred to on the radio.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. As a speech was reported in *Hansard* in my name although it was made by another hon. Member, can you advise me what to do when in the second paragraph I am supposed to have waxed eloquent on Balkanisation? Far worse than that, I am supposed to have said:

> "It is wonderful to be able to quote a statement from the present political leader of Bulgaria."—[*Official Report,* 1 December 1989; Vol. 162, c. 977.]

What can I do to safeguard my reputation, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: I am sorry that the mistake was made. New technology in *Hansard* caused the malfunction. I think that the hon. Gentleman has now put the record straight.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): On a different point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is not related directly to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell)—it is more general than that—but earlier this afternoon, in a question to my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General, the hon. Gentleman referred to a loyal and devoted civil servant. It was one of the seemingly endless occasions on which he has done so on the Floor of the House on an issue which surely has had its day. Is it correct, and if it is not, what can be done about it, for the names of senior civil servants to be mentioned in this way? Would it be possible for the House to examine whether there is a better way of handling these matters?

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Surely it would be wrong for anyone to stop my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), or anyone else, raising important matters in the House merely because a long time has passed since the issue arose. We all remember the case of the Guildford Four and the 15 years which followed, during which hon. Members asked questions about the case. Tory Members could have said that that should stop. It is a good thing that it did not stop. Another example is the Rover sweetner. The questions about that will run on and on and on.

Hon. Members: And on and on and on.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that these points of order will not run on and on and on. There is an important debate to follow.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Could not the matter which I raised be brought quickly to an end and cleared up if the deputy Prime Minister were to tell us from the Dispatch Box whether he believes that Sir Leon Brittan, his friend and protegé, was right or not right in saying that Mr. Charles Powell and Mr. Ingham quite improperly approved the disclosure——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is a matter for the Government Front Bench and not for me. I say in answer to the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) that we must all calculate the use of names of those who are not Members of this place and the impact on them when mentioning them. However, hon. Members have freedom of speech in the Chamber, and that cannot be rationed.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I will put together the Questions on the two motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft Census Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Human Organ Transplants (Unrelated Persons) Regulations 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Ordered,

That European Community Documents Nos. 8520/89 and 8521/89 on Air Transport be referred to a Standing Committee on European Community Documents.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Orders of the Day

Coal Industry Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Speaker: Before I call the Secretary of State for Energy to move the Second Reading of the Bill, may I say that once again there is a great demand to take part in the debate, and I therefore propose to place a 10-minute limit on speeches between 7 pm and 9 pm. I hope, however, that hon. Members called before that time will bear the limit in mind in the interests of others.

3.55 pm

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. John Wakeham): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

This Bill is of major importance, not just to the coal industry but to the framework of our energy policy over the next five years. It may be helpful, therefore, if I set it in perspective before going on to introduce its detailed provisions.

The coal industry's performance over the past five years has been remarkable by any standards. British Coal has done well to maintain its United Kingdom sales. Between 1983-84 and last year, in spite of the damage done to customer confidence by the strike and in spite of large falls in the price of competing fuels—particularly imported coal and oil—British Coal lost only 4 per cent. of its business. It was able to fend off the competition only because of very large gains in productivity and improvements in cost.

Since before the strike, productivity has risen by over 75 per cent. and operating costs have fallen in real terms by 30 per cent. That is a success story that outstrips even the large gains in productivity seen elsewhere in industry during the past 10 years.

In the past four and a half years, more than 90 pits have closed. The number of employees has more than halved, from some 220,000 to a current total of fewer than 90,000. There has been virtually no recruitment from among communities that hitherto, to a greater or lesser extent, depended on mining, and I for one do not wish to play down the human consequences of those changes.

Each pit that has closed, however, has been subject to a detailed review procedure like that of no other industry, and each man who has left has done so voluntarily. British Coal has been able to offer alternative jobs to any men who wanted to remain in the industry; for those who wished to go, substantial amounts of redundancy pay have been made available, as well as counselling and retraining. To help bring alternative jobs to mining communities, British Coal set up British Coal Enterprise. I know that many hon. Members will have seen the exhibition that BCE set up last month nearby, and I for one have been most impressed by its contribution to the creation of new employment where mines have closed.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): I apologise for interrupting the right hon. Gentleman so early in his speech. He said that miners had been able to exercise their rights under the colliery review procedures. In the summer, men at the Merthyr Vale colliery and pit in Aberfan wanted to exercise those rights, but were told that unless they agreed to the closure by the following Saturday they would lose every redundancy payment. They were therefore unable to exercise any rights under those procedures to assess what they considered to be an act of vandalism by British Coal.

Mr. Wakeham: I have heard about that. The detailed operation of the scheme is, of course, a matter for British Coal and not one for me.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth) *rose*——

Mr. Wakeham: I think that the hon. Gentleman will understand that it is probably better for me to deal with one intervention before I start giving way to others.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley) *rose*——

Mr. Wakeham: I am trying to answer the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands), but the hon. Members for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) and for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell) have risen to their feet. In a minute I shall have to ask the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney to repeat his question, because I will have forgotten what it was.

Our policies—voluntary redundancy, the colliery review procedure and job creation through British Coal Enterprise—amount to a package that is unrivalled in any other industry. By and large, these policies are working extremely well, but I recognise the strength of the point made by the hon. Member for Methyr Tydfil and Rhymney. As circumstances change the policies will have to evolve, but they are widely recognised as being a fair and effective mix. We shall encourage British Coal to continue to pursue them.

Mr. Hardy: Does not the Secretary of State condemn British Coal's attempt to influence events in a dishonourable, outrageous way by casting aspersions on or writing critical letters to the review panel because it had the audacity to appear to criticise British Coal for its rather doubtful approach to redundancies?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not believe that the hon. Gentleman's question meets the circumstances of the case. Some views have been expressed by British Coal and by the chairman who presided over the independent reviews, but it is not for me to comment on them at this stage.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: A mine in my constituency closed two years ago. The case went through the review procedure and the colliery won. However, on Coal Board instructions, the colliery was closed.

Mr. Wakeham: Implementation of decisions is not a matter for me; nor was it a matter for my predecessors. I cannot defend every single action by management; it will have to defend its own actions. However, the Government have played their part by providing additional resources and a system that is generally acceptable and working very well.

Within the 100 million tonnes a year of sales, the bulk goes to power stations. For the past four years, British Coal has had a joint understanding with the Central Electricity Generating Board under which it has supplied around 75 million tonnes a year at a price which fell year by year, in real terms, and which since November 1987 has in fact been frozen in nominal terms. Negotiations have been going on between British Coal and National Power and PowerGen on the terms of the contracts that will replace the joint understanding from vesting day at the end of March 1990.

As some hon. Members may have heard, British Coal has today announced that it has successfully reached agreement with each generator on the outline terms of interim three-year contracts.

For the first two years of the new contracts, British Coal will supply an aggregate of 70 million tonnes a year. In the third year it will supply 65 million tonnes. Prices will continue to fall each year in real terms. There is nothing in the contracts which prevents British Coal from bidding to sell additional spot tonnages where that makes financial sense.

These are, I emphasise, interim settlements. Negotiations will continue with a view to reaching longer-term agreements covering the period beyond the next three years. At the same time, the two sides will be working to flesh out the details of the three-year agreements.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): If the agreement is allowed to continue on that depreciating scale, does the Minister not realise that Britain will have to import more coal? It may cost less now, but who knows what its future price will be? With a £20 billion balance of payments deficit, does the Minister not understand that it is economic lunacy to import more coal and thereby to add to the balance of payments deficit? The answer is to keep pits open and to use British coal. The Government ought to pay attention to our long-term energy needs.

Mr. Wakeham: The contracts which are freely entered into by British Coal and the generating companies are very good for both. The hon. Gentleman may cast doubts on this, but, according to Sir Robert Haslam's statement today,

> "The new contracts are a firm rebuff for the Jeremiahs and their gloomy forecasts for the future of coal. It is evident that the 'scare stories' of further massive contraction of the industry have been seriously overstated."

It is good news for the coal industry, and the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), who seeks to represent it in the House, should take credit for his industry when the opportunity presents itself.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Is it right for the Secretary of State to shield himself behind British Coal? Nuclear power is up to three times as expensive as coal, and the Government have supported it. Opencast mining is desperately damaging to the environment, and the Government have supported it. The importation of coal, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) referred, deepens the balance of payments deficit. Those are Government decisions. They are not matters on which the Minister can shield himself behind the chairman of British Coal.

Mr. Wakeham: The Government have provided very large resources for British Coal and, by and large, in recent years British Coal has taken great advantage from that and has substantially improved its position. I paid proper credit to that at the beginning of my speech. The right hon. Gentleman is deluding himself and the House if he believes that the coal industry can be protected by Government intervention to stop, for example, coal imports. The competition that British Coal must face—it will face it successfully—is from competing fuels—for example, natural gas and oil, both of which are available in this country. Unless British Coal can compete against those fuels—I believe that it can—the future will be bleak. I do not believe that the right hon. Gentleman's analysis or his remedy are right.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South) *rose*——

Mr. Wakeham: I must not stand here and answer questions. My task is to make my speech in support of the Second Reading of the Bill. I have given way many times, and I may well give way to the hon. Gentleman when I have made progress.

Those agreements are important steps forward for both industries. They will allow the contracts between generators and distributors to be put in place according to the planned timetable. The prospect of further reductions in real terms in the cost of coal in each of the next three years is good news for the electricity consumer.

The contracts are also good news for the coal industry. They remove much of the uncertainty that has overhung the industry in recent months. They give British Coal a large tonnage to go for and time in which to adjust its capacity and costs. But British Coal's ability to retain this business in the longer term will depend upon its own efforts to get its costs down even further over the intervening period. The remarkable productivity trend over the past few years must continue, and I believe that there exists within the industry the will and the technical skill to achieve it.

Mr. Mullin: I represent part of Sunderland, where 1,700 people are employed in the Wearmouth pit. One of the most disastrous things to happen is that, through our port and others along the coast, large quantities of coal are imported from cheap labour economies, including South Africa, Colombia and places with which no level of productivity can ever permit our miners to compete. Does the right hon. Gentleman understand that that is disastrous for the 1,700 men at Wearmouth pit and that, if it continues, it will lead to the closure of that industry, which is one of the largest remaining industries in Sunderland?

Mr. Wakeham: As the hon. Gentleman knows, it has not been the policy of this Government or of the Government whom he would support to restrict the import of coal into this country. Levels of coal imports have not substantially altered in recent years. British Coal is capable of meeting a substantial portion of the needs of the British generating industry for a long time to come.

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): I thank the Secretary of State, who has been generous in giving way. He has informed the House about increased productivity and the agreement that has been reached today. He has confessed that he will not be opposed to the import of coal and he has announced that gas will be a great competitor. Is he aware that an energy group of hon. Members had a lecture by the chief executive of British Gas and that he told his assembled audience that British Gas expects to have between 2 GW and 7 GW of gas-fired power stations in 10 years' time? Will the Secretary of State concede that he is misleading the House to some extent about the long-term prospects for coal if the policy of the importation of coal goes ahead and if gas-fired power stations become the order of the day?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot be certain about the future pattern of fuels for generating, but I know that a substantial number of power stations will be gas fired, as is right and proper. That will add to the diversity of fuel and we know that gas is an environmentally satisfactory fuel. I must add that I was not one of those who were most anxious that the flotation of the nuclear industry should not proceed, but I made a statement to the House when I felt that it was the right course of action. Ten GW of electrical generation capacity were going to be filled by nuclear power, about which there is now considerable doubt, so there will be plenty of markets for which British Coal can aim, if it is competitive and able to seize those markets. I am doing all that I can to enable it to achieve that.

The Government's view is that there should be a diversity of sources of fuel. We should like to maintain our level of nuclear power, but nothing that I have done in my time as Secretary of State has damaged the prospects of British Coal—rather the opposite.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone) *rose*——

Mr. Wakeham: I must get on with my speech.

Mr. McKay: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wakeham: No, as I have given way considerably. If I make progress, the hon. Gentleman is next in line and I shall keep him in a corner of my mind. If he sits nicely and quietly, I may be able to give way to him a little later. I have much more to say, so if I give way again hon. Members will complain that I have gone on for too long.

Clause 1 provides for a new deficiency grant which will enable me to reduce or extinguish British Coal's accumulated losses as at the end of this financial year. It differs from the deficit grant, which was available to British Coal until 1987, in two respects. Whereas deficit grant was paid out in respect of each year's losses, the new deficiency grant relates to the accumulated losses in the corporation's balance sheet, rather than to the results of any one year. The second difference is that deficit grant was an ongoing grant and a continuing subsidy. The new grant deals with the overhang of the past, but it is not available to cover any losses that British Coal may incur beyond March 1990.

Apart from restructuring grant, to which I shall return in a moment, we do not envisage offering any grant subsidy to British Coal for the period beyond March 1990, for the simple reason that, taking the next three years as a whole, we expect British Coal to make a profit. As Sir Robert Haslam told the Select Committee on Energy last month, British Coal does not want a subsidy and it does not need a subsidy.

However, it is essential and urgent that we address the massive distortions that are now appearing in British Coal's balance sheet. That is because, on the basis of the balance sheet that we expect to see by March, there would be no prospect of British Coal being able to service and repay its debt. In those circumstances, it would be neither proper nor legal for me to continue to lend money to the corporation and the corporation would no longer be in a position to discharge its statutory functions. Let me spell out what those distortions are.

First, until this year, British Coal's borrowings, at around £4 billion, were broadly in line with the value of the fixed assets shown in the balance sheet. But the growth in borrowings this year will lift the corporation's debt to nearly £5 billion. Meanwhile, it is becoming clear that pressure on British Coal's margins has left its fixed assets substantially overvalued in terms of their true earning potential. I cannot at this stage tell the House the extent of the write-down that may be necessary. That will depend upon a detailed review of the industry's prospects, and I shall naturally wish to satisfy myself that they are based on demanding output and productivity targets.

Secondly, under a new accounting standard applicable this year, British Coal is expected to provide in its accounts for its concessionary coal liabilities—primarily to ex-employees—instead of charging them on a pay-as-you-go basis. The corporation also has potential liabilities in respect of ex-employees' industrial deafness claims. Over the past four months I have learnt just how painful such long-term provisions in the energy sector can be, and I am afraid that these are no exceptions. The concessionary coal provisions are likely to amount to nearly £2 billion at today's prices and the industrial deafness provision is around £0·5 billion.

Finally, there are the bottom line losses that British Coal has recorded over the past three years, including £200 million last year and perhaps double that sum this year. British Coal's balance sheet has no reserves against which those losses can be offset.

Altogether, the losses over the past three years, the provisions in respect of concessionary coal and industrial deafness, and the write-down of colliery assets could amount go more than £5 billion; they represent the accumulated deficiency with which I propose to seek powers to deal by means of deficiency grant. I foresee a substantial part of such grant being paid immediately on Royal Assent, provided that the Bill receives Royal Assent before the end of the financial year. That will allow British Coal to repay an equivalent amount of its borrowings so that its debt can be brought into closer alignment with the true value of its colliery assets. The remainder of the deficiency grant will be paid over time as British Coal's longer-term liabilities fall due.

Clause 2 raises the ceiling on restructuring grant from £750 million to £1,250 million, increasable by order to £1,500 million, and extends its availability by one year to March 1993.

The increase in the ceiling is urgently required because the existing £750 million has been fully committed. Indeed, there are unreimbursed costs outstanding at present as a result of this year's redundancies. I appreciate the concern felt on both sides of the House about what is implied in terms of further manpower rundown. The proposed increase in the ceiling is a broad-brush figure and is not based on a specific view of what the manpower rundown will be.

I think that it is generally recognised that the number of jobs will continue to fall as collieries exhaust their economic reserves and as manpower-saving investment comes to fruition, but I shall certainly not predict the outcome of individual colliery reviews or whether individual mineworkers will wish to remain in the industry or take voluntary redundancy. Similarly, I am not in a position to judge whether British Coal will find it profitable to sell more than the minimum contract tonnages to the power stations or to develop alternative profitable markets for its coal.

However, I am not disguising the hard truth that the industry will have to reduce its manpower costs further over the next three years, and the grant is vital if British Coal is to be able to afford appropriate redundancy terms.

Clause 3 makes a technical amendment dealing with loans to British Coal. Its purpose is to enable me to take temporary deposits from British Coal so that I can offer revolving credit facilities as well as term loans.

Because of the weakness of its balance sheet, British Coal has had access over the past two years only to short-term loans, and this has meant a great deal of volatility in the interest rate it faces. Once its balance sheet has been strengthened, I intend to consider how the maturity of its borrowings could be adjusted to a more conventional medium-term structure. There will, however, still be a need for temporary loan facilities, and clause 3 will allow a more straightforward way of providing those.

Finally, the Bill provides for an increase in the limits on licensed mining and other consequential changes.

Mr. Michael Welsh (Doncaster, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wakeham: I must outline what the Bill contains, but I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman if I have time after I have given way to his hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay).

Mr. Peter Rost (Erewash): *rose*——

Mr. Wakeham: I have not given way to any of my hon. Friends and, in fairness, I shall do so when I have concluded the point about licences.

Private sector coal mining under licence from British Coal, which owns all coal reserves in Britain, produces between 2 and 3 per cent. of our total output. Those mines are limited in size, under legislation from the 1940s and 1950s which has never been revised, to 30 underground employees in the case of underground mines and 25,000 tonnes in the case of surface—that is, opencast—mines.

Mr. Rost: I am sure that many of my hon. Friends will welcome the relaxation of the artificial and outdated restrictions on private mining. Will my right hon. Friend accept, however, that there will not be fair competition unless he alters the licensing system? It should be taken from the patronage of British Coal and transferred to the Department of Energy so that, in common with oil and gas licensing, it is open to tender. In that way, genuine private enterprise competition would be achieved.

Mr. Wakeham: I note what my hon. Friend says. I suspect that improvements could be made to the licensing system, but they must wait, I fear, until a major Bill to privatise British Coal is introduced. That will not happen until the next Parliament. In the meantime, I thought it right to introduce the modest proposals I have outlined to assist, but they are not a substitute for the more fundamental review that my hon. Friend would like.

Mr. Allen Mckay: The Secretary of State has said that manpower in the small mines will increase from 30 to 150. I hope that he will consider carefully the question of health and safety, especially when the rules and regulations are altered. There is a difference between a private mine that employs 30 men and one that employs 150, as such a work force means that the mine is fairly large.

Mr. Wakeham: One of the purposes of the changes is to improve safety in private mines. With the present number of 30 employees, it is difficult to use modern technology and equipment, but the safe operation of mines largely depends on using modern equipment. The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right that safety is an important consideration.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): *rose*——

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): *rose*——

Mr. Wakeham: I must make some progress.

It is important to put our proposals for increasing the size of opencast mines into perspective. The smallest British Coal mine has about 250 underground employees; and while there are a few British Coal opencast mines with tonnages of less than 250,000 tonnes, they account for a tiny fraction only of the corporation's output.

We have made it clear that we would seek a mandate in the next general election to hive off British Coal's operations from its licensing functions and to privatise them once they have become fully competitive. The decision when and in what form the coal industry will be privatised is one for the next Parliament, and we do not want to pre-empt this decision by major changes now in the statutory framework.

Mr. Ashby: When we have such extended opencast mine facilities, will my right hon. Friend please ensure that they are not concentrated in one area as they are in my constituency? We have to suffer opencast mining on top of opencast mining. Will consider the local people so that only one opencast mine at a time is operated and no more?

Mr. Wakeham: I have great sympathy with my hon. Friend, but I am not the planning authority which settles these matters. No doubt those with the authority will take note of what my hon. Friend said.

Dr. Mike Woodcock (Ellesmere Port and Neston): If my right hon. Friend is saying that at this stage it is not reasonable to transfer licensing arrangements from British Coal to the Department of Energy, will he at least give the House an assurance that he will look carefully at the royalty paid by private mining operators to British Coal? It seems to many Conservative Members that an £11 per tonne advantage in what is supposed to be a free and fair competitive market is not reasonable in the private sector.

Mr. Wakeham: I have no plans for doing that, but my hon. Friend has asked a question and I shall certainly look at the matter. However, I do not give an undertaking that he will necessarily have a favourable reply.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Wakeham: I had better make a bit more progress. I have given way a great deal and I merely wanted to redress the balance.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. A number of the hon. Members now seeking to intervene have also stated that they wish to participate in the debate and their interventions take up time.

Mr. Wakeham: We see merit in raising the licensing limits to take account of developments in mining

[Mr. Wakeham]

techniques since the 1940s, to allow the working of deposits which are too small for British Coal to consider but too large to be worked by licensees under the present limit. Some of these deposits are of special qualities such as anthracite where British Coal's own local output may be insufficient to meet demand and the market would otherwise be supplied by imports. The increase will therefore open up the possibility of increasing employment and investment in the small mines sector.

I am aware of the concern felt in the House about the safety record of small mines. I am glad that the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay), who raised this issue, is still in the Chamber. However, the overall accident rate in licensed mines has in fact fallen in each of the last three years. I accept that it is higher than in British Coal's mines, but we are dealing with a small statistical population. My worry is that the existing limits condemn licensed mines to work with the equipment and techniques of the 1940s.

Investment in safer and more efficient equipment and techniques is likely to be forthcoming only if the mines can be worked more intensively, which means increasing the manpower ceiling. Indeed, contrary to claims by some Opposition Members, the measure is designed to offer the prospect of greater, rather than less, safety in licensed operations. In the opencast sector, the higher limit now proposed will greatly reduce the piecemeal working of small opencast deposits, and encourage investment in larger and more efficient machinery. Licensed workings will continue to be subject to planning approval and proper conditions of operation and land restoration.

Mr. Michael Welsh: I am grateful to the Secretary of State for giving way on the important issue of the safety of the mines and the individuals who work in them. The increase in miners is not great, but it is more than 500 per cent.; therefore, percentagewise it is large. There will be a tenfold increase—which is large—in the opencast extraction from the pit top. How many more safety inspectors will be employed in the industry to ensure that the extra miners working in the pits are well looked after and their safety, which is supreme and should come before any production, given top priority, with production coming second?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman is right to say that we should ensure that we have the right number of inspectors, as we have. They are up to establishment levels, although there are fewer inspectors now than there used to be. But there are substantially fewer miners than there used to be and the ratio of inspectors to miners has risen substantially. When we came to power in 1979, there was one mine inspector for every 3,185 miners employed by British Coal. The ratio is now one inspector to every 1,998 miners. That is an improvement of 52 per cent. The hon. Gentleman is right: that aspect of matters should not be a subject of controversy between us.

Much has been accomplished over the last five years since the miners' strike. That was a watershed in the industry's history. The Bill, together with the agreement reached with the generators, marks a further crucial landmark for the industry as it adjusts to a changing environment in which its two main customers for power station coal move into the private sector.

By addressing the losses and liabilities of the past, and by recognising the true value of its assets, we are providing the industry with the opportunity to compete in the market place of the future. The Bill is the measure of the Government's support for the industry, and I commend it to the House.

4.30 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): The Opposition welcome those parts of the Bill that are intended to improve the financial position of British Coal. However, we are opposed to the Bill as a whole, especially because it permits more people to go underground in private pits whose safety record, whatever the Secretary of State may say, is quite deplorable.

The main financial provision of the Bill is to write off the debts of British Coal. We welcome that decision. The Government are doing the right thing but for the wrong reason. It is being done only as part 1 of the Government's usual three-stage procedure for privatisation which can be summarised as write-off, sell-off, and rip-off. That is what the Government intend.

Another clause increases the Government grant towards the cost of redundancies in the coal industry. If there are to be job losses, generous severance payments should be made, but it would be better still if we did not have all the pit closures that will lead to redundancies on the scale that is indicated in the Bill. As I have said, we are totally opposed to the proposal to permit more people to work underground in private mines. The safety record in private mines is dreadful, with fatal accidents running at between two and four times the rate in the pits run by British Coal. With that sort of record, we should be exposing fewer people to that sort of danger and not more, and we shall vote against the Bill for that reason.

We are also opposed to the tenfold increase in the size of private opencast workings. The record of private operators is bad enough already, as communities living near them can confirm. They do not take enough care, they do not try to protect local communities, and some of them have failed to restore old workings to agricultural use. The Government should have used the Bill to honour their undertaking to improve the arrangements for compensation for damage caused by mining subsidence. They said that they would do that as soon as there was a legislative opportunity. This is that legislative opportunity, and we shall press for the inclusion of that in the Bill.

We cannot look at the Bill in isolation. We need to look at the current position of British Coal and its financial situation. We need to look at its past, present and future relations with its major customer, the electricity supply industry. We also need to look at it in the context of the Government's general policies on energy, the environment and privatisation. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has said, we need to look carefully at the Bill's likely impact on our ever worsening trade deficit.

The Government have many questions to answer. How does the Bill tie in with the coal contract that was announced today? What will it do to electricity prices? Will it promote energy efficiency and conservation? Will its effects on the environment be good or bad? What future does it offer the coal industry? Will it make mining safer or more dangerous? How will it affect communities living near mines and opencast workings? What has the Bill to do with the proposed privatisation of the coal industry and how is it tied up with the privatisation of the electricity industry?—*[Interruption.]* We have had some instant answers from Conservative Members, but I am afraid that I cannot claim to have their intellectual grasp. Time does not permit me to deal with all those questions as swiftly as they do. However, I am sure that those questions will be seriously pursued by my hon. Friends, unlike the hon. Member for Ashby who, by the way he is behaving, apparently thinks that the idea of a new opencast working in his constituency is a joke. However, those questions will be pursued by my hon. Friends.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): While my hon. Friend is asking questions of Conservative Members, will he include the protection of the fuel allowance to miners, retired miners and miners' widows? In my constituency, there is grave concern over British Coal's attitude in denying retired, redundant, sick and injured miners and miners' widows their fuel allowance. They fear that that practice will escalate and that those people will become a target for taking away that allowance. Will my hon. Friend ask the Minister to give an assurance that those benefits, which have been fought for by miners, will be protected?

Mr. Dobson: My hon. Friend has put his question effectively; I could not have put it any better. That is one of the many serious questions that Opposition Members will ask about the future of the industry and how it will be affected by the Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) will deal in particular with safety, opencast working and subsidence and he will want to know why the question of subsidence is not covered in the Bill. I should also like to thank him and my hon. Friends the Members for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) and for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran) for the help that they have given me since I became the shadow Energy Secretary. I should like to pay tribute also to the effectiveness of my predecessor. In doing so, I am doing something that the Secretary of State could not do, at least not whilst keeping a straight face.

Throughout this decade the Government have been shortsighted, wasteful and environmentally backward. Nowhere has that been more obvious than in energy. Britain's use of energy has been profligate, expensive and harmful to the environment. Instead of carefully husbanding our energy resources, the Government have allowed them to be squandered. Through the period of this Government, coal-burning power stations have provided the bulk of the nation's electricity supplies. They will continue to do so into the foreseeable future.

A sensible Government would have recognised that and concentrated effort on improving the efficiency of coal-burning power stations. They would have invested in the research and development of more efficient techniques such as fluidised bed combustion and would have promoted coal-fired combined heat and power stations. They would have put an end to acid rain by cleaning the sulphur from the flue gases. Sadly, they have done none of those things and, as a result, the coal-burning stations—the mainstay of the system—are less efficient, more expensive and more environmentally damaging than they need have been.

A real commitment to those coal-fired stations could have made them cleaner and more efficient and could even have made their electricity cheaper. Instead of that commitment, the coal industry and the coal-fired stations have been derided and deprived. They have been derided by allegedly distinguished people in the electricity industry who were supporters of nuclear power and by the advocates of burning oil. They have been deprived of the research and development necessary to improve their competitiveness.

Instead, money has been poured into nuclear research and that truly bottomless pit, the AGR programme. That is the biggest technological foul-up in British history. Common sense and cheapness have had to take second place to the Prime Minister's obsession with nuclear power. That continues to this day. This year, less than 1 per cent. of the Department of Energy's research is going into coal, while more than 80 per cent. is going into the nuclear industry.

In view of all the official propaganda, it is hardly surprising that few people realise that supplies of cheap British-mined coal have been the foundation of success for the electricity industry. Coal-fired stations have kept the show on the road. The cost savings in the British coal industry have been used by the generating board to mask the uneconomic operation of nuclear power stations. If the coal industry and coal-fired power stations had got the credit that they deserved, and were to get it in the future, the coal price contract announced today would not have involved a reduced burn of British coal, nor would the Government face the alternative of increased fuel imports and a further worsening of the trade deficit.

I have to warn that when it comes to the balance of trade in energy the situation is not as bright as at first appears; trends are moving in the wrong direction. At the moment, Britain is self-sufficient in energy because we have an oil surplus. This is fortunate, because without it our trade deficit last year would have been not £14 billion but £22 billion, and the figure would be far worse this year. The Government should take care when they talk of alternative sources of fossil fuels, because Britain's fuel surplus has been whittled away from a surplus of 29 million tonnes in 1983 to one of just 9 million tonnes last year. That is partly because our oil surplus is coming down, but also because Britain imported on average 17 million tonnes of natural gas during each year of the 1980s.

On top of that, last year we imported 12 million tonnes of coal, so this is hardly the time for the Government to be promoting more coal imports or new power stations that will burn natural gas. It is bad enough that the Department of Trade and Industry does nothing about the trade deficit, but it is even worse that the Department of Energy appears to be contemplating making that deficit worse.

The contract announced today between British Coal, National Power and PowerGen is closely related to the Bill, but its real significance is that it signals an about-turn by the Government on electricity privatisation. Privatisation was supposed to secure competition between National Power and PowerGen. This contract means that there will not be any competition. Both have been told by the Secretary of State or his officials how much British coal they will burn between them for the next three years and how much they will pay for it. That agreement has about the same relation to open competition as Eric Honecker had to open government.

[Mr. Dobson]

In February this year, the former Secretary of State for Energy, the right hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Parkinson)—the living embodiment of the triumph of hope over experience—said to the Adam Smith Institute:

> "We are devolving to Lord Marshall, to Bob Malpas, to the Area Board Chairmen, to the private generators, accountability for the industry. And we are devolving to them the power to run their business without sovereign interference . . . I myself look forward to an electricity industry in which managers are free to manage, and have to meet the demands of customers and competition, not of Ministers and civil servants. That is the principle of privatisation and I am sure it is one that Adam Smith would approve of. It is certainly one that I intend to uphold."

A little later, he left the job, but before doing so he made a speech in the debate on the Report stage of the Electricty Bill in which he summarised his approach by saying:

> "We want to get away from political influence and political impositions."—[*Official Report*, 5 April 1989; Vol. 150, c. 279.]

During the past few weeks, the Secretary of State has made nonsense of all the arrangements made by his predecessor and particularly everything that he ever said as Secretary of State for Energy. The new Secretary of State has withdrawn nuclear power stations from the sale, but announced that they will provide the baseload on the system and that he will decide the price to be charged for nuclear power. He has now laid down the terms of the biggest contract that National Power and PowerGen will ever sign. So much for the industry being "free to manage" and not having to meet the demands of Ministers and civil servants. The case for electricity privatisation is in ruins and he knows it. His actions speak louder than his predecessor's words; and they both confirm Labour's case for leaving these natural monopolies in public hands.

The terms of today's contract are made possible only by the Bill. The proposed cuts in the price of coal are possible only because of the write-off proposals. Unfortunately, the cuts in price are not the only cuts in the contract. The new contract signals a reduction in coal sales to the generating companies from 75 million tonnes a year to 65 million tonnes a year—a reduction of 10 million tonnes—over three years. That reduction must lead to further substantial redundancies—there is no way round it. These job losses will come on top of the 12,000 jobs that the leaked Cabinet paper predicted would result as newer pits like Selby move to full production.

What of the price to be charged for this coal? We are told that British Coal will have to sell it at a price that absorbs the first and probably the greatest part of any inflation in each year of the contract. In other words, the cost of coal supplies to the generating companies is to be partly inflation-proofed by the coal industry, and that is a price cut in real terms every year. Will this price cut be passed on to the electricity consumers? Will electricity consumers face electricity prices lower than the rate of inflation, and, if not, why not?

If it is not the miners who are to benefit from their increased productivity and not the books of British Coal and not electricity consumers, whom does the right hon. Gentleman intend to benefit? Is it all part of the fattening up process? Surely, whatever else he does, the least that he can do is to make sure that low-income families and pensioners are protected from any unnatural price increase and his proposed nuclear levy.

Mr. Ashby: Has the hon. Gentleman noticed that in the other industries that have been privatised price increases have been below the rate of inflation? Will that not apply to electricity as well?

Mr. Dobson: I was talking about low-income families. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman can explain why it was that, in the first two years after British Gas went into private competitive hands, the number of people cut off for non-payment doubled and it had to be forced by a publicity campaign to do something to protect people. In any case, I cannot recall, before the privatisation of any other industry, people from the London business school predicting a 50 per cent. increase in the price of its product within the first few years, because that is what the new private owners would want. I will take more notice of them than of the hon. Member for Ashby.

Mr. Ashby: My constituency is Leicestershire, North-West.

Mr. Dobson: I apologise. It is all the Zouche that does it.

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) was talking about something but could not get his mouth round the words. I think that he was talking about Rover, and about water privatisation, which will cost the taxpayer about £1·3 billion. However, he dare not speak the words because he is frightened of offending the Prime Minister and she may think that he will finish up voting for the other fellow.

Mr. Dobson: The price charged for Rover was so low that there is some suspicion that Lord Young thought it was a dog.

As I have already said, the main financial provision of the Bill is to write off British Coal's debts. That will require a contribution by the taxpayer of more than £5 billion to join the £5 billion that they have contributed to the water write-off and the £5 billion that they contributed to the British Steel write-off prior to privatisation.

The write-off is intended mainly to further the Government's privatisation programme, and it is the first stage of their three-stage procedure. I admit that this case is unusual, because the Bill applies the technique to two industries at once. The write-off will make British Coal more attractive to potential buyers, but the debt is also being written off to help pay for the cut in coal prices to National Power and PowerGen which was announced today. Without the write-off, British Coal would not be able to reduce prices as it is intended that it should.

It is not the first time that the benefits of coal reductions in the pits have been passed directly to the electricity industry. According to a press statement already quoted by the Secretary of State today, this year the generating board has already benefited to the tune of no less than £850 million. During the past three years the fuel cost to the generating board has come down by 6 per cent., its charges to electricity consumers have gone up by 12 per cent., and its trading profit has gone up by 90 per cent.

Over the past decade such cost savings have found their way into the profits of the Central Electricity Generating Board rather than being passed on to electricity consumers. In the elegant words of the leaked Cabinet paper, all the benefits of the savings on coal prices were kept as higher profits.

In all justice, the taxpayer, should not have to foot the bill for that write-off; the generating board should pick up the tab. Therefore, the write-off proposal in clause 1 is not intended just to help the privatisation of British Coal. A lot of the money to be written off has already been spent to help fatten up the electricity supply industry for privatisation.

That is not all. Cheap electricity generated at coal-fired stations has been used to cross-subsidise the expensive electricity generated in the nuclear stations, or, as the Cabinet paper states, allowed revenue to be moved into the nuclear business without leading to large overall increases in price. In other words, it financed the nuclear cost cover-up.

Much of British Coal's debt arises from the CEGB's profit and the cost of keeping nuclear power stations going, when that could not be justified by the price of the electricity that they were producing. Unfortunately, that will continue as the new Secretary of State has decreed that, no matter how much it costs, nuclear stations will provide the baseload. The consumers will be forced to pay for that privilege through the nuclear levy, the coal industry will pay for it through reduced sales of coal, and the miners will pay for it through job reductions in the pits.

I understand that it has been announced that the new nuclear company will be called Nuclear Electric Plc. A buzz word these days in energy circles is transparency. I think that a more transparent and accurate title for the new company might be Irradiated Loss-Makers plc. It will leave the consumers to pay for the losses.

If the CEGB were forced to repay the money that it has misappropriated from the savings on coal and bunged into its profits, and if the coal-fired stations were to take over the base load function of nuclear stations, much of the proposed write-off would be unnecessary and there would be much less need for British Coal to draw on the £1,500 million in redundancy subsidies in clause 2.

Before moving on to clause 2, we should consider the other aspect of the write-off provisions, which my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover mentioned. The write-off is intended to be a precursor to the sell-off. We need to try to ensure, at least in the case of British Coal, that it does not turn into the usual rip-off. So, will the Secretary of State tell us his latest valuation of the assets of British Coal if the debts are written off? I hope that he will not tell us that he does not know, because if he does not know the value, how can he claim that he is getting value for money? Has he assessed the value of the land and the non-operational property of British Coal? If he has not, it proves that he is as ignorant and negligent as those people who sold off Royal Ordnance and Rover.

Mr. Wakeham: I think that the hon. Gentleman did not listen to what I said. I said that the write-off might be as much as £5 billion, but that I was not in a position to say what it would be until we had agreed with British Coal and the auditors what it should be, for precisely the reason mentioned by the hon. Gentleman. It would be foolish to agree a write-off until one knew the value of the assets remaining. The necessary valuations will be made on 31 March 1990, the date on which the write-off will take place. I think that the hon. Gentleman is misguided.

Mr. Dobson: I am always willing to accept that, from time to time, I may be misguided. However, I am not as misguided as the Government's privatisation policy has been.

As the provisions allow for the debts to be paid off, or to be written off, over a lengthy period, many Opposition Members and people in other places are suspicious that the Government and the chosen auditors may find that a write-off is justified if privatisation is to proceed but somehow it will not be justified if British Coal were to remain, quite rightly, in public hands.

Clause 2 doubles the amount of grant which the Government may make to British Coal to cover the cost of redundancies during the period of the new contract. The Cabinet paper estimated that job losses would equal one third of the collieries, or about 30,000 jobs.

Time has certainly passed since that paper was prepared. Will the Secretary of State tell us his latest estimate of the job losses? Since that paper went to the Cabinet, I am informed that the total work force in British Coal's collieries—and I emphasise the word collieries—has fallen from 80,000 to about 66,000, and that more definite closure proposals are being implemented.

Will the Secretary of State tell us how many closures will take place and which pits are most at risk? Last week I published a list of pits, based on information made public by British Coal. The list suggested those pits that might be most at risk if the Government were to press ahead with 30,000 job cuts. In response, British Coal flannelled but never denied what we said.

The trouble is that the provisions in the Bill undermine any claims made by the Government or British Coal about job security, because the maximum grant for redundancies permitted in the Bill is clearly set at a level which is designed to meet redundancies on the scale referred to in the Cabinet paper. I am sure that the Minister will confirm that it is unusual for the Treasury to agree to back expenditure that it does not expect to take place. Suspicions are also raised because the period covered by the redundancy provisions is extended for one year, so that it will coincide with the third year of the three-year contract which has just been announced.

One other factor underlines the plausibility of any Government claim to a new-found commitment to the British coal industry.

Mr. Allen McKay: One thing comes to my mind, and perhaps my hon. Friend will probe it further. The present redundancy scheme caters for weekly payments for people until they reach retirement age. As the average age in the mines is now much lower, do the Government intend to carry on that scheme, or are they going to tell us that they will alter it?

Mr. Dobson: Once again, my hon. Friend, like his colleagues from Yorkshire, has put the question clearly, and perhaps the Minister will answer it in his reply. We will pursue the matter in Committee.

There is also the problem of coal imports. National Power and PowerGen have already signed contracts, so we understand, to import as much as 6 million tonnes of coal. Those supplies are clearly intended for the Thames-side power stations, which already receive coal by sea from Northumberland and Durham as they are equipped to deal with colliers. The pits in the north-east are among the cheapest and most efficient in Britain. Some have recently

[Mr. Dobson]

received substantial investment, and some have the most enormous workable reserves. Surely it makes no sense for the generating companies to try to replace that source with cheap coal from South Africa and Colombia, which until recently was known better for its coke exports than its coal exports.

There are proposals, moreover, for new coal handling facilities in ports all around Britain. Their total increased capacity is well in excess of 30 million tonnes a year. Some of the proposals come from close friends of the Tory party; some require private Bills, which are being pushed through the House with Government support.

I tell the Secretary of State that, if he wants people to believe that he backs British coal, the least he can do is withdraw Government support from the proposals for new coal handling facilities, particularly those proposed for Humberside. If he does not, we will know where he really stands and why he wants to double the redundancy money in the Bill.

The write-off and redundancy provisions in the Bill have been made necessary by a decade of neglect of the mainstay of our electricity system and its customers. Similar provisions will be required in future unless the Government change their policies. Energy efficiency, conservation and the needs of the environment have been ignored. Electricity prices have been pushed up to fatten the industry for privatisation and to cover up the nuclear losses. The consequences of these short-sighted policies are not some academic matter. In Britain, with its abundance of indigenous supplies of coal, oil and natural gas, the Government have contrived to bring it about that more of our old people shiver and die in a cold winter than in any of those countries in western Europe who do not have our natural advantages and envy our supply of fuel.

The financial provisions of the Bill should put British mined coal in a strong position to provide the bulk of Britain's heat, light and power, but that is no reason to sell it off. The Secretary of State has inherited this threat of privatisation from his predecessor. In view of his problems in sorting out the mess that he inherited in the electricity industry, he should recognise a shambles when he sees one coming. He should abandon the privatisation proposal while he can still blame Cecil. Then he could leave the people in the coal industry to concentrate on their proper job, which is to produce coal efficiently, cheaply and safely to the benefit of themselves, their communities and the whole nation. That is their real job, and he should let them get on with it.

15.3 pm

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): It is quite amazing to hear speeches with as many inaccuracies as we heard from the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). We get them year after year. One would imagine that we have not put any money into the coal industry. One would also naturally assume that we have not previously had a write-down in capital. In 1965, we had a write-down of £415 million. In 1973, we had another of £450 million. Revised to current figures, that works out at £5·9 billion.

The nation should understand that we are not paying for an economic industry. I happen to be strongly in favour of it. I have never said whether I am in favour of denationalisation, but it is a loser. If we examine British Coal's assets, we see that the company is rapidly going bust and would be insolvent tomorrow but for the fact that the Government are putting money into it.

Mr. Hood: I am listening with interest to the hon. Gentleman. Did he use the same multiplier when he argued in the Standing Committee that considered the Electricity Bill that the nuclear power industry should be kept in public ownership? He then supported public ownership of energy.

Sir Trevor Skeet: The hon. Member was a member of that Committee and may have listened to my speech on that subject. I shall not anticipate my arguments on the denationalisation of mines. He will have to wait until another occasion to see whether I subscribe to that idea. I am dealing with the Bill which the Government have presented. It is exceedingly good, and I congratulate them on it.

Write-offs in the industry since 1947 work out at something like £10·5 billion. That is roughly half of the United Kingdom's health budget or equivalent to the turnover of our aerospace industries. The money could have been used much more profitably elsewhere, although I agree that if one has a local industry it should be supported.

We learned some time ago that, with nitrous oxide and sulphur dioxide in flue gases, the polluter pays, but on this occasion the taxpayer will pay—it certainly will not be the mighty industry. That is a very unfortunate form of expenditure.

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central) *rose*——

Sir Trevor Skeet: Other hon. Members, including the hon. Gentleman, wish to make their own speeches, but as the hon. Gentleman was a member of the Standing Committee which considered the Electricity Bill, I shall give way to him.

Mr. Illsley: How does the hon. Gentleman equate his statement that the polluter pays with British Nuclear Fuels plc's discharges from Sellafield and the problems that will occur because of nuclear waste disposal?

Sir Trevor Skeet: There are many forms of nuclear waste disposal. Some proposed by BNFL and the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority are extremely complicated. I am not drawing any parallel when I say that the Government are again coming to the rescue of the coal industry. They have consistently vouchsafed the industry.

Members of the Opposition Front Bench tell us that everything in the garden is lovely, but United Kingdom coal costs about £41 per tonne, whereas the spot price on international markets is roughly £27 per tonne. Are we to tell electricity users in the United Kingdom that they must pay higher electricity prices because of the higher cost of British coal? Electricity users want cheaper electricity and thus cheaper coal. Opposition Members are saying something entirely different. They are saying that we should keep the price up to benefit coal miners and make the public pay.

Mr. Hood *rose*——

Sir Trevor Skeet: No. I shall not give way.

I shall give some figures. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras said that we import coal from Colombia, and it is true that we import a small amount from there at

$38 a tonne. If it is stripped down, it comes to £30 per tonne, which is much less than the price charged for United Kingdom coal. I agree that the coal industry is doing the maximum to bring down prices, but it has not been able to bridge the gap. I congratulate the Secretary of State on having negotiated an agreement for three years on supplies of foreign coal which will enable the mines to bring down their costs further to compete in the international market. What is wrong with that philosophy?

Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe (Leigh) *rose*——

Mr. Hood *rose*——

Sir Trevor Skeet: I wish to say a little more first— *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order.

Sir Trevor Skeet: I want to make a few more observations because I want to get the facts right. It is always a tragedy when a colliery closes down, whether through exhaustion or because it is uneconomic.

Mr. Hood: Or through Government policy.

Sir Trevor Skeet: It was through Government policy under the Labour Government. They closed more pits than anybody else.

Mr. Hood: That is not clever.

Mr. Allen McKay *rose*——

Mr. George J. Buckley (Hemsworth) *rose*——

Sir Trevor Skeet: The hon. Gentleman may say that that is not clever, but it is accurate. Under the Labour Governments, 294 collieries were closed, but under Conservative Governments only 157 were closed. One cannot quarrel with those figures. The greatest number of closures was from 1964-65 to 1969-70, when there were 262 closures, all under Labour Governments. That is not a matter for congratulation. The Labour Government had to face the inevitability that coal was becoming completely uneconomic and had to do something about taxpayers' resources and adjust the number of mines to the correct figure for the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hood *rose*——

Mr. Allen McKay *rose*——

Sir Trevor Skeet: The Labour Government faced reality. Now the Conservative Government are telling British Coal to face reality and it is prepared to do so. I do not think for one moment that the Bill is a precursor of denationalisation of the industry. Far from it: it is the infusion of a certain common sense, given that we cannot expect British Coal to continue paying interest of £570 million per year. That is a burden on the industry and the Bill is a way to relieve that burden.

Mr. Hood *rose*——

Mr. Allen McKay: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Trevor Skeet: No, I shall not give way.

Under the planned cuts, I am told that another 30 pits could be closed. That will be a matter of considerable regret. By 1993 manpower in the industry could be reduced to 50,000. With 50,000 mineworkers the industry will be thoroughly economic, capable of competing with other industries, and completely independent of Government subsidies.

Mr. Hood *rose*——

Sir Trevor Skeet: I shall not give way. I have the Floor at the moment. The hon. Gentleman can make his own speech later.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras said that the average age of miners is about 47 years. That worries me. Even if it is 47, it is low. I hope that the Government will bear that factor in mind when they draw up the redundancy arrangements. In giving redundancy payment to a man of that age one must take into account that he has a long life ahead of him and ensure that he can be retrained for a different purpose in life. He must be given a good payment and be properly resettled.

Mr. Illsley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

Sir Trevor Skeet: I have given way to the hon. Gentleman once. He has just come into the Chamber.

Mr. Buckley: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. It has been suggested that my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) has not been in attendance for the whole debate. He has been here since the debate began and the hon. Gentleman should withdraw his allegation.

Sir Trevor Skeet: I am very much obliged.

Mr. Illsley *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

Sir Trevor Skeet: As I said, the Government must consider two factors with regard to redundancy payments. The low average age of miners poses great problems. The other factor is job opportunities in the coal fields. British Coal Enterprise has done a remarkable job in Ebbw Vale and in other parts of the United Kingdom. A great deal of money could be made on land sales. Colliery areas will come up for sale which could be made available to property development companies which could dispose of the land and charge a substantial rent. Indeed, a report in the *Financial Times* on 27 November said that British Coal was doing just that. I congratulate British Coal on that.

Mr. Hardy: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Trevor Skeet: No, I wish to finish making my point. The hon. Gentleman can make long speeches in Committee.

The second factor is diversification, which is important. Everyone knows about the Dutch State Mines, now DSM, in the Netherlands. It does not run coal mines, but operates chemical works. It has diversified completely away from coal. I do not recommend that in the United Kingdom, where we have vast reserves, but diversification into other fields could be profitable and would be useful to mineworkers.

Another matter which has been accommodated—Lord Ezra is keen on this—is the purchase of power stations to broaden outlets for coal. I understand that several smaller stations could be developed for coal. That would be useful. RWE in the Federal Republic has been successful on this

[Sir Trevor Skeet]

score. Another project in conjunction with BP would use heavy fuel oil with water or coal dust turned into an emulsion. Those are simply suggestions.

I come to my last point, because I do not want to hog too much of the time.

Mr. Illsley: Hog is the right word.

Sir Trevor Skeet: It is important to view the position not through rose—coloured spectacles but in the clear light of day. Power stations absorb 80 million tonnes of coal per year in the United Kingdom. However, there have been problems. West Burton has been deferred, Fawley B has been cancelled and we have heard nothing more about Kingsnorth B. Projected capacity totals 5,400 MW. It is possible that the three nuclear power stations at Hinkley C, Wylfa B and Sizewell C which could produce 3,600 MW will be shelved at least until after the review.

The Government, PowerGen and Natonal Power favour combined cycle gas turbines. I have the figures in front of me. Between them, National Power and PowerGen will use gas turbines to produce 4,223 MW or 5,000 MW under current plans, which is a considerable figure. If that is the case, what are the prospects for the coal mining industry? What opportunities will it have? If everyone goes for small power stations, which will mostly be gas-fired, and if there are to be some small coal-fired power stations, where is the justification for the manpower and the number of pits in the mining industry today? That is the question that hon. Gentlemen must ask. If they do not, they will reach the wrong conclusions.

Imports from Electricité de France work out at 5,000 MW a year. Coal imports from abroad will be modest and kept modest. I accept that coal production may come down to 65 billion tonnes, which was the figure mentioned by Professor Robinson about five years ago. He was a man of great vision. He saw what could happen to British Coal. Labour Members seem to be completely misled. They have not taken any of these matters into account.

Mr. Hardy: I should like to challenge the hon. Gentleman on a whole list of points, but I hope that he will comment on two. First, he called on British Coal to engage in land sales. Is he aware that the changes in derelict land grant which the Government inflicted on coal-mining areas brought a blight on any question of developing substantial areas? The hon. Gentleman should have been aware of that problem, but he seems to be out of touch. Apparently he still thinks that Lord Ezra is chairman of the British Coal industry.

Secondly—this is a serious point—the hon. Gentleman pretended to have considerable knowledge of the industry and referred to importations from Electricité de France to Sellindge in Kent. Does he accept that the appalling secrecy surrounding the price of that importation will have to end as we approach 1992? Will he join me in hoping that, during the Bill's passage, we may establish the true price?

Sir Trevor Skeet: The hon. Gentleman is acute to ask three or four questions which I have no intention of answering now. *[Laughter.]* The price of electricity from France works out at about 1½p per kWH. That is comparatively cheap. We cannot produce if for that in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hardy: The price is secret.

Sir Trevor Skeet: The hon. Gentleman says that the price is secret. Perhaps he can find the answer for himself and understand that it is cheap. It is profitable for Electricité de France and for the United Kingdom, which is why we import it. If the hon. Gentleman had an opportunity to go back to university, he might learn something about economics and understand some of these problems.

I do not think for a moment that we have seen the end of nuclear power in the United Kingdom. If all Europe, except Spain and the Netherlands, and particularly France can run nuclear power stations profitably—[HON. MEMBERS:"That is not true."]—if the United States can run nuclear power stations profitably except in areas close to the coalfields, if Japan can run them profitably and if throughout the world more than 20 per cent. of electricity production is generated from nuclear power stations, there is no reason why we should not run nuclear power stations profitably in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hood *rose*——

Mr. Buckley *rose*——

Sir Trevor Skeet: Hon. Gentlemen can listen to me for a change.

The privatised sector wants both to write off the capital of the power stations, not in the life of the plant but over a shorter term. That creates one difficulty. Another is that they demand an increased rate of return because all private companies will be quoted on the stock exchange. That is understandable. If one is preparing a package for the market, it is not unreasonable to take economic considerations into account.

Mr. Buckley *rose*——

Mr. Hood: Come on.

Sir Trevor Skeet: Don't tell me to come on. I happen to be on my feet at present.

The swifter write-off which we have been able to bring about and the opportunity for more people to work in small mines in the United Kingdom will be a godsend for miners. The valuable, profitable, opencast workings will be substantially acceptable to the private sector and, indeed, the coal industry. This will lead to greater profitability which the industry could never otherwise achieve.

5.24 pm

Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe (Leigh): I find it strange to listen to the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet), who is joint chairman with me of the all-party minerals group. I listened to his statistical slug-out—something of a lecture—and never cease to be amazed that he is not a Minister for the fuel industry simply because of his highly technical knowledge, which the House has just experienced. Indeed, I recommended him for that several years ago to the majority party. His knowledge is in balance, but highly technical.

I am sorry that the Secretary of State has left the Chamber. In every energy debate that we have had, Conservative Secretaries of State have all quoted Government energy policy. Since 1979, the Government have never had the framework for a sensible, planned, energy policy. Their philosophy denies that. The Government have a pricing policy, today more than ever.

Their philosophy has always been to leave everything to market forces, and every Secretary of State, whether at the Department of Energy or another Department, has been subservient to free marketeers. Today we are back on that same avenue.

For the first time ever, a Conservative Government have embraced in a Bill pure state intervention. Intervention has always been a dirty word in the Conservative party. Tory Members think that it should not be mentioned, but it glares from the Bill. Why? Certainly not because of Conservative Christian charity to the mining industry. It is there for selfish financial motives. It is to provide a financial base for privatising the whole of the British mining industry, and the return of another Conservative Government depends on it. That is the basis. We shall talk about the coal debt write-off later.

I pay tribute to the mining industry. I worked in it all my life and I have represented a mining constituency all the time I have been in Parliament. As the Secretary of State partly acknowledged today, there has undoubtedly been a phenomenal reconstruction of the mining industry. It is now one of the most streamlined, efficient and effective fuel industries in the world. I do not want to dwell on the industrial trauma that took place. We are now in a settled period—although unfortunately not for industrial relations—with British miners producing some of the highest outputs per man shift in the world. I pay tribute to them for that achievement.

During that reconstruction, 90,000 jobs vanished in four and a half years, the number of collieries was halved and 98 collieries were merged or closed. Coal output from the 74 producing collieries is magnificent. No one, not even the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North, could be glad to see literally thousands of miners lose their jobs in the past 10 years or to see the vast mining fraternities, which were the bases of family life and tradition, disappear. That is sad and is a matter for regret. The Bill will do nothing to console the mining fraternities about job security.

The pit lads, who have achieved magnificent productivity levels, will be demoralised when the Bill is enacted and far more than the 30,000 to which reference is made in the leaked Government document lose their jobs. That will result in many mining communities disappearing.

British Coal is providing cut-price coal to the Central Electricity Generating Board for about £850 million a year. Coal prices have been reduced over the past four years to the tune of about £1,000 million. The achievements of the miners and British Coal are now to be frittered away and the speculators, City investors and other sharks will be waiting for the subsequent rip-off. The Bill will fatten the goose prior to the privatisation of the coal industry. That will be the reward for services rendered.

We know now that the British nuclear industry is not competitive with British Coal because its costs are so very much higher. We know that the Magnox stations are the white elephants of the nuclear age. There has, of course, been cross-subsidisation. The market mechanism has not been operated. There has been no free competition. The Secretary of State says that the Government will have to impose a non-fossil fuel levy. It seems that this will be done to support the nuclear industry. That is unprecedented. The nuclear industry is already ring-fenced to the tune of about £12 million. It is protected because of its high costs. There is state intervention and protection, and a levy of about £1·4 billion a year is paid, in effect, by the British miner. It is the coal industry which has to pay the major part of the levy. In effect, the coal industry is subsidising electricity prices. This is a classic example of unfair competition.

The British mining unions have for years told the Government about the high cost of nuclear energy. We were told, however, that it would be cheaper in the long run. It was claimed that it was the fuel of the future and would solve the energy supply problems faced by industry generally. That has been proved to be a myth, and it seems that the miners are expected to pay the price of the nuclear industry's failure.

Since 1980, about £1·2 billion-worth of price cuts have been extended to the customers of the coal industry. The industry is told that it will have to produce more if it is to remain competitive, and it seems that miners will have to work harder and harder. In doing so, they will know that the profits that they produce at their pits will be hived off to subsidise the electricity industry. As my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) said, there would be a 6 per cent. reduction in electricity prices if account were taken of the subsidised prices that British Coal charges the electricity industry.

There has been talk of incidentals, such as the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill and import licences, within the general debate on the future of British energy generally and the British economy. The free marketeers argue that, with the development of port facilities and with a private coal industry, we could import about 30 million tonnes of coal a year. With existing facilities, we can import 10 million tonnes. That means the loss of another 35,000 miners' jobs. The Government would have no scruples in taking that course. They know that eventually they will be able to attract speculators into a privatised electricity industry.

Third-world countries and undesirable countries, such as South Africa, export coal. It is considered that any import surge is highly unlikely. Why? The answer is that there is a security problem. Overseas suppliers are grappling with major difficulties. For example, China, the USSR and Poland are preoccupied with the decline of their exports. China could become an importer of coal. I represent a constituency which produces some of the most advanced mining equipment in the world. There is tremendous mining technology in the Wigan and Leigh areas, and the products of it are sold to China. The export achievements are acclaimed.

I know, however, that in due course the machinery will be used to compete with the British miner. That I understand, but I do not understand how the market economy can be linked to countries that are politically unstable. Surely it would be too great a risk to have links of that sort. British industry would never fall for that. The racial tensions in South Africa, for example, are still unresolved and there is violence in Colombia. Australia is still beset with industrial relations difficulties.

The leaked document tells us that another 30,000 miners will lose their jobs for economic and financial reasons and not as a result of supply and demand considerations. The Government believe that they can intervene and cause British Coal to provide cheaper and cheaper coal for privatised industries. I and many others believe that this will result eventually in a suicidal supply of coal.

Sir Trevor Skeet: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cunliffe: The hon. Gentleman did not allow me to intervene in his speech. I shall give way to him, however, as I have every reason to believe that he will be a member of the Committee that considers the Bill.

Sir Trevor Skeet: If countries such as Germany, France and Italy can import coal in measured quantities and—as in the case of Germany—utilise their own, why cannot the United Kingdom operate a similar arrangement? The hon. Gentleman mentioned China. If its annual production is roughly 1 billion tonnes and if it is a "third country", could we not help some of the teeming millions to survive by accepting some of its imports?

Mr. Cunliffe: I should have thought that what I have said was pure Conservative philosophy: charity begins at home. Certainly it should. *[Interruption.]* I do not intend to deprive the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North of an opportunity to speak, but we have listened to him lecturing the Chamber for 20 minutes or so. He has asked for answers, so let me give him some.

I am not suggesting that we should erect barriers against Third-world countries; I am merely arguing for conditions of fair and honest competition, based on all the costs that can be amalgamated to provide the cheap coal to which the hon. Gentleman has referred. That will require reasonable working conditions, a fair living wage and pure trade union practice. As the hon. Gentleman knows, many of those countries do not meet such criteria. South Africa is a classic example. We have never run away from such practices, and it should be remembered that we operate different pricing in parts of the British coalfields as well: there is a degree of competition there.

That seems to have stopped the hon. Gentleman from intervening. Let me now deal with the question of safety.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cunliffe: Does the hon. Gentleman's point concern safety?

Mr. Porter: Before the hon. Gentleman moves on to that subject, I feel that the House is entitled to know the answers to a few questions. If the hon. Gentleman is suggesting that the mining industry should receive a subsidy, I think that we should know how much it will be, the levels of employment and production that will be involved and whether the subsidy will be a cost to the Exchequer. If the answer to the last question is yes, I think that we should know where it is to be met. Will it be substituted for some other form of expenditure, or will it be additional thereto? That is a reasonable question, is it not? Incidentally, I have no intention of serving on the Standing Committee.

Mr. Cunliffe: I do not know that that is a reasonable question; it is a bit of a mixed grill. I shall give the hon. Gentleman his answers in writing. I can say now, however, that we believe in a degree of protection for our industries —why should we not? Nevertheless, I do not hesitate to add that a future Labour Government would introduce selective import controls if the economy ever returned to its present state. I have no scruples about recommending such action. As for subsidies, they should be provided according to need, not want, and Labour will take account of that.

Now let me return to the important subject of safety. *[Interruption.]* I am not interested in whether anyone is looking pale or anaemic. Hon. Members who look pale should leave the Chamber. In the past seven weeks, there have been three deaths in the Lancashire coalfield. That is a sad fact; it is not a subject for jest. I concede that British Coal has tried to improve its safety record and techniques, and the lessons that have been provided have helped, to an extent, to avoid potential accidents, but we are still far from achieving a 100 per cent. safety record, and I doubt that we shall ever achieve it. Certainly we shall not do so without the professional concern and expertise that is imperative in extractive industries such as mining.

The pit safety union has expressed grave concern about the Government's proposals, and the chairman of British Coal has already voiced his surprise at the Government's announcement that they intended to liberalise the limits of privatised licensed mines. He was, he says, somewhat taken aback.

> "We had assumed",

he says,

> "that any changes in the statutory limits on licensed mining had been overtaken by the decision to privatise British Coal early in the next Parliament."

Clearly a degree of unpredictability has been involved.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) said earlier, unless a clear instruction is given for an increase in the number of coal mine inspectors, and unless deputies and overseers in private licensed mines are educated, trained and given clear responsibilities dictated by coal industry legislation there could well be many more accidents in such mines than there are now, while the coal corporation has such responsibilities.

The essence of the Bill is that it is a basis for the privatisation of the British mining industry. Its only saving grace is that that may never come to pass. We can, I believe, legitimately claim without boasting that, if the current Gallup opinion polls are correct about the political disposition of the British people, the legislation will never be enacted.

Essentially, privatisation means piratisation. It plunders the nation's assets; it paralyses our public services and lowers their standards; it pursues and promotes private greed, which I believe Conservative Members equate with godliness. A future Labour Government will ensure that those who produce the wealth of the British mining industry—let alone that of the nation—will become the possessors as well as the creators of wealth.

5.47 pm

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): Today's debate marks a new beginning for British Coal. The Bill is simple, having only four clauses, but it lays the foundation for a secure and prosperous future for the industry.

The miners of this country deserve a new dawn. The Coal Industry Nationalisation Act 1946, which promised so much for so many, could be seen as a political fraud because it delivered so little to everyone—until 1984, when the Nottinghamshire miners, through the ballot box, cast off the shackles of union dictatorship, and introduced democracy at the coal face.

The results have been spectacular. Productivity is up by 100 per cent., an achievement unmatched by any other industry. Coal prices to the main customers are down by 30 per cent. in real terms that too is unmatched by any other industry. Modern industrial relations between men and management, involving conciliation rather than strife, provide an example that other industries could follow.

This remarkable turnaround, spearheaded by the Union of Democratic Mineworkers and achieved in such a short time, is the principal reason why my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is so confident about introducing his Bill. Let me offer my congratulations and thanks to my right hon. Friend, who, in his short time at the Department, has recognised the strategic and important role of the British coal industry, and has acted accordingly.

Today's announcement that contracts have been agreed between British Coal and the new generating companies, National Power and PowerGen, for more than 200 million tonnes of coal, at fixed prices, during the next three years will be widely welcomed in the coalfields. That will remove the cruel deception created by the Labour party, which purported to have received a leaked Cabinet paper stating categorically that the future coal requirements for the new power-generating companies would be 60 million tonnes per annum, and that 30,000 men would be made compulsorily redundant.

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Stewart: No.

Why the Opposition stoop so low as to spread despondency and dismay among the miners of Nottinghamshire, only they know.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Hood: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Stewart: No, I do not intend to give way. Our speeches are limited to 10 minutes.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Stewart: Opposition Members can bawl as much as they like, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I am not giving way.

I believe that they stooped so low because of the Socialist inferiority complex of being unable to accept that successful contracts were in the offing.

Clause 1 wipes out British Coal's accumulated debt to the taxpayers of £5 billion. In view of the Labour party's concern about taxpayers' money, one might legitimately ask why it is not making a fuss about it today, remembering its view last week about the sale of Rover to British Aerospace. To remove the debt burden, which is an annual charge of £5·70 on every tonne of coal mined, will lead to British Coal having a realistic prospect of viability, without continuous interference by politicians. Those written-off losses will be more than justified by the success of British Coal and its staff and the benefits gained by industrial and domestic electricity users.

Mr. Hood: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is aware that the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) does not intend to give way. He should therefore not persist in asking him to give way.

Mr. Stewart: I am an optimist by nature. My optimism about the success of Britain's coal industry is well known in Nottinghamsire, compared with the daily prediction of doom and gloom by Opposition Members. Nevertheless, my constituents' jobs in deep mines will be put at serious risk by the electoral self-interest of the Labour party, which is opposed to any opencast coal mining. Those of us who work in the interests of the industry know that in today's green environment the future of our deep mines is dependent on output continuing at our opencast sites. Without coal from opencast sites, we should be faced with two choices: either to close the deep mines or to import coal that is low in chlorine content. To accept either choice would be totally unacceptable.

My hon. Friends and I who represent Nottinghamshire constituencies believed that we should oppose the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill, for the reasons that I have just outlined and to protect our constituents' jobs. However, because of its policy on opencast mining, the Labour party recognised that low chlorine coal would have to be imported in order to keep the deep mines working. Therefore, it decided on a sham during the Second Reading of the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill on 23 June 1988—that Labour Members would make synthetic speeches during the debate, and 180 Labour Members were advised to be absent when the Division was called at 8.20 that evening. That deception has not gone unnoticed in Nottinghamshire.

Mr. Hood: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) ought to be less disingenuous when he accuses Opposition Members. He told us that the Bill will be good for Nottinghamshire miners. However, it would lead to the closure of the Annesley, Calverton, Cotgrave, Gedling Rufford, Silverhill, Creswell and Clipstone pits.

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order for the Chair. I remind the hon. Gentleman that my impression is that he is seeking to catch my eye during the debate.

Mr. Stewart: This might be an opportune moment to remind the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) that in his usual calm, quiet voice during the Queen's Speech debate he went over the top of the slag heap in his condemnation of the opencast coal mining industry. No fewer than 13 of the 18 Nottinghamshire collieries produce coal with excess chlorine. That is unacceptable to power stations and other commercial customers. The hon. Member for Ashfield might, when away from the glare of the cameras, explain to Nottinghamshire miners how he expects to protect their jobs without the sweetener of opencast mines.

The importance of British Coal's opencast operations must be fully recognised. Last year, 50 per cent. of the corporation's profit of over £400 million came from that source. In addition to blending the deep-mined coal that was delivered to our power stations, it sold 10 million tonnes to commercial users such as Bowaters and ICI. If low chlorine coal was not available to them, they would have no alternative but to turn to foreign suppliers.

Clause 4, which frees small coal reserves of up to 250,000 tonnes, to be worked by private operators, can only enhance the future of our deep mines. However, I welcome my right hon. Friend's commitment that all new sites will still have to abide by planning regulations.

[Mr. Stewart]

We cannot have industrial expansion and keep a rural economy. Unfortunately, all developments affect communities. That is the price that we have to pay for a modern, industrial society. Nevertheless, we can minimise the length of time of extraction at opencast sites and restore them as quickly as possible. During the summer recess, I spent some time with British Coal's opencast executive. I looked at its operations in the east midlands, in particular at its restoration work at Morrells in Derbyshire, which is now recognised by environmentalists as an outstanding landscaped restoration. Speedy extraction and sympathetic restoration must be a pledge that we give to those who are affected by opencast mining. Nothing less will be acceptable.

Clause 4 will also foster diversity by increasing the manpower limit in private mines from 30 to 150 men. That change reflects the fact that the existing limit was set many years ago and that it has inhibited investment to improve productivity and safety. It has therefore militated against the creation of new jobs in depressed mining areas. However, in the light of the experience that we had last year in my constituency at Blidworth, will my right hon. Friend consider in Committee making exemptions to the clause when British Coal has announced a pit closure, due to it being uneconomic?

Blidworth colliery, with 30 million tonnes of reserves, received £10 million of new investment but failed to perform. When the closure came, 350 men were convinced that it was viable and, given a chance, they would have proved it. Their judgment was confirmed by a feasibility study that was carried out by a major British company which was prepared to take over the mine at no cost either to British Coal or to taxpayers. However, because of the existing rules it was not allowed to do so. That is an example of why I wish consideration to be given to an exemption rule.

Safety in the mining industry will be frequently mentioned during the debate, and rightly so. If coal is king, then safety is lord paramount. Therefore, let us remember the lessons from the past and build that knowledge into our mining and quarries safety legislation. One life lost is one life too many.

Although I have welcomed the Bill, my constituents will share one great disappointment with me—that it contains no mention of help to overcome the problem created by mining subsidence. My right hon. Friend is fully aware of that problem. I realise, nevertheless, that subsidence legislation is complex and needs to be carefully considered. Could my right hon. Friend therefore promise that in the next Session of Parliament a Bill to deal with subsidence will be introduced? That would go some way towards reassuring my constituents that that problem has not been forgotten.

The Coal Industry Bill has been drafted by a listening Secretary of State. It wipes out a debt of £5 billion, provides generous restructuring grants of £1·25 billion and introduces a small measure of flexibility which will protect and create new job opportunities. In all, it is a generous package in recognition of the commitment made by British miners to their industry. I cannot imagine that anyone in his right mind would vote against the Bill. I commend it to the House.

5.59 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): I concur with the concluding words of the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart). It is extraordinary that the Labour party proposes to vote against the Bill, which increases funding for the coal industry. One can only assume, if the debate continues in that format, that we are seeing the ideological gulf on coal translated to a point where Members vote against anything that comes from the opposite side, regardless of the contents of the proposal.

Mr. Dobson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bruce: If the hon. Gentleman wants to clarify the way in which Labour will vote, I shall give way.

Mr. Dobson: Does the hon. Gentleman, who represents the Liberal Democrats, believe that it is an ideological matter to oppose shifting more people into pits that are between two and four times as dangerous as British Coal pits?

Mr. Bruce: I intend to address that point. The essential point is that the Labour party proposes to vote against increased funding for the coal industry. I cannot see how that makes good sense.

Having served on the Committees on the Electricity Bill and, before that, the Gas Bill, I have heard the argument a few times. One of the problems with debate in the House is that there are so many ideological divides on coal industry issues that it is difficult to address the changes and how best we can plan for the future and ensure that the industry develops in a sensible, economic way taking account of strategic long-term interests and environmental considerations. Regrettably, those points tend to be overlooked or forgotten in the heat of the argument.

The Bill is essentially about the financing and restructuring of British Coal. Points have been made about the preparation for privatisation. The Secretary of State said that that may or may not come down the track, but there is no doubt that British Coal is charged with preparing for privatisation. The Conservative party has said that it is committed to privatising the coal industry. Consequently, British Coal is forced to aim for short-term maximum profitability to prepare the industry for a sell-off. That affects the way in which it approaches management of the industry. It raises legitimate questions as to whether the actions of British Coal are in the long-term interests of the country, whether British Coal is compromised by short-term commercial considerations and whether we should review the basis of organisation of the industry.

I stress those important points. It is interesting to note from the comments of the hon. Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) and some other Conservative Members that there is, at least on the Government Back Benches, recognition of the fact that British Coal's monopoly of coal licensing is not satisfactory and should not continue indefinitely. It is strange that the assets of oil and gas are owned by and administered on behalf of the nation by the Department of Energy. The assets covered by the Coal Industry Nationalisation Act 1946 were transferred to the National Coal Board, now British Coal, which in moving into a commercial world must take account of considerations that did not apply when the NCB was created in 1946. I give notice that my colleagues and I will support the Bill but will propose amendments to transfer ownership of the coal assets from British Coal to the Department of Energy, thereby making significant developments possible.

British Coal has a vested interest in preventing potential competitors from moving into its market place. It has the power to prevent them from doing so. That is an extremely dubious position for British Coal to be in. The hon. Member for Sherwood quoted an example from his constituency. I have been slightly involved in two recent examples, in Scotland and in Kent. Bilston Glen colliery in Scotland was closed at short notice, although British Coal had announced that it had substantial reserves and considerable potential for investment. There is interest in forming a miners' co-operative to take over and operate that pit as a private venture, using private finance. It is interesting that the Labour party opposes miners getting together with private capital interests to reopen a mine that British Coal has closed. The interests of the miners and the communities should demand at least proper and fair examination of those matters.

I made representations to the Scottish director of British Coal and was told that he was not prepared to allow a representative of this potential co-operative access to information or to the pit. He had determined that the pit was not viable and did not want anyone else to have access to information that might be used against British Coal. That is wholly unsatisfactory. It is inappropriate that there is no right of appeal to the Secretary of State and no alternative way of getting a licence.

Mr. Eadie: How deep was the hon. Gentleman's involvement in the pit which he mentioned, which is in my constituency? I did not hear of him being involved in any way. It is customary for a Member to have the courtesy to inform another Member of involvement in his constituency. Can he tell us the names of all the people in that community who were involved in the co-operative? Can he tell the House what private finance bodies were so anxious to be involved? We did not hear about it. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman has information that we do not have.

Mr. Bruce: My information was in a circular letter written to all Scottish Members by representatives of some of the miners who wished to gain access to the pit. I am sorry if the hon. Gentleman did not read his post. I did and responded to it. I spoke to the people in question and this is the information that they gave me. I accept that in the end they may not have been able to put together a viable proposal, but British Coal should not determine the matter. It should be determined independently.

The same thing is happening at the Betteshanger colliery in Kent. British Coal is determined to take out machines over the next four weeks, resulting in the pit being abandoned and flooded, and at least 30 million tonnes, possibly 100 million tonnes, of workable reserves will effectively be lost for ever. Both cases involve low sulphur reserves of coal, which will be valuable when we pursue a low-sulphur electricity generation policy. In these circumstances, we are operating against the interests of our long-term strategic needs and of miners in pits who are exploring the possibility of saving their jobs and communities.

I have been advised by union representatives that they have made an offer to British Coal to pay to keep the machinery in, pending negotiations on the possibility of a workers' buy-out, and have been told that British Coal has no intention of allowing them to do that. The union representatives have told me of the possibility of another private interest taking over the pit. British Coal has said that it is not interested in holding discussions on that matter.

These examples reinforce the case for changing the basis on which licences for coal are issued. They underline the idea that British Coal is not a fit and proper custodian of all the nation's coal assets. It may well be the right custodian of the majority of those assets and it should be the major producer of coal in the foreseeable future, private or public. To have a more commercial approach and the possibility of exploring different methods of extracting coal and different approaches, we must remove control over licensing from British Coal as a matter of urgency. I was disappointed when the Secretary of State seemed to say that this could be left until later. I have given examples of what is happening now. Later will be far too late, because the pits will have been abandoned and irretrievably lost.

Coal reserves are not monitored on a dynamic basis in the way that oil and gas reserves are monitored. Every year, the Department of Energy produces an oil and gas Brown Book with a statement of probable and possible recoverable reserves from the North sea. Yet the stated recoverable reserves of Britain's coal industry have not been altered in many years in spite of the fact that many pits have been closed and that, realistically, many of those pits can never be reopened commercially.

It should be a requirement for British Coal in its annual report to say how many reserves that could have been viable have been abandoned irretrievably. That would enable us to make a strategic decision on whether we should find some other way to keep some pits open while ensuring that the industry operates competitively. It may be worth while to say that we shall pay a subsidy, as a separate fund, to maintain pits because the long-term value of the reserves will become apparent in five, 10, 15 or 20 years and there may even be private investors who are prepared to take a long-term risk on that. We should not simply allow British Coal to decide that it will abandon reserves irretrievably because they do not suit its short-term requirements.

The possible expansion of opencast mining is another important issue. It is clear that there is cross-party controversy on the matter. Opencast mining in a densely populated country such as ours is environmentally damaging and causes great opposition in the areas in which it takes place. We should not cheerfully say that we should go ahead with opencast mining because we must compete with the Australians and with the Americans. They have far more extensive areas of remote land where opencast mining can be carried out cheaply and with less immediate environmental impact. The upgrading from 25,000 tonnes to 250,000 tonnes is a big bite, and if substantial conditions are not attached it could lead to considerable devastation. We shall pursue that point in Committee. The Government should give us some idea of how opencast mining will be regulated.

I have had discussions with representatives of the mining industry, and I have also witnessed the rather tribalistic way in which opinions divide. In Scotland, we have faced the virtual destruction of our mining industry over the past few years. Before the miners' strike, there were 18,000 miners in Scotland, whereas there are now only 1,500. Almost all our pits have closed and one or two

[Mr. Bruce]

have been mothballed. To insist that we do not change the basis on which we operate the industry against a background of enormous reserves of low-sulphur coal in which British Coal is not interested is a travesty for which a future generation will not wholly forgive us.

The Bill should be passed, but it should be amended radically. It is unfortunate that, in introducing the necessary financial restructuring of the coal industry and in recognising that the licensing rules should be changed, the Government did not take the necessary radical step of transferring ownership back to the Department of Energy and ensuring that private developers, miners' co-operatives or any interest other than British Coal could feel that they could apply for a licence on a fair and competitive basis and not in circumstances in which they would effectively be done by British Coal which, with its short-term planning, has no interest in allowing competitors to enter the market.

6.13pm

Mr. John Hannam (Exeter): The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) supported the Bill, but he made some important points which should be considered carefully in Committee. I support his point, especially about the need for change in the licensing arrangements, which is valid and necessary. Like him, I welcome the Bill as a necessary step towards creating a coal industry which will be properly equipped to compete in the energy supply market in the next 20 years. Whether British Coal is a public sector corporation or a private sector public limited company is not relevant to today's debate and, like other hon. Members, I am amazed that the Labour party has chosen to oppose the Bill on Second Reading.

I hope that the time is near when our coal industry will be a successful private sector extractive industry, selling good coal at competitive prices throughout Europe, but as we come to the close of the 1980s we must be careful not to draw a complete energy picture which looks too far into the future. I have been involved with energy matters throughout my parliamentary career, and I have seen oil prices quadruple, then double, then collapse. I have seen nuclear power suddenly become the least favoured electricity generating source recently and I have seen gas become the most favoured source for electricity generation. I have, therefore, become a staunch supporter of Murphy's law—that if anything can go wrong, it certainly will.

I have been a member of Committees on successive Coal Industry Bills in the past 15 years during which time various Ministers have proposed increased grants and borrowing limits for British Coal. I recall the general theme of speeches made by Front Bench Members from both parties, which was that this was the last time that we should see such huge increases in subsidy.

It is not all that long ago that we were told that oil reserves were running out, that electric cars would take over and that gas was so scarce and expensive that it should be reserved and not used as a fuel for the generation of electricity, but only as a direct premium fuel. Coal was fading from the scene, its primary role in electricity supply being taken over by cheap, clean, safe nuclear power. That was the picture not many years ago.

Finally, we were also told that bigger meant better and that the bigger the power station, the more efficient and less expensive its electricity output. All those shibboleths have been tipped up and destroyed one by one. As a result of the electricity privatisation programme, the role of nuclear power is being re-examined in the light of new market costings, replacing the previous system of public sector discounts and write-offs.

We approach the next decade seeing the emergence of a new programme of smaller generating stations using gas, coal, oil and wind power, rather than the large nuclear pressurised water reactors and the large coal-fired stations. However one looks at all the energy equations, it is becoming certain that we are changing from a producer-led energy market to a consumer-led energy market. There lies a rub in that for coal. The world has also now woken up to the dangers to our environment if we continue to burn fossil fuels in the inefficient and polluting ways that we do at present. We are having to reduce the use of a generating system which is comparatively clean—that is, nuclear power—and we are left with a reliance on fuels which, if we do not find methods of cleaning them, will produce acid rain and greenhouse gases at an ever-increasing and destructive rate.

We must consider two alternatives ahead of us. One is to burn coal only in power stations fitted with flue gas scrubbers and control systems to reduce sulphur and nitrogen emissions, and to use the fluidised bed coal burning system. The other is to increase energy conservation dramatically. Either alternative will involve increased costs and increased prices because, as we know from experience, cleaning systems are expensive and conservation works only if there are substantial price incentives.

The increased reliance on gas, oil and coal as our main feedstocks will inevitably result in rising prices as those fossil reserves are depleted. Some time in the next decade or so, nuclear power will inevitably come back into its own as a comparatively cost-efficient fuel.

In the context of the Bill, however, we are considering the future of coal. I welcome the realism that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has introduced into the energy policy debate with his decisions on nuclear ordering, his requirement for reasonable contracts for coal burn after privatisation and his enthusiasm for energy efficiency. British Coal is close to becoming a profitable, competitive industry after several decades of contraction. There have been huge investments by the Government, running at some £2 million every working day, and firm and positive leadership of the industry has resulted in a near doubling of productivity. But in the light of the accumulated losses, now approaching £5 billion, which is more than the corporation's total assets, it is essential that the financial restructuring proposed in the Bill should take place.

Clause 1 provides for ad hoc deficiency grants to eliminate British Coal's accumulated historic losses as at 31 March next year. If that were not done, the annual debt interest would amount to nearly £600 million, to add to the basic insolvency of the corporation. That is why I welcome clause 1.

Clause 2 extends and increases the grants available for continued restructuring and redundancy payments. The fact that the industry has been able to slim down its work force and make vital productivity improvements in recent years is largely due to the generous redundancy schemes being offered. It is important that we continue with voluntary redundancy efforts.

As we know, the contraction of the coal industry is a Europewide phenomenon. More than 1 million jobs have been lost in the European industry in the past 30 years. The European Commission has now recognised the need to help coalfield communities to adapt to the changes and is creating a new initiative known as RECHAR which will make £200 million available to help areas such as those referred to by the hon. Member for Gordon.

Clause 4 deals with the licensing of private mines and open-cast production. I welcome the employment prospects that that will produce, especially in declining coalfield areas such as Scotland and south Wales. The smallest mine that the Coal Board operates employs 250 men. The gap between that figure and the maximum of 30 men hitherto allowed in a privately licensed mine is far too wide. The new limit of 150 men makes much more sense, and I welcome it as a job-creating measure to help areas where big pits will inevitably be closing. I agree with those who argue that the Department should become the licensing authority in place of the Coal Board.

I believe that the Bill will be of great help to the coal industry as it faces up to the future. The main challenge will be the challenge of meeting environmental requirements. In that context, I hope that every support will be given to cleaner and more efficient use of coal, using combined heat and power schemes and the fluidised bed systems. I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State regards energy efficiency as one of his top priorities. The Bill will lay the basis for a competitive industry but will also give the Government the main responsibility for providing a framework for the best use of our coal reserves. I hope that the House will agree to give the Bill its Second Reading.

6.22 pm

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): I was a miner for 27 years, and I am surprised by some clauses in the Bill. I do not, of course, oppose the writing off of British Coal's debt. I am sure that if that were the only purpose of the Bill all of us would support it. But the Bill is a double-edged sword, and it has some clauses with which we disagree.

We must ask ourselves what the future holds for the coal industry. We have watched the Bills promoted by Associated British Ports go through the House with the Government's support, and we have witnessed an increase in coal imports, especially from South Africa. We know of the interests of some hon. Members who have been involved with those private Bills and of the trips that they have made to South Africa, ostensibly to see how the South Africans mine their coal.

Those imports pose a threat to the north-east of England, where I was a miner for many years. Among the mines in the leaked list are Murton, Dawdon, Wearmouth, and Westoe, where some of the threatened 30,000 job losses may take place. Those losses will result as South African coal is brought up the Thames, and the north-east will suffer once again. If any area has been hit hard by pit closures and job losses, it is the north-east. Our mines and miners in the north-east are the most efficient in the country and produce the cheapest coal, but that makes no difference to this Government, because they have a one-track mind. They want to help their friends in South Africa and elsewhere to produce cheap coal, irrespective of the jobs that will be lost in this country.

We must ask ourselves, "What is cheap foreign coal?". It will be a problem not only in the north-east but in the constituency of the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart). He, too, will find foreign coal coming up rivers in his constituency and his pits being closed. Is the cheap foreign coal subsidised? When we ask the civil servants, they cannot tell us, and the lads in the Library cannot tell us. We even telephoned the South African embassy and asked what subsidy the coal coming into this country attracted. It does not come from South Africa to Britain direct but goes first to the Netherlands, but we know full well that it is South African coal. Because the subsidy on South African coal is a hidden subsidy, we are fighting in the dark. Australia does not subsidise its coal; we know that for a fact, because it is mainly opencast coal. We know, too, that Colombia subsidises its coal and that its industry is heading for economic trouble.

Because the Government encouraged the proposals in the Associated British Ports Bills and this so-called cheap foreign coal, our coal imports are unstable. We are relying on unstable countries for our supplies. Once the Government have closed pits in my constituency and in Nottinghamshire, the coal will be lost. The pits will not be reopened—unless, of course, a private entrepreneur wants to open them as private mines. Once a mine has gone, the coal is lost. The pit can never be opened again because the cost would be enormous. When that happens the Government will then carry on bringing in the foreign coal. Their policy towards the industry is two-faced. On one hand, they boast how good they are being to the British coal industry, while on the other they allow the port Bills to be passed and let in foreign coal.

In my constituency, we went through the new review procedure. Ours were some of the first collieries to do so. We have a pit called Bates colliery. It had about 29 million tonnes of reserves of the low-sulphur coal to which the hon. Member for Gordon referred; the coal was tested and its nature was confirmed. It is true that we have a few other problems there—for example, with water. But we went through the review procedure.

We put our case to the independent chairman and we won it. We were the first pit to win. We were overjoyed. We had a good drink that night, and I shall never forget it. A week later, MacGregor decided to close the pit—so much for the review procedure. Does the Minister intend to do the same with other collieries that win their case? Will he allow those pits to close? The Coal Board closed that pit when the review procedure had concluded that it should stay open and we do not know why. That question has never been answered by any Minister or top-level Coal Board official.

There is a private mine in the neighbouring constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Wansbeck (Mr Thompson). A lot of my lads who worked with me in the colliery got a job there when our mine closed. I have heard some stories that make my hair rise. When the pit closed I never went down a pit again, let alone down a private mine.

One story related to the visit of a mines inspector, Mr. Sellars, to the private colliery. He was down the colliery half an hour and then he came running out and threw his hat on the manager's table together with a list of things to be done. He said that, unless the requirements on that list

[Mr. Ronnie Campbell]

had been dealt with by the time he visited again the next week, he would close the colliery. It is deplorable that a mining inspector should go to a pit, know the state of that pit and know that he could close it there and then, but not do so. Instead, he ran away saying that it had to be put right before he came back the next week. That is what happens in private mines.

Mr. Paterson was killed in a private mine in the north-east. The report on his death said that he was in the wrong place at the wrong time. The rope snapped on the haulage, the tug ran away and killed him. When the inspector studied the rope he discovered that it had been condemned for more than six months. He then found out that the rope had not been changed because its replacement would cost more than £4,000. The miners of the north-east are on the dole, so they are fairly cheap. A pit can get another one of them at no extra cost.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Michael Spicer): The matter of deaths in pits is a difficult subject. The hon. Gentleman is making a coherent and good speech and surely he would not let himself argue that people are killed only in private pits.

Mr. Campbell: I was a miner for 27 years and no one was killed in my pit because the rope had been condemned for six months. That is the point I am trying to make.

Two weeks ago the manager of a private mine went up to the fitter and said, "I'm finishing you this week." That is how they do it in private mines: people get no notice, they are just finished on the spot and out they go. He was finished not because he was not doing his job but because the manager said that he could phone another fitter 30 miles away. The fitter asked what would happen if one of the lads got fast in a machine or got his leg or arm stuck. The manager replied, "Ah, we'll manage. We'll get him out." That is the attitude of the entrepreneurs who run private mines. They are not worried about the miners because there are any amount of miners on the dole, but there is not any amount of equipment available. That is the reality of safety in private mines. The Minister should look at the private mine legislation and at the mining inspectorate to ensure that the inspectors do the same job in the private mines as they do in the mines of the nationalised industry.

There are big opencast mines all over Durham and Northumberland. They are spoiling the countryside and the environment. Obviously I know that opencast mining must take place. I worked in a mine that was always being "sweetened" from opencast mining. The Bill means that more and bigger opencast mines will be allowed. That has already happened in Durham and Northumberland, but once the Bill goes through there will be even more such mines elsewhere.

Mr. John Cummings (Easington): In common with my hon. Friend, I worked in the industry for 29 years. I am sure my hon. Friend would agree that west of Durham is an area of great outstanding natural beauty. If there is a proliferation of opencast sites and private mines, a most beautiful area will be pillaged by an army of carpetbaggers who will descend on the west of the county. Fifteen miles away we have four of the most modern coal mines in the world. My hon. Friend has referred to two, Dawdon and Murton. I worked at Murton. Productivity at those mines has never been higher. My hon. Friend should reflect on the comments made by the Prime Minister in 1985 when she spoke about the enemy within. Does my hon. Friend agree that the enemy within is sitting on the Conservative Benches?

Mr. Campbell: I agree with my hon. Friend. Of course the British miner is not the enemy within. We know who it is; she lives down the road at No. 10 Downing street.

All my life I have been concerned about safety in mines. I have made a number of points about safety in private mines, but I could make many more. It is the Government's intention not to bring the standard of private mines up to that of the mines of British Coal, but to bring the standard of those mines down to that of the private mines.

The Bill will go through, but I must warn the Minister. If there is a disaster in a private mine employing 150 men I will hold him responsible, whether he is on the Front Bench or on the Back Benches. I will hold him responsible if anyone is killed. In this Chamber we often talk about the IRA and the thuggery, killing and butchery that it is about. I must say this to the Minister: "Don't put your head on the block and become like it."

6.37 pm

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): I welcome the Bill and the happy coincidence that enabled my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to include in his opening remarks the details of the contract that has been made—or perhaps I should say allowed to be made—between British Coal and the power generators. I do not know whether the contract was made by British Coal or through the Secretary of State, but I welcome it.

As I understand that contract, British Coal will supply 70 million tonnes in the first two years and 65 million tonnes in the third year. Those supplies will preserve the size and structure of British Coal very much as it is now. It will also give British Coal the breathing space it has earned and deserves to plan further ahead. I hope that the Minister can confirm that those figures relate purely to the contract between British Coal and the power generators and that it is still open to British coal to add to that turnover with spot price contracts and with any marginal cost production which it feels is commercially worth while in terms of its long-term plans.

If the contract and my reading of it are correct, the compliments of this House are due to the new Secretary of State. The Opposition's whingeing—we have heard whingeing of the worst kind from the Opposition today—is merely opposition for its own sake. The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) was absolutely right when he said that he was appalled that the Labour party could vote against the Second Reading of this Bill which gives so much to the coal industry. The Bill contains clauses which the Labour party would wish to oppose in Committee, as is its right, but to vote against the Bill in principle—a Bill that helps British Coal's finances—is absurd, and opposition for its own sake.

I agreed with one part of the opening speech of the right hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson)—his comments about the lack of provision for subsidence in the Bill. That comment has been made by hon. Members on both sides of the House. I am told that subsidence was not included in the measure because it is primarily a financial one. I do not need to stress too strongly that my constituents know only too well that it is a financial problem for them. They have been seeking redress because of the subsidence problem for a long time.

In my constituency within the city of Nottingham two pits have been closed for 20 years, but the arguments about subsidence still continue. I still receive correspondence from constituents whose properties suffer subsidence because they are on top of the old Wollaton pit. The Coal Board has a strange way of granting assistance to some, but not to others. Since this House and this Parliament often provide financial compensation for a raft of matters which have their origins in the past and were the fault of no one in particular, it seems strange that there is no provision in the Bill for public funds to support British Coal in dealing with problems, some of which it has had to duck by pleading the statute of limitations. It deserves help with this matter.

We should compliment the Secretary of State because the terms of the contract seem to ensure that the price of electricity flowing from it after the privatisation of the electricity supply industry will be lower under the Bill than it would otherwise have been. I hope that the Minister will respond to that point. It seems as though, happily, there may be a negative movement in the retail price index in terms of electricity pricing. I accept that prices will always rise, but if the deal will help us to keep those rises below inflation, that must be good.

The Minister and others of my hon. Friends have mentioned the number of pits closed. It would certainly be wrong for Conservative Members to seek to duck the fact that pits have closed during this Government's lifetime. It is not enough simply to say that they were also closed under the Labour Administration. We are very conscious of the social distress brought about by closures. If the contract, to which the Secretary of State referred in his opening remarks, gives the industry breathing space and allows British Coal to slow down the closure process, the mining industry has deserved that breathing space. It will take a little pressure off pits which might otherwise be at risk. Such stocktaking is right on commercial and moral grounds.

Conservative Members are conscious of the personal sacrifice made by miners in the east Midlands during the terrible time in 1984 when many of them, at great personal cost, stood out for democracy against what were rightly described as the Scargillian mobs. That is why there are Conservative Members who, against their natural instincts for commercial investment, have consistently opposed the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill and will continue to do so. We recognise that we owe a large number of people in the east midlands a debt of honour.

I know that this always produces roars of disapproval from the Opposition, but as my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) said, the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill would not have received its Second Reading if Opposition Members had been here that first night. For Opposition Members to say that they were slipped that night and given the night off by their Chief Whip was a quick bit of backfilling when they realised what had happened. It is absolutely disgraceful that, ever since then, to put right the damage done that night, Opposition Members have blocked a private Bill which had nothing whatever to do with——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Perhaps we can return to the Second Reading of the Bill.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: You are absolutely right, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Allen McKay: The hon. Member is as bad as the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet).

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I take that as a compliment.

In beautiful parliamentary terms, clause 1 takes 19 lines simply to say that we shall take powers to write off the accumulated debts and burdens of the past. That is great, and my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North said, we should not lose sight of the fact that in 1989 terms, £5 billion was written off once before and £5 billion is being written off again in this Bill. If that figure of £10 billion is correct, the argument put forward by Labour Front Bench spokesmen that coal has been subsidising electricity in the past few years, falls down. The public purse has been subsidising coal. I am not arguing whether that is right or wrong, but simply that coal has been massively subsidised for many years.

Clause 2 gives us powers to finance change for the next couple of years, which is right and proper. The Labour party disagrees with clause 4. I find it contentious due to one omission, referred to earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost), the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) and others. I refer to the asset.

The coal under the ground, not British Coal, is the public asset. Just as with oil or any other mineral, a licence should be given to extract coal, but it should not be restricted to British Coal. The licence should be in the gift of the Secretary of State, acting on behalf of Parliament. This place, not British Coal, should give the licence to extract coal. I should not be at all surprised if British Coal also felt that this was reasonable. If Parliament rather than British Coal issued the licences, we would get a fair price from British Coal or from private and opencast operators. That seems the right thing to do. Perhaps when my hon. Friend the Minister winds up the debate he will comment on the possibility, if nothing else, of the creation of an independent coal commission, the function of which would be precisely to control the issue of licences.

There is no doubt in anyone's mind that the environmental impact on people living close to opencast mining is appalling. My hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) gave the technical, chemical and price reasons for the necessity of opencast coal. If the advantages of opencast coal are to be made available to the public through lower electricity prices and through the preservation of some of our deep mines that would otherwise close, then some of the price differential between the cheap opencast and the more expensive deep mining should be used generously as compensation for the small percentage of our people who have to put up with the environmental hassle, the dirt, the smell and the noise of opencast mining. The beneficiaries of that cheap coal should be prepared to pay something towards compensating people who suffer the nightmare of disturbance.

It would be quite wrong for the Opposition to imagine that no Conservative Member is worried about safety. Whether it is private-sector or public-sector mining, safety is paramount. Hon. Members have spoken about raising the numbers in private mines to 150. All hon. Members want absolute assurances that that will not result in a diminution of our priorities about safety.

6.52 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I do not wish to follow the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo), because it would not be appropriate to make a long speech. The hon. Gentleman, the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) and other hon. Members have expressed surprise that my hon. Friends and I are critical of the Bill. I recognise that it provides money for the coal industry, but in essence it is a dishonest Bill, because although the word "electricity" does not appear anywhere in it, the Bill is more concerned with electricity privatisation than with anything else.

The Bill tries to persuade people overseas that electricity shares are a good bet because the Government will make sure that coal is supplied at a reasonable price. At first sight, the Government seem complacent about the enormous trade deficit, but they know that they have got the economy into such a mess that they will have to get rid of our current assets to meet current need. They therefore appear to be generous to British Coal.

Having persuaded British Coal to get rid in a very short time of a substantial part of what was its capacity three or four years ago, it is perfectly reasonable that the Government, having forced a situation in which capital assets are virtually sterilised or destroyed, should make some contribution towards making sure that that is reflected in British Coal's finances. They are not taking any great risks, because while they may be concerned to sell off electricity to meet current need, they are quite willing to take only the most short-sighted view and allow Britain to develop a dependency upon imported coal which currently appears cheap. As the incompetence with which the economy is being managed continues, sterling will fall and the price of imported coal will rise. It certainly would rise if we ever developed a dependency upon it. Perhaps the Bill is the beginning of a glimmering of understanding by some members of the Government who accept that point.

I am sorry for the Under-Secretary of State for Energy. The previous Secretary of State has gone to fresh pastures and a new one has been brought in. He, like the river, keeps rolling on. Unfortunately, he was in the Chamber about a year ago when some of his hon. Friends put down questions urging the privatisation of British Coal and the extension of opencast mining and private mines. I asked the previous Secretary of State whether he accepted that the Government had no mandate to privatise coal in this Parliament. I asked whether he agreed that the Government had deliberately eschewed such a mandate and suggested that it was matter for the next Parliament. I am glad to see that the Under-Secretary of State agrees. I asked the Secretary of State to assure the House that since the Government had no mandate there should not only be no privatisation but no significant steps towards it. Some of my hon. Friends will remember that the Secretary of State immediately got up and said that he gave me and the House the assurance that I was seeking. The Bill is quite some evidence of consistency!

I strongly oppose the Bill because I represent and have many close friends in the National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers, the trade union of those charged with statutory responsibility for safety in the mines. The House should note that NACODS is absolutely opposed to clause 4 of the Bill because it recognises, as some hon. Members have recognised, that that part of the Bill will cost lives and limbs, and probably a significant number. Hon. Members may think that all that we are doing is increasing the work force of a private mine from 30 to 150, but if they look closely they will see that the 150 refers to the number down the pit at any given time.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I am sorry to keep interrupting on the subject of safety, but the hon. Gentleman is making an important point. Will he take it from me that, sadly, there have been 18 deaths this year in British Coal alone? It is not a question of the private or the public sector but the fact that mining is a very dangerous business.

Mr. Hardy: The Under-Secretary of State will be aware that I do not need to be reminded that the coal industry is dangerous and that there have been too many fatalities and serious injuries in British Coal. It is a disturbing trend. Perhaps the Minister would like to consider the proportion of fatalities and serious injuries which occurred when contract labour was employed. That is an important aspect and deserves serious consideration. I do not suggest for a moment that the Minister is queueing up to kill miners, but the provisions of the Bill will lead to more people being killed and maimed in the new expanding private coal mines.

I should be happy to serve on the Committee which is to examine the Bill, but I should like to make one suggestion to the Minister which I hope that he will consider seriously. It is that before the Committee embarks even upon the sittings motion it should look at a film made by Yorkshire Television about safety in private mines. That was a carefully documented programme and a serious one. Every hon. Member should see it before discussing private mine expansion. It may be a revolutionary proposal, but I suggest that Conservative Members who will no doubt be clamouring for more opencast and private mines should be educated before they join in any decision making.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: I do not wish to pursue the matter of safety, although I agree that it is vital and should be a factor in any change relating to private mines. How do the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues react to the idea of miners' co-operatives wishing to take over their own pits and using private capital? The Bill will enable them to do that in a way that they cannot do at the moment. Is the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues against that?

Mr. Hardy: I do not think that that is realistic. I have studied the mining industry for a long time and there have been a number of similar initiatives, few of which have ever come near to fruition. Also, I would be worried about the terms on which private capital was available.

Another aspect of the Bill which I find threatening concerns the proposed extension of opencast mining by a factor of 10. In the original nationalisation of coal, the limit of 25,000 tonnes appeared so that small-scale development did not permanently sterilise small areas of coal. That was a reasonably modest provision. However, we have now reached a proposal for 250,000 tonnes, which is a much larger matter. As the fortunes of farmers decline, I have noticed the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) becoming more sympathetic towards opencast mining. Perhaps his farm is on the list and he might make more out of coal than potatoes. Perhaps that is why he is optimistic—he is the only farmer I have met who is.

At the moment, despite the care and competence of the opencast executive, opencast mining is a nuisance and a danger. It causes congestion of local roads and a great deal of noise and disturbance. The opencast executive may seek to minimise that, but I wonder whether those Conservative Members who have been eager for some time to see this step taken would be prepared to see their profits curtailed so that those who live near the opencast sites shall not suffer nuisance and disadvantage. That provision in the Bill is a real threat to those living in close proximity to areas where coal lies near the surface.

This is not the occasion for a long and detailed speech as we shall have to look at these matters exhaustively, and no doubt repeatedly, in Committee. I am concerned that the Government have suddenly decided to provide support for British Coal. There is now only one colliery left in my constituency. When I entered the House, there were 19 collieries in the old south Yorkshire area, which has now disappeared to join the Doncaster area. There are only half a dozen of those 19 collieries left. We have suffered a devastating experience in a concentrated time scale.

The hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) talked about land sales, but we cannot begin to improve the hundreds or thousands of acres of derelict land because of the way in which the Government have changed the rules for derelict land grant. That is another aspect that should be considered.

With regard to the Government's energy policy, the example of Kent has already been mentioned. I promised a friend that I would mention the Kent coalfield in the House at the first opportunity. My friend Frank Redman became national president of my association just a few weeks before British Coal decided to close his colliery. It was decided to close the colliery when men did not turn out in full numbers on a Saturday and Sunday, less than 48 hours after a promise of weekend working. That was not a great deal of notice.

However, the point that was made to me, which should also be made to the House, is that even if those men had turned out in full numbers on the Saturday and Sunday, they would not have been able to produce one cobble of coal more due to equipment malfunction. British Coal was looking for an opportunity to end mining in Kent. I believe that it was looking for that opportunity because the Prime Minister wanted an end to mining in Kent, presumably because Conservative Members based in south-east England do not like mining and do not want it on their doorsteps. In Labour areas, we can have opencast mining and private pits and be used as a simple instrument to allow the privatisation of electricity now and the privatisation in a few years of that part of the mining industry which remains because it is profitable.

That is no way to run an industry or a country. The sooner the present Administration's biased and bigoted incompetence is ended, the better. For the Government to pretend that the Bill is something for which we should vote when it represents a profound danger to our constituencies and profound disadvantage to our environment is to insult our intelligence, and it will not work.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the House that Mr. Speaker announced earlier that between 7 and 9 pm speeches should be limited to 10 minutes.

7.5 pm

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Gedling): The hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) must have had difficulty keeping a straight face during his loud opposition to the Bill. It is an excellent Bill, and I look forward to explaining why.

I am sure that we all enjoyed the speech by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), whom all hon. Members came to like and respect in his previous job. He too has a brass neck to raise the question of the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill and claim that the Conservative party is behind it. Many of my hon. Friends joined me in the Lobby to vote against that Bill. Approximately 180 Labour Members did not turn up to oppose it. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman should not have made those comments in his opening remarks.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): Will the hon. Gentleman tell us how many Conservative Members turned out to support the Bill?

Mr. Mitchell: I am happy to answer that question. The remarkable statistic is that 265 Conservative Members either did not support the Bill or did not vote for it. The hon. Gentleman knows those facts as he was here on that night whereas many of his party were not. The people of Nottinghamshire are aware of that.

The Bill underlines the strong support that the Government have given to the mining industry. It also underlines the two important obligations that remain with the coal industry—that of providing £2 billion for the concessionary coal obligations and £500 million for industrial deafness. A number of former miners in my constituency will be pleased to hear that.

I want the coal industry to mirror British Steel and the progress that has been made there. Far from opposing the Bill, many Conservative Members will ask how we can justify the payment of £4 billion of taxpayers' money enshrined in the initial clauses of the Bill. The justification for that lies in the massive reconstruction that has taken place and the enormous increase in productivity, which has doubled in the past four and a half years. That has been achieved with a reduction of 66 per cent. in manpower, yet the output has been reduced by only 15 per cent. Since 1985, we have seen a reduction of £1 billion in the price of coal to customers at a time when the cost of international coal has increased by no less than 70 per cent. That is a remarkable achievement.

One does not have to look only at the national scene. In my constituency, Gedling colliery has made remarkable progress. It will never make a large profit and has always performed on a wing and a prayer. Anyone who knows the Nottinghamshire coalfield knows how difficult the Hazel seam is. Earlier this year, it was under grave threat of closure. The work force has been reduced from 1,100 to 610 and we now have at the pit an enthusiastic and skilled work force with an average age of 30.

Following the reconstruction, the management set a target of 12,500 tonnes per week, which has been comfortably exceeded. We are now performing at the rate of between 13,000 and 15,000 tonnes per week, and the figure has been as high as 18,000 tonnes per week. Those show that substantial progress has been made locally as well as nationally. That is the justification for the major restructuring enshrined in the Bill.

Anyone who looks at the state of the coal industry and the fact that this year it will have to pay £570 million in

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debt-servicing arrangements will understand how difficult it is to run a business under constraints of that sort. I welcome the major restructuring involved in that.

I want to welcome the interim deal announced today by British Coal in respect of its arrangements with the generators. The Government are to be congratulated on their enabling rather than enforcing role. I hope that it will not be too long before we see much longer contracts of up to eight years, because that is what is required. It is noticeable that this deal will ensure that it is not necessary to leap into another closure programme. British Coal is not talking about closure, and nor are the Government. Only from Labour Members do we hear about closures. No one else says that British Coal is to launch a major closure programme.

Mr. Illsley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Mitchell: I am sorry, I will not give way because I am under a time constraint. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will understand.

The generators also have an excellent deal. Effectively, prices have been frozen over the past two and a half years and now prices will be frozen for another three years, so they will have five and a half years of fixed coal prices on 400 million tonnes of coal. In other words, the generators have managed to secure a great benefit which only British Coal can deliver—fixed-price coal in sterling.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) asked whether the generators will pass on this massive saving to the electricity consumer. We all know that coal is 50 per cent. of the cost of generating electricity and electricity prices should therefore come down in real terms. I calculate on the back of an envelope that they could come down by 2 per cent., and I should be interested to hear whether my right hon. Friend the Minister agrees with that calculation. This is also of key interest to British Coal. In the midlands, British Coal remains the largest customer of the East Midlands electricity board, which is to be found in my consitituency, so it too stands to gain a great deal in the reduction in the real cost of electricity.

It is interesting to look at the cost of producing electricity. At one time I spent a lot of time reading the evidence of the Sizewell inquiry. It was something of a masochistic experience. We now know that electricity produced by Sizewell will cost up to 10p a unit. We know that electricity produced by an AGR, based on historic costs, is about 7p a unit. The new small, environmentally friendly, privately financed—with up to 85 per cent. debt —ventures will produce at a cost of about 3p a unit. In other words, there will be a significant advantage for coal.

We hear the advantages of heavy fuel oil mentioned, but there has been a 70 per cent. increase in the price of that fuel over the past two years. The only heavy fuel oil available in quantity and at low prices is high in sulphur. When looking at international coal prices, I urge people to be careful.

Those of us who, in the early 1980s, did work on international coal prices know how difficult it is to predict the variables, because we invariably got them wrong. Therefore, I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister will not put his faith in foreign coal. We have seen this year alone how much has changed in the provision of American, Chinese, east European and Australian coal. We should note that important point.

Although British Coal continues to produce at above the supposed international market rate, it has made colossal and effective progress. That is why the Government are right to adopt a carrot-and-stick approach to the coal industry. The Bill recognises the importance of the carrot.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State mentioned his support for new coal technologies and that too must be right. We must support and develop advanced coal technologies and new coal technologies. These can raise efficiency of generation from coal by 20 per cent., improve the economics and reduce carbon dioxide and consequently the gases contributing to the greenhouse effect. We have to take a sensible and sensitive approach to the environmental effects of the industry.

I am an unashamed believer in the privatisation of the coal industry. I want to see the industry follow the same path as British Steel because that is in the interests of British Coal, the employees, the management and the consumer. I suggest that Labour Members talk to employees of British Steel and see what they think about the matter.

The coal industry encapsulated all that was worst in British adversarial labour relationships. Privatisation will give those who work in the industry a real interest in how well it does. The men who work in the industry used to be alienated from the management, and that is the hallmark of the nationalised sector. Privatisation, by involving all the employees in the ownership of the business, will bring far greater identity with the commercial interests of the business and, a greater acceptance of the reality of the market place and will encourage the work force to work hard when times are good and to work themselves out of trouble when they are bad.

Above all, there are real opportunities for smaller operations such as Bilsthorpe in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart). Everyone employed there will be able to own shares, commercial money will be involved, there is new technology, it is small and clean, and, above all, the Union of Democratic Mineworkers—to which the country and the industry owe a great deal—is involved.

In support of ventures such as that taking place at Bilsthorpe, I support the Bill strongly and look forward to catching the eye of the Chairman of the Committee of Selection so that I may serve on the Committee which considers the Bill.

7.15 pm

Mr. Terry Patchett (Barnsley, East): I am pleased to be called to speak in the debate because, even today, my constituency relies heavily on the mining industry. However, in my constituency 29 per cent. of the under-25-year-olds are unemployed as a result of the Government's pit closure programme since the miners' dispute. I concede that some young people have been involved in such projects as the youth training scheme. For the uninitiated, these schemes allow the Government to present their entrepreneurial friends with cheap labour and to maintain their Victorian values in their attitude to work. They expect these young people to be grateful to the Government for finding them a job. We must tolerate that on top of 25 per cent. unemployment. This from the Government who told us repeatedly during the miners' strike that there was not a pit closure programme. History has proved that the House was misled.

I welcome the Bill's intention to write off some of British Coal's debt, but I remain suspicious of the Government's motives. It is ironic that a great deal of the burden of debt placed on British Coal was created by the Government forcing on it the pit closure programme. British Coal has to find 30 per cent. of the cost of every redundancy created by that programme, as well as carrying the reduction in the value of its assets. In some cases, so-called unproductive pits have been written off while British Coal is still paying off the interest on money borrowed from the Government to invest in those pits. How stupid can one get?

I would like to think that clause 1 was a result of the Government having a conscience over this matter, or perhaps suddenly becoming interested in the future of British Coal. I fear that neither could be further from the truth, as they have not shown any interest in writing off the debt on the many occasions when we have appealed for that. The truth is that they are using taxpayers' money to prepare the industry for privatisation, making it more attractive to their friends on the stock exchange.

The Bill cannot be taken in isolation from other aspects of the Government's energy policy. Electricity privatisation is an example—it is an absolute shambles. The Government had the audacity to try to con investors—their friends on the stock exchange—into taking over the nuclear power industry by guaranteeing them a share of the market when, at the same time, they were singing the song of free competition. However, realising that they could not con their old pals, they withdrew that part of the industry from privatisation. Someone suddenly realised that nuclear energy was costly. Labour Members have been telling the Government that for years, but the Government consistently and happily pursued their policy. That will cost the country dear for generations to come.

We then had leaked documents on the privatisation of the electricity industry. The Government are opening the gates to a flood of imports of cheap foreign coal, and that may cost 30,000 jobs in the British coal industry.

Now we know why the private Bill procedure was so misused by the unofficial whipping of the Associated Ports Bill. Now we know why some Government Back Benchers have been swanning around South Africa as guests of the South African mining industry. Those are the reasons why we must not consider the Bill in isolation.

The Government have shown, by their record of inept bungling and their deceit of the House, that they are not interested in the future of British Coal. It is a scandal that millions of tonnes of coal reserves are being thrown away while the Government flirt with cheap imports.

I thought that we had a huge problem with the balance of payments deficit. I find that difficult to believe, as the Government are working hard to contribute to that deficit by seeking to import coal. Do they have such short memories that they have forgotten the terrible problems that we had when world oil prices shot up, after we had placed reliance on cheap middle eastern oil for our energy resources? We were in a right mess. I thought that we had learnt a lesson from that shocking experience, but the Government are taking us down a similar path again. That is madness.

We cannot rely on the get-rich-now-and-to-hell-with-tomorrow philosophy of the Government for Britain's energy demands. The House should have a long debate on the gambit of the Government's energy policy before it is too late.

I am concerned about the growing tendency for deregulation in coal mining, and its effect on safety. Several of my hon. Friends have also mentioned the subject. Most of our present regulations were established because of loss of life and limb, and not by convincing someone in this House in a debate. I can give a personal example of that.

In 1975, in my own colliery, there was an explosion. During the 24 hours that we spent looking for missing lads, in the hope that they might be alive, we received expressions of condolence from right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House. We were grateful for that, but we were more pleased when legislation was changes as a result of a public inquiry into the accident and the problem of degassing the headings. Some of my hon. Friends will be familiar with that.

I would be angry if someone came to the House and talked about changing that regulation on degassing. Every regulation has been changed by a disaster and a public inquiry. We will never convince Conservative Members that they should spend money on safety. Conservative Members have already demonstrated by their watery words that they are intent on deregulation and cutting corners and safety. I have worked in mines and I have seen what happens if one cuts on safety.

I regret that there has been a change of attitude by the management. They think that they are at the top of the tree, supported by the Government, or perhaps local management are frightened by Hobart house.

A few weeks ago there was a fire at Grimethorpe colliery. The work force and the management worked long and hard to contain the fire and thereby saved other reserves. Everybody was full of compliments for the work force that week, but within three weeks the same management was fetching the men in saying, "Your pit's in danger. The reserves are there, but we don't think you've been pulling your weight." People with that attitude would be happy to short cut on safety.

If we allow the tendency to deregulate to continue, I am fearful of the consequences for the safety of miners. Therefore, I beg the Minister to consider carefully what I have said.

7.24 pm

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): I have always argued in coal debates for the need for a diverse energy policy, in which the coal industry plays the major part—and by coal I mean United Kingdom coal. I see no reason to change my view because of the Bill. I certainly see no reason to change that view as a consequence of the major shifts in the energy industry in recent times—quite the contrary, as I believe that the central thrust of the Bill is important to the development of our nation's industrial base. A diverse energy policy requires coal as its major ingredient. Where I depart from the views of the Opposition is in their belief that one can dragoon customers into taking coal. Customers will come only if the price is right and supplies are secure.

One of our problems is the Scargill legacy. Most people who want to switch to coal would be more likely to do so

[Mr. Spencer Batiste]

if there were dual or triple sourcing for their supplies, rather than depending upon a union which they believe is renowned for its militancy. It makes no sense for a country as rich in natural coal reserves as Britain to depend on imports to any significant extent. However, one can only resist imports if one makes one's own industry as efficient, capable, productive and profitable as the alternatives. Otherwise one would pass the problem down the line to other industrial users of electricity, who would themselves become competitively disadvantaged.

I believe that the Bill will receive widespread support in the House and in Britain because it is a vitally important step towards getting our act together, and helping to set up a coal industry with a secure and viable future based on the fact that it makes a profit, which is a central part of our industrial strategy.

I am amazed that we have heard only words of criticism from Opposition Members so far. During the years that I have been in the House, since the 1983 election, in debates on coal Opposition Members have always said that the coal industry has not enjoyed a level playing field compared with other industries. This Bill will give £5 billion to the coal industry, on top of the £6·5 billion already been put in. Yet the Opposition say that they will oppose it. How can it make any sense for the industry to be relieved of £570 million per year in debt interest payments and for the Labour party to oppose this solution? How can it make sense to those who work in pits where viability is threatened to see the Labour party voting against the money which would make them viable?

Mr. Hood: Will the hon. Member give way?

Mr. Batiste: I will not give way, as I have only 10 minutes. I am sorry, but the hon. Gentleman had a chance to make his speech.

Refinancing is an important first step. I hope that what will emerge from it—and I hope that my hon Friend will consider this carefully—is consequent restructuring to ensure that British Coal does not close off any of the options for future privatisation. I make no secret of the fact that I believe that privatisation will better serve the interests of all those who work in and depend on the coal industry. Nor do I make a secret of the fact that I want British Coal to be broken into regional components when it is privatised, so that we shall have Yorkshire Coal plc, as well as Yorkshire Water and Yorkshire Electric. Our regional economy is already beginning to reflect the fact that major industrial players and their headquarters are inextricably bound up with the success of our regions. I want coal to contribute to that as well.

We have all talked of the United Kingdom coal industry as though it consisted only of British Coal, but the British coal industry mines more coal in the United States than here. None of the big companies which mine in the United States can operate here, however, because of the obscure, irrelevant and outdated restrictions on investment by private capital in our domestic coal industry. We have companies which control up to 14 per cent. of United States coal production and would like to invest in a big way here. We also have small companies which could restore profitability to some of the small pits which are closing but the rules introduced on nationalisation mean that they cannot contribute to our national prosperity. The Bill marks an important first step towards putting that right. Areas where coal mining jobs have been lost recently could have the opportunity of new jobs.

Safety is not an issue, as safety standards will be exactly the same following liberalisation. There will be the same procedures, the same restrictions, the same type of prosecutions of the guilty and even tighter enforcement.

Mr. Hood: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Batiste: No, I have already said that I will not give way. The hon. Gentleman has already made his speech.

With all other privatisations, the regulatory framework which have been put in place have been far more effective in terms of safety and the environment than what preceded them—and coal will be no exception.

There is a great deal of commonality about opencasting among those in the House who have experience of it. I do not think that any of them look with enthusiasm on the prospect of 10 times the present area of land being put to use for opencasting. I accept that opencast coal is needed as a sweetener for deep-mined coal. Anybody who denies that is being hypocritical, as he is denying that coal should be a major ingredient of our energy policy. If we argue the need for coal, we have to accept that a certain amount of opencasting is necessary, but—it is a big but—environmental issues must be considered carefully in any planning application.

Tipping in opencast sites has not been mentioned, but exercises most hon. Members' minds. Gamblethorpe tip is in my constituency. After years of opencasting, people now face the prospect of years of disruption to the environment as a result of tipping. If a statutory authority were to set down a timetable when an opencast mining application is made, stating what restoration work will be done, when the coal will be extracted and what the community will gain from the facility, so that there is no possibility of someone coming along later and saying, "What a lovely hole—I should like to tip something in it for a few more years," there might be a very different reaction. At the moment, people look out across wasteland knowing how they would like it to be restored so that it can be of benefit to the local community, but facing the prospect of years of disruption, noise and damage to the environment.

Planning for opencast mining is rather like planning for every other major infrastructure programme in that our compensation policy is absurd. It lays down that we shall be niggardly with compensation for those whose environment is disrupted for the greater good of the community, and then we are surprised when they fight like mad to prevent it and plans are deferred for years due to determined resistance. If, like some other Community countries, we were more generous with our compensation, recognised that there would be disruption and that the communities concerned had a legitimate claim to have something put back to compensate for the disruption, we might have a more balanced approach to opencasting and major infrastructure, planning applications.

British Coal's monopoly in relation to opencast licensing merely restricts further the resources available to operators to use for the benefit of the community. However, all the signposts in the Bill are good ones for the future of the coal industry, and I warmly commend it.

7.34 pm

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): We have been told that the Bill will be good for mining communities. The hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart), who unfortunately is not here at the moment, said that Labour's opposition——

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I think that it is the general view of the House that we want the public to see what is happening in the House. Can you rule whether it is in order for hon. Members to move around the Chamber according to who happens to be speaking? The hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) is so intent on getting his photogenic face on camera that, every time a Labour Member speaks, he moves——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. That has nothing to do with the Chair. I am neither Whip nor shop steward in the House.

Mr. Meale: I hope that, like a good referee, Madam Deputy Speaker, you stopped the watch during that point of order.

The hon. Member for Sherwood said that Labour's opposition to the Bill is a cruel deceit of the miners. The reverse is the case. The Bill is a cruel deceit of mining communities throughout Britain. The Government have changed the way in which the number of unemployed people are calculated 28 times already. Since June this year, 11,500 miners have been made redundant because of Government policy, but they have not been included in the number of unemployed. The Government are planning another change in the calculation of the number of unemployed people, so unemployed or redundant mineworkers will not be included in any calculation of unemployment after December.

Deceit is the Government's number one priority. Since the last general election, they have moved away from the coalfield communities and denied them even the right to show how bad their plight is. Hon. Members from Nottinghamshire should be honest enough to argue for the correct figures to be given. District councils in Nottinghamshire, such as Ashfield, Bassetlaw, Mansfield and the area represented by the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) are trying to get funds from Europe to support their endeavours to get development under way and to reduce unemployment. Because unemployment figures are not being calculated properly, the funding that councils can get from the EEC is put at risk. I hope that Conservative Members will be a little more honest.

I also wish that Conservative Members would stop suggesting that it is only because of the parliamentary Labour party that the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill is still proceeding through the House. No hon. Member has a better record than me when it comes to voting against that Bill, but half a dozen Conservative Members——

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Your predecessor in the Chair ruled me out of order when I mentioned that subject. I trust that the rules will be the same for hon. Members on both sides of the House.

Mr. Meale: I have made my point, and I hope that Conservative Members will not deceive the electorate any more.

The Government have tried continually to deceive mining communities, especially those in the area that I represent. Before the last general election, the previous Secretary of State for Energy said that he had no intention of privatising the coal industry. As my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) said, the Government went to the country at the last general election on that basis and came away victorious. Therefore, they have no mandate for legislation to privatise the industry. The Bill represents privatisation of the industry, pit closures in the coalfield communities and another rip-off of the mining communities by the Treasury.

Mr. Hood: My hon. Friend mentioned the word "deceit" earlier and referred to the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart). I do not want to make too much of whether the hon. Gentleman was deceitful, but is it not the case that the Bill, which the hon. Member for Sherwood supports, will close the pits at Clipstone, Annesley, Calverton and Rufford in the Sherwood constituency?

Mr. Meale: The Bill is nothing more than a fattening-up exercise for privatisation of the coal industry. It will benefit only one set of individuals, who are a minority in our society. It will fatten up the people in the City who have already ripped off an enormous fortune from British taxpayers.

The Bill means extensive job losses in the coalfield communities. As my hon. Friend said, it is calculated that the Bill will probably result in another 30 pit closures. Some of those at risk are in the constituency of the hon. Member for Sherwood. He is a fool to support the legislation because it will cost hundreds, indeed, thousands, of jobs in Nottinghamshire.

The Opposition Front Bench has obtained a leaked Cabinet document which shows that the figures calculated by Opposition spokesmen are correct. The document was prepared not by the Labour party but by the Cabinet. It got into the hands of our Front Bench team and I commend them for having obtained it. It suggests that the Bill will lead to 30,000 job losses. Conservative Members have said how wonderful it is that the Government have tied up a contract for all this coal, but nothing has changed. The document also states that a three-year agreement is part and parcel of the contract. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Sherwood is making signs to the effect that three years will take the Government beyond the election. If he believes that the Government's mandate will be extended, he is living in cloud cuckoo land.

The Bill offers nothing to the coalfield communities. I was saddened when the Secretary of State spoke about the terrible deficit debt that British Coal currently carries. He spoke of a debt of £500 million, but that is not a debt in monetary terms. It is a scandal that British Coal has calculated the figure of debt as a whole, taking into account items such as concessionary coal for widows and retired miners. Do Conservative Members not realise that that coal was negotiated in decades gone by, by working miners, who gave part of their coal concessions and put it into a pool to keep widows and retired miners in fuel? It

[Mr. Meale]

is not negotiable because it was negotiated in years gone by. It is a disgrace for British Coal to include it in its calculations.

I am sorry that the Minister of State is not present. I wished to raise with him coal mining subsidence damage about which there is serious anxiety among hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber. The Minister of State has misled the House. Earlier this year he said:

> "We are reviewing this matter as part of our total appraisal of Waddilove and we have said that we will look at it again before 1990. We shall bring forward the review of the way in which adjudication is conducted and shall review the criteria by which the distinction betweeen the two types of arbitration is made.—[*Official Report*, 16 June 1989; Vol. 154, c. 1272.]

This Bill was the only real opportunity to do that. The Minister misled the House because he has not come back with legislation before the end of 1990. It is incumbent on him to state why he has not brought forward legislation on subsidence. On the same day, the Minister said that he was interested in setting up independent legal advice centres in coal mining areas but the Bill makes no provision for that.

Problems are still occurring with subsidence in my constituency. My constituents are having problems with British Coal. Yet another letter came to me recently from some of my constituents saying that they had a letter from British Coal threatening that unless they accepted £150 to redecorate the whole house—inside and outside—it would close the file.

The Bill is a disgrace. It is yet another rip-off by the Government in favour of their friends in the City. In no way, shape or form is it good for the coal industry. I hope that my hon. Friends on the Front Bench will stick to their commitment to repeal the Bill when we return to power.

7.45 pm

Mr. Den Dover (Chorley): I am disappointed that Opposition Members are so vehemently against the proposals in the Bill. To write off British Coal's debts and, as my hon. Friend the Minister said, help it to become more competitive with other fuels such as gas and oil is surely a good thing for all workers in the coal industry, whether in deep mines, private mines or opencast mines.

There seems to be a general adverse feeling among both Opposition and Conservative Members about opencast mining. I deplore that because, as several hon. Members have said, it is the only activity that has made a profit for British Coal during the past few years. The percentage of opencast coal as a proportion of British Coal's output has risen from 13 per cent. 10 years ago to almost 20 per cent. now. It is an important activity if British Coal is to wipe the slate clean, balance its books and make a profit after its massive debt has been written off.

As we have heard, opencast mining can produce coal with a low chlorine content which has to be mixed with deep-mined coal. I am massively opposed to the Coalfield Communities Campaign, mainly financed by local authorities, which states that deep mining is a marvellous activity which produces jobs in the coalfields. It completely opposes opencast mining. The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) said that opencast mining damages the environment. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) said that people did not take care or look after the interests of the residents of the area and that it spoilt the environment. That is not necessarily the case. I have seen opencast mining in the east midlands, the west midlands, the north-west and south Wales. I have probably visited many more opencast mines than any other hon. Member here tonight.

I know that the Minister of State has visited many opencast pits. I am not aware that the Secretary of State has done so, but I should implore him to visit such pits. He will find that the workers are not from the National Union of Mineworkers or the Union of Democratic Mineworkers. They are either in the Transport and General Workers Union or are subject to a loose trade union arrangement. It is not a mining but a civil engineering activity. It is a massive earth-moving operation.

The United Kingdom does well on opencast mining, especially when one contrasts our difficult working conditions with seams only a few inches thick—it is a bonus if they are 4 or 5 ft thick—with the 20 m to 50 m thick seams in Australia, America and Canada. We can get the coal out, deliver it to customers by conventional coal lorries, and more than compete with imported opencast mined coal.

Mr. Allen McKay: I have been listening with great interest to the hon. Gentleman's comments on opencast mining, but he has not yet mentioned the people who are affected by it. He talked about councils and the Coalfield Communities Campaign. They are local councils, Labour and Tory, which are concerned about the environment.

Mr. Dover: The hon. Gentleman has anticipated exactly what I was about to say.

Thirty years ago my constituency had six mines near the villages of Coppull and Charnock Richard and thousands of workers in deep mines. Since then we have had a great deal of opencast mining. Some parish councils, local authorities and, indeed, the county council are opposed to that. We have mined 500,000 tonnes from Ellerbeck west and 500,000 tonnes from Ellerbeck north. Now we have the opportunity of a further phase at Ellerbeck west to mine 1 million tonnes in five years, and the 100 or so local residents who live near the potential mine want it to be developed. They know that they live on a coal reserve which will eventually be mined. They know that until it is mined their life will be uncertain, and that mining it will provide minerals, wealth and jobs.

Opinion in the area is split. The two parish councils are opposed to the development. I wholly support the application. We have a bad swamp—there is a little wildlife in it—which will be completely drained and made into a super lake. We have old colliery workings, barbed wire, shafts, old metal and brick work and slag heaps. It is a disgrace. I have heard comments about derelict land grant rules being changed, but we have no chance of doing away with all that unless the opencast opportunity proceeds.

I welcome the new rules that will help opencast applications to win approval. I note that some people are massively opposed to the misuse of the holes in the ground for refuse disposal, particularly if four or five years of mining are followed by three years of refuse disposal. I am fully in favour of local residents having their say. In my area they are in favour of the opencast operation.

I am delighted that hon. Members on both sides of the House agree that local residents should receive some form of compensation, as they already do.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Does the hon. Gentleman find serious transport problems in his constituency involved in collecting opencast coal? Is he in favour of railway lines being built to opencast sites so that coal can be moved in railway wagons?

Mr. Dover: Certainly heavy lorries bearing large loads travel to and fro, but much of the earth is moved from one part of a site to another. In many areas the disposal point is an eyesore, but I could take hon. Members to a site in Leicestershire almost as large as the Chamber, yet nobody driving along the road within 5 m of it knows that it is there because of sensible mounding and grassing. Indeed, sheep graze on the site.

I support the Bill wholeheartedly. I am delighted that the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) has tabled a sensible amendment. I hope that hon. Members will support changes in granting licences. The Bill provides an opportunity for the development of small areas of opencast mining and for British Coal to make a profit. The Bill writes off debt. I see nothing but good coming from it for the coal mining industry as a whole, particularly small private mines which should be allowed to compete with British Coal. In the past opencast developers and site owners have operated only as civil engineering contractors, winning the coal on behalf of the opencast executive.

I pay tribute to the opencast executive. It has asked me to lay on an exhibition in the Upper Waiting Corridor to show what opencast mining is and what environmental improvements people can expect. I hope that hon. Members will take the opportunity of visiting it from late January to late March.

7.54 pm

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): Like many of my hon. Friends, I welcome the major proposal in the Bill —the restructuring of the coal industry's finances—but some clauses cause anxiety.

The principal clause seeks to relieve British Coal of its huge debt of £4·5 billion. All hon. Members will welcome a reduction in that, but we have not heard how much it will be. The Bill does not state how much of the debt will be removed and the Secretary of State did not mention the exact sum. It remains to be seen how warmly we can welcome the clause and the reduction.

Although British Coal has shown an operating profit over the past two years, it is unprofitable on the bottom line because it finances that debt. The interest charges in the forthcoming year will be £575 million. The recent increases in interest rate have done nothing to alleviate that burden. Indeed, British Coal has been prevented from achieving the financial targets imposed on it because of interest rates and exchange rate changes. The figure of £4·5 billion is high. Tory Members tell us of previous reconstructions within the recent past, but we should remember the wealth that British Coal has generated since the war. The whole story has not been simply squandering taxpayers' money.

Since 1980 British Coal has been required to give up £1·2 billion in artificial price reductions to customers. Since 1985, £850 million has gone to the Central Electricity Generating Board to bolster its profits. The 1989-90 CEGB trading profit was well over £1 billion. Money has also been used to fund our nuclear programme or, to be more accurate, the shambles of what is left of our nuclear programme. It has been used to provide an excuse to run down the coal industry since 1985 so that now it is a small runt compared with its previous state.

The one thing that the money was not used for was a reduction in electricity prices to consumers. In the past two years the Secretary of State has imposed increases, although electricity generators were calling for price reductions. If those price increases had not been forced on the industry, British Coal would now be looking at an operating profit of about £1·4 billion. The electricity industry forced price increases on British Coal for tenuous reasons. World coal prices are low. The 4 per cent. of coal which is traded internationally is at artificially low prices.

Had the Central Electricity Generating Board opted for imported coal, prices would have increased quickly—assuming that the CEGB could have imported it. We have already heard about the effect that that would have had on the nation's balance of payments deficit, which is already at a record level. As I have said, however, the facilities were not available to enable substantial imports to take place. Conservative Members have referred to the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill. I merely say that if the Government were not prepared to vote for it, we would not have it.

The price reductions that British Coal has been required to make have been used to fund the nuclear programme, the costs of which are far higher than was ever suggested previously. Price cuts were demanded even though it was clear that the comparative generation costs of coal-fired electricity and nuclear electricity were in favour of the coal industry.

Over the past few years, the costs have been substantially misrepresented to the industry and to the House. Privatisation has initiated a re-examination of the decommissioning costs of nuclear power. Consequently, the true costs are now becoming clear. The different policy for nuclear decommissioning which has been implemented by the nuclear industry has brought a sharp increase in decommissioning costs, which has exacerbated the problem. The difference between the costs of coal-fired generation and those of nuclear generation will result in a nuclear levy of about £1·4 billion. That levy will be imposed upon the coal industry, thereby adding to the costs of British Coal.

The restructuring of the finances of British Coal is a welcome part of the Bill. It is interesting that it is designed to enable concessionary coal to be protected and to enable British Coal to meet the costs that it incurs in industrial deafness cases. I hope that the Government will continue to fund concessionary coal, which is an important issue in constituencies such as mine. Concessionary coal is provided for many retired mineworkers, and has been for many years. It is essential to maintain concessionary coal in areas such as mine, with high unemployment, low wages, few job opportunities and a large retired population. It is important that the scare stories about concessionary coal being bought out for a few thousand pounds should be knocked on the head.

If the financial restructuring takes place and the debts of British Coal are wiped away, British Coal's products will be competitive with imported coal and with other fuel sources. We have heard that technically British Coal will be bankrupt because its assets are worth less than its current liabilities, but why has British Coal been left in such a position for so long? Why has it had to have a £4·5 billion debt hanging round its neck, with interest charges

[Mr. Eric Illsley]

of £400 million or £500 million a year and the electricity industry pointing the finger and demanding further price reductions? Coal mining constituencies have suffered closure programmes, massive redundancy programmes, all the misery of job losses and the knock-on effects on the local economy, so as to subsidise the nuclear industry and the electricity industry's profits.

Even now, despite the removal of a proportion of British Coal's debt, the industry is still threatened. There are the shadows of privatisation. At the same time there is the removal of nuclear power stations and also a lack of independent generation, although that is supposed to come forward. There is still pressure for further colliery closures. The hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) poured scorn on the leaked document and the reference to 30,000 redundancies, but the Cabinet Sub-Committee document states:

> "It would be almost impossible to shield UDM areas from further closures given that British Coal has already fallen over backwards to maintain in existence relatively high-cost pits in Nottinghamshire."

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. A time limit has been imposed on speeches during this stage of the debate, and I must call the hon. Gentleman to order.

8.5 pm

Dr. Mike Woodcock (Ellesmere Port and Neston): I welcome the Bill, but as my hon. Friend the Minister probably expects, my welcome is somewhat qualified. I welcome the Bill because it is the necessary prelude to what I hope will be the privatisation of British Coal. The former Secretary of State for Energy, my right hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Parkinson), who is now Secretary of State for Transport, referred to that as the ultimate privatisation. That is a long overdue measure that will lead to greater efficiency, to a better deal for industry and domestic coal consumers. It would represent the great change that has taken place since the time that the country was held to ransom by the defence of inefficiency in the coal industry. With the advent of privatisation, miners will own part of their industry and trade unions will negotiate with owners who put the customer first.

As I have said, I welcome the Bill with some qualifications. I feel that the Government have once again missed the opportunity to reform many of the practices of British Coal that are unfair and anti-competitive. In my view the Bill should go a good deal further.

Clause 4 relates to coal production and exploration licences. It will permit British Coal to grant licences to work deep mines with up to 150 employees and to grant licences for opencast operations where total production is not likely to exceed 250,000 tonnes. On the face of it, the clause seems to offer a great improvement, but in reality, even with 150 employees in a deep-mining operation, the private sector cannot take on British Coal on the same commercial basis. The limit of 250,000 tonnes for opencast production can hardly improve competition when British Coal never exploits reserves at that level. The proposals may be gestures to competition but they fall far short of the ideal.

Clause 4 raises the more fundamental issues of royalty payments and licensing. British Coal receives about £11 per tonne royalty payment from private mining operations. Even though British Coal has the best sites, it enjoys the further advantages of an £11 per tonne royalty payment and an £11 per tonne subsidy. How is that fair or reasonable? How can it be anything but anti-competitive? In addition, British Coal has the power to decide whether an operator should be licensed. As the law stands, British coal is in a position to say, "We shall decide whether you are entitled to compete with us. If we decide that you can do so, we shall start with an £11 per tonne advantage, and you will pay us an £11 subsidy on top of that." I find it difficult to understand how the Government can justify that anti-competitive approach to the mining of coal. In my opinion, clause 4 should have gone much further.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) and the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) said, clause 4 should have removed the licensing responsibility from British Coal. It is a matter of regret that the Bill does not do that, so I ask the Minister whether he will give one relatively minor assurance. Will he say that when private mining operations increase as a result of the Bill, British Coal will not be allowed to contract for the production that then ensues from that mining, so further stifling competition in the marketplace? If my hon. Friend is serious about wanting to increase competition, he will surely give that assurance.

Competition is a subject about which many sections of the coal trade feel very strongly. I say "sections" because, from what hon. Members have said so far, it might be assumed that the coal industry consists entirely of British Coal. Of course it does not: there are several thousand coal merchants in this country, employing several thousand people. There are many wholesalers; there are importers and exporters of coal, producers of smokeless fuel, private deep-mine operators and opencast operators.

The people who work in those sectors are firm believers in competition, as are most Conservative Members. Even the Government believe in free competition. In the main, I think that we all accept that it is a guarantee of efficiency and a driving force for change. It seems strange, therefore, that a Government committed to privatisation and free market forces should stand by while a nationalised industry is allowed to engage in back-door nationalisation and anti-competitive practices.

For example, British Coal recently introduced loyalty rebate schemes, intended to restrict merchants to obtaining their supplies from British Coal; yet, as we all know, British Coal is regularly unable to supply the highest-quality coals. While British Coal makes deals to restrict the import of coals by independent importers, and while many—Opposition Members in particular—campaign to restrict coal imports to protect British Coal's position, the corporation itself is a major importer, and not only from the EEC. How many hon. Members realise that British Coal now imports and distributes Chinese and Vietnamese anthracite, while attempting to stifle imports by others? I ask the Minister to take a close look at whether the signing of such loyalty agreements contravenes GATT regulations.

There is also the question of concessionary fuels for retired miners and widows.

Mr. Allen McKay *rose*——

Dr. Woodcock: I will not give way, simply because I have not time to do so.

The Secretary of State has told us today that he will underwrite that commitment with taxpayer's money. Why, then, does he not insist that the distribution of the fuel is put out to open tender, as so many local-authority services have been? Why is distribution carried out exclusively by National Fuel Distributors Ltd—which is a subsidiary of British Coal—rather than being open to competition?

Then their is the question of incursions into private trade. In the past year or so, British Coal has acquired a 50 per cent. stake in British Fuels Ltd. At the time, British Coal gave assurances that an arm's-length relationship would exist, and the Minister gave me the same assurance. We now find that the commercial director of British Coal has been appointed chairman of British Fuels Ltd. How can that be describe as "arm's-length", and how can it be in the interest of free competition? Why does the Minister stand by while all that is happening? I ask him to give an assurance that, if National Fuel Distributors is put up for sale—as rumour has it that it will be—it will be offered on the open market?

There is widespread concern about preferential treatment with regard to British Coal projects for depots, pre-packed plants and land-sale operations, and about pricing tranparency. All that creates the impression that British Coal is manipulating the market. British Coal also intends to introduce a "master merchant" scheme, requiring merchants to hand over the names and addresses of customers. That is yet another attempt by British Coal to manipulate the market and take complete charge of it. In Ulster, British Coal regularly makes fuel available at £6 to £16 per tonne cheaper than in the rest of the United Kingdom. Why are prices being offered in Ulster that are not available to merchants in this country? How can that be a free market?

In every area of British Coal's involvement in the market, there is evidence of anti-competitive practices—so much so that many believe that an investigation by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission would now be appropriate. On the basis of what I have said, will the Minister make a referral to the commission in the interests of the private coal trade, the consumer and the nation?

I welcome the Bill as a step towards the privatisation of British Coal. My wish, however, is to see the privatisation of the state sector of the coal industry, rather than the nationalisation of the private sector. I ask the Minister to think hard about what I have said, and to ensure that, as he restructures British Coal, he increases competition and market forces rather than reducing them. If he is unable to influence British Coal by persuasion, he should use the mechanism provided by the Bill to compel the corporation to come to heel.

8.14 pm

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): When opening the debate, my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) welcomed the clause in the Bill that gives British Coal some financial assistance. Let me make a brief plea for some of that assistance to come back to the anthracite coalfield of west Wales in the form of investment.

My constituency and Carmarthen contain at least 50 million tonnes of mineable anthracite reserves. Apart from the dwindling pocket of anthracite in the West German coalfield—which will dwindle further if the European Commission starts having a go at the way in which the German coal industry is financed—there is no anthracite between Llanelli and Poland. The potential for development of the anthracite coalfield and its reserves in Britain and Europe is enormous; yet despite that, and despite the potential markets, British Coal has walked away from the anthracite coalfield, and especially from deep mining it. It has closed the largest anthracite pit in Britain—indeed, in western Europe—and has mothballed a drift mine into which it had itself put £18 million. My area has only one deep-mined anthracite pit left.

There is plenty of opencast, however, and if the Bill is passed there will be a good deal more. Apart from its awful, damaging effects on the environment, opencast mining—at least in the anthracite coalfield—sterilises the coal beneath, which the opencast machines can reach and mine. When the earth is put back, anyone wishing to drift-mine or slant-mine the coal beneath it must incur all the costs of digging through the earth to get to it.

There are a few small producers, but they are very small, and they are finding it difficult to make a living. Anthracite is sold mainly to the domestic consumer market, and I am told that the current price for best west Wales anthracite "run of mine"—that is, as mined—is between £27 and £29 per tonne. My constituents, many of them elderly, are paying £155 per tonne; moreover, they cannot obtain the anthracite very often, because British Coal has closed the mines. We are forced to import Chinese anthracite, which is of inferior quality.

I understand that coal must be washed, sifted and distributed, but does a mark-up of 500 per cent. make any sense? A cartel is operating. It is not a cartel of miners —they are not benefiting from it—or a cartel of elderly consumers, but a cartel of private factors in south Wales. Someone is receiving the difference between £27 or £29 and £155 per tonne. I do not know whether that is a matter for the Office of Fair Trading, but it certainly does no good to anthracite production or anthracite consumers.

The market is enormous, but, over the years, British Coal—whatever it has done in other parts of the country —has not paid much attention to the market in anthracite. First, there is the market in power stations. British Coal has said that anthracite cannot be burned in power stations, although it can be mixed with other coal. That is not true. Very clear fluidised bed technology has operated in Finland and the United States for years, burning not only the anthracite but the anthracite dust which is a cheaper component of it. Thereby a market is being provided for the better-class and better-priced anthracite.

Apart from the domestic consumer market, schools, hospitals and other public institutions constitute a market for the use of anthracite for central heating. The competition is intense. Certainly gas is a great competitor. I have been told that there are only two British manufacturers of small anthracite boilers for central heating. One of them is too small to engage in research and development. The other is not interested. I am certain that it is possible to burn anthracite in schools and hospitals on the continent. British Coal, however, is not interested in it.

British Coal should reopen the drift mine in my constituency on which it has spent £18 million. It should open small slant and drift mines to replace much of the opencast mining and get together with boiler manufacturers to try to sell anthracite to power stations. In addition, British Coal should get together with the smaller

[Mr. Denzil Davies]

boiler manufacturers and ensure that anthracite can be used for the heating of schools, hospitals and other public institutions.

The miners in my constituency have shown loyalty and dedication to the mining industry and to British Coal. It is time that British Coal repaid their loyalty and dedication by investing in our coalfields.

8.21 pm

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): Since I became a Member of Parliament I think that I have attended virtually every debate on the coal mining industry. I seem to recollect that there has been a constant cry for more support for the mining industry. I recollect too the Opposition's total ignorance of the fact that £2 million a day has been invested in the mining industry since the Conservative party came to office. I am astonished by the Opposition's lack of generosity of spirit in their comments on the Bill. One would never think that an enormous debt is to be written off and that consequently British Coal will be profitable and able to compete with imported coal, about which the Opposition are rightly worried.

During the last five or six years the coal industry has undergone massive restructuring. Coal is now competitive with most other fuels. Since 1983-84, about 84 pits have closed. Only 86 collieries are now left, but they produce virtually the same amount of coal as was produced five years ago. The number of employees has virtually halved, to the current 86,900. That reduction has taken place without any compulsory redundancies. Productivity has increased by over 90 per cent. during that period, and it is still increasing.

To reach those figures, everyone in the coal industry has played a part—often a difficult part. I pay particular tribute to the Union of Democratic Mineworkers in Nottinghamshire and to its president, Mr. Roy Lynk.

The industry is basically profitable, but year after year what would otherwise be a profit is turned into a loss because of the huge interest payments that it has to make to the Treasury. That is what the Bill is about. It is not about imported coal or about fattening up the industry for privatisation.

A healthy coal industry plays a vital part in our national economy. Both sides of the House recognise that fact, despite the invective that we some times hear. If it is not healthy, costs rise, there are expensive imports and the industry cannot offer long-term contracts, based on certainty of supply and price, to the electricity supply industry. It makes sense, therefore, as Opposition Members have argued for a long time, to write off the accumulated losses. British Coal is entitled to say to the Government, "We have done what you asked, we have restructured, we are now profitable and we have played our part. The Treasury must now play its part." I know that my constituents in Nottinghamshire will be very happy with the Bill, in particular with the writing-off provisions that are fundamental to it. They will also find it astonishing that Opposition Members think so little of the Bill's provisions that they intend to vote against the Bill.

Without this help, the industry will find it very difficult to restructure. It will also benefit from the proposed increase in the restructuring grant that will rise to £1,500 million by 1993. The Government's policy has always been to try to ensure generous redundancy terms and, if possible, no compulsory redundancies. With the increase in grant, British Coal can offer generous redundancy terms without eating into annual profits.

There must surely come a time, however, when the redundancy process will cease. The industry seems to be run by accountants, not by entrepreneurs. Accountants decide whether a pit is uneconomic. Engineers and visionaries should play a major part in that decision. Pits which produce fine, excellent coal are in danger of closing because they verge on the margins of profitability. They cannot satisfy an accountant's eye if he looks only to next year's balance sheet figures.

Apart from aiming at a high-wage, high-profit industry that produces coal that is attractive to the consumer, industry and the electricity supply industry, we must do more than just make it the supplier of choice. We must go to the young colliery manager, the young pit deputy and the trained young worker and ask them what they see as their future. They are getting good coal out of pits that have considerable reserves, yet they fear for their job security. They have no conception of what British Coal's accountants have in store for them and their pit in even a year's time.

The opportunity should be taken to draw up a new plan for coal, otherwise the industry will drift, with each Secretary of State having a greater or lesser commitment to it. What does my right hon. Friend think the coal industry will look like in five years' time, yet alone by the end of the century? My right hon. Friend will not be there in five years' time; he will have moved to a different job. However, will his successor be able to look back and say, "This is what we planned five years ago; we have achieved it", or will he be living from day to day?

We have one of the finest indigenous industries in the country, with a dedicated work force at all levels and a product which is the envy of the world. If we want young mining engineers and coal face apprentices with ambition to come into the industry, they must surely feel that someone, somewhere up there has a commitment to their future. Does the board ever tell them what its vision of the future is, what its enthusiasm and commitment are and the obstacles to achieving those ambitions? Paring the industry down to the lowest sustainable economic unit until someone takes it off the taxpayers' hands is not a plan for coal.

Mr. Cunliffe: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on making a genuine, sincere contribution to the debate. He recognises the human and fundamental elements of the industry which we are debating. I put it to him that the theme of his address supports what I said—we must get out of the market force arena and free-for-all and away from the free marketeers who indulge in cost per unit price production and instead get back to a planned fuel economy, where each industry knows what it is expected to produce under a planned energy policy. Does the hon. Gentlemen agree?

Mr. Alexander: I cannot take up the hon. Gentleman's comments because I have virtually a few seconds left in which to conclude.

Perestroika for an industry is not a banner under which young people can come in and work. We must give them more than that—a vision. I should like that to come out of the Bill.

8.31 pm

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): The hon. Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) talked of a vision, but that vision was seen in the mining industry only as a result of nationalisation. Before nationalisation, the industry had no future, no hope and no vision. Only since the industry moved into public ownership has that vision been created. Judging by the Bill, however, I am afraid that that vision will disappear, for a number of reasons.

I have been proud to work in the coal mining industry for more than 30 years, both as an electrical engineer and as an industrial relations officer. I have been proud and privileged to watch it come from nothing to one of the finest highly technical industries in the world. I have been proud and privileged to work among and with the people who have brought the industry through that era. The British coal miner stands second to no one anywhere in the world in terms of his workmanship and adaptability to anything that comes before him. That is why the British miner has always been prized outside the industry, when anyone has been able to get hold of him.

The miners worked for the industry because they worked for the vision of which the hon. Member for Newark spoke—a blue flag flying over the winding gear, proving that the British coal industry belonged to the British people. That is what it has all been about.

The Bill marks the end of that vision, and the beginning of the end of an era. The next election, which the Conservatives will not win, will decide how the coal industry proceeds. The Bill is an enabling and paving measure for the privatisation of the coal industry. Conservative Members say that they cannot understand why the Opposition intend to vote against it, but that is the answer in a nutshell—we want a nationalised coal industry.

Although many of my colleagues and I approve of the £4·5 billion or £5 billion write-off, we must recognise what it will mean. We should not hide from the fact that this is a subsidising Bill for the electricity industry. In a way, it is a crafty Bill. The Minister will say, "Although we are aiming for the privatisation of the British coal industry we shall not bring that about until we win the next election." The Government have had two bites of the cherry. They have provided the means of achieving privatisation should they win the next election, but in their current term of office they have provided the means for subsidising the electricity industry. By the write-off of £4·5 billion or £5 billion, British Coal will be able to compete with any coal industry in the world—not for its own benefit, but to provide cheap energy for the electricity industry.

There is nothing untoward about that. It has happened in the past. The coal industry has always been used as a milch cow for private industry. In the era when coal could have been sold on the open market, as it was highly profitable and a bank balance had been built up, it was not allowed to be sold. The National Coal Board directors patted us all on the head and said, "You should not ask for a wage increase because it will cause the closure of the pits and raise the price so that we cannot sell coal." The pits have closed anyway, and coal has been sold at a cheap price to the electricity industry. That is why the coal industry has always been a milch cow. Through the Bill, the electricity industry will continue to be provided with cheap coal, especially through the nuclear levy.

The history of the coal industry is not surprising. Over all these years, the industry has carried out research and development through its electrical and mechanical engineers—for example, into the hydraulic systems which the aeroplanes use, coal-burn research, and mine support systems which had not previously been developed. The industry has provided electrical and mechanical engineers for mining industries throughout the world.

The hon. Member for Newark talked about electricians and mechanical engineers for the future. There has never been any other apprenticeship scheme like that provided by the NCB for its workers. Anyone who worked for the board could join its mechanical and electrical schemes. It put the workers through its technical schools and sent them on to the universities to get degrees. The NCB provided this country not only its fuel and with expertise in many subjects, but with its wherewithal. That is where the expense came in.

I should like to talk about concessionary fuel and cash in lieu. Historically, the coal belongs to the miners. I used to get 13 tonnes of concessionary coal per year. It was part and parcel of our wage agreement. *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members may not have seen a Yorkshire grate. One used not a shovel but two buckets, and the ash from Yorkshire grates has provided miles of pathways through allotments. That concessionary coal was included in the negotiations as part of the wages. We gave it up, tonne by tonne, to provide a pool of coal for the widows and retired mineworkers.

Who will pay for redundancy once the industry is privatised? I asked the Secretary of State about that earlier. As the Minister knows, redundancy has been paid in two ways—a lump sum payment and a weekly payment until the age of 65. Each time the age of redundancy has dropped, the ceiling on the money has dropped as well. Under the Bill, people in the mining industry under the age of 45 or 46 will be made redundant. Will the redundancy payment scheme be such as to provide the same benefits as people receive now? Will there be a lump sum payment based on age, wages and the number of years worked for British Coal, and then a weekly income until people find work or reach the age of 65? It is important that we should know.

Other hon. Members have mentioned small mines and licensing, but they did not mention that licensing was a bond. British Coal gave out licences, which were also bonds because so many private mines left areas of dereliction when the operators had finished getting out the coal. British Coal had to put matters right and it provided the expertise. If there is any alteration in the licensing system, we must ensure that the bond remains so as to ensure that the environmental problems created by private mines are dealt with.

Clause 4 raises the permitted number of workers under licensing from 30 to 150. Can the Minister tell me now whether the management structure under the health and safety rules will be the same as now? Will there be a manager, an under-manager and an over-manager? Will there be mechanical and electrical engineers? At present, they are not found in the small mines and most of the small mines, which run at the periphery of the large mines, have

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used British Coal's technical engineers for their work. It was supposed to be a free service for small mines, although it was in fact a charge on British Coal.

All those developments will be halted by the Bill. A lifetime of progress——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I call Mr. Neil Hamilton.

8.41 pm

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay), who is one of the most respected hon. Members. I share with him an emotional bond with the coal industry because my family has been involved in it for many generations. Both my grandfathers were coal miners, my father spent more than 30 years in the industry, and I was myself briefly an employee of the National Coal Board at Hobart house. I am happy to say that I have now mended my ways.

I greatly welcome the Bill and I congratulate my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary on his work in bringing it before the House. I mean no disrespect to his precedessors in saying that he has been the most forward-looking and effective Minister for coal since I have been a Member of Parliament, and I pay tribute to his work. I especially welcome clause 4. I was sorry to hear that the Labour party rejects clause 4. It is a proposal to which it is not accustomed, but I hope that it will grow on the Labour party with some experience and that the Labour party will extend its new attitude into other areas of policy as well.

Clause 4 proposes a liberalisation of the opencast regime, which I welcome. The Government have belatedly accepted the recommendations of many who have gone before. In 1983, the Monopolies and Mergers Commission recommended that the limit on opencast sites that were operated by licensed operators should be increased to 100,000 tonnes, and in 1986 it reiterated that in a report on the South of Scotland electricity board. In 1986-87, the Select Committee on Energy recommended that the statutory limit should be removed altogether. I am glad that the Government have gone part of the way in raising the limit to 250,000 tonnes.

Under section 1 of the Coal Industry Nationalisation Act 1946, British Coal has a duty of

> "making supplies of coal available, of such qualities and sizes, in such quantities and such prices, as may seem to them best calculated to further the public interest in all respects".

The Bill is one of the means by which that primary duty of British Coal can be fulfilled.

There is, of course, a conflict of interest for British Coal because it is the licensing body. It is extraordinary that the primary producer in the industry is responsible for licensing its competition. That does not seem fair, and the results have been nothing other than we might have expected. British Coal has the power not only to license competition, but to saddle it with royalties. The average royalty now paid by licensed opencast operators is £11 a tonne and the figure was as high as £16 until recently. In effect, at various times, the royalty has been greater than the profit that the opencast executive has made on its own opencast operation. If the opencast executive had had to pay a royalty to the Crown on its production, it would not have turned in any profit in many years. Yet it is only the notional profits that the opencast executive has produced that have made British Coal's recent results acceptable.

Private producers have been very much the creatures of British Coal. They have not had the freedoms that they could have expected to find elsewhere in the private sector, but have been wholly controlled by the nationalised monopolist. They are controlled not only on the supply side, but on the demand side. The Central Electricity Generating Board has been the almost monopolistic purchaser of the coal that we produce and there has been an agreement between British Coal and the CEGB that has greatly affected the private sector.

In the 1986 supply agreement, it was announced that 50 million tonnes of coal would be taken from British Coal at nearly £47 a tonne, 10 million tonnes at £34 a tonne, and 12 million tonnes at £30 a tonne. The average price of that coal was just over £42 a tonne, but the price that has recently been forced on the private sector is not the average price, but the marginal price of the third tranche of the coal—£30 a tonne—out of which it is paying to British Coal £11 in royalties. The private sector has to make its profit and cover its costs out of a fraction of the revenue that British Coal derives from its own operations.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Declare your interest.

Mr. Hamilton: The private sector does pay its interest, unlike British Coal. It does not have the taxpayers' cheque book behind it to cancel debts. It not only pays interest, but contributes to the revenue of the Treasury by paying tax on the profits that it makes. That is a major difference between those two sections of the industry.

The private sector has been operating under severe difficulties. It is an astonishing achievement that it has made small-scale production profitable in spite of the arbitrary output limits and royalty levels that have been set above the average profit of the coal that is produced by British Coal.

What on earth is the logic of restrictions? I agree entirely with the Select Committee on Energy in its 1986-87 report that there is no logical basis for a tonnage restriction on opencast production. Competition is good for British Coal—or it would be if it was exposed to it —just as it is for everybody else. I should like the mineral rights of the coal to be vested in the Crown. Let British Coal pay royalties on the coal it extracts in the same way as the private sector and let it compete for the right to exploit the coal.

It was a Conservative Government in 1938 who nationalised royalties and gave them to the Coal Commission. As a result of the 1946 Act, the bounty that was supposed to be provided for the taxpayer has been channelled into the coffers of British Coal, not to the taxpayer. It has been a disguised form of subsidy all along, which has helped to mask the real disaster of British Coal's finances.

The changes are most welcome. In any case, they only keep up with technical developments in opencast mining over the past 30 years or so. In 1958, a mechanically driven dump truck of maximum size was about 20 tonnes, whereas today it is 10 times that—200 tonnes. All the machines are much more productive. Equipment is now available to licensees which in 1958 was not available even to the National Coal Board. Equipment improvements now permit extraction down to a level of 100ft, whereas the maximum 30 years ago was 10ft to 20ft. In 1958 a site with 25,000 tonnes of coal would take two to three years to complete, whereas today the process would take less than six months. The two to three-year period would now be long enough to permit the extraction of 250,000 tonnes of coal. In increasing the amount from 25,000 tonnes to 250,000 tonnes, the Government are only taking account of those technical developments.

The hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone said that bonds were required because British Coal had to clear up the mess following the involvement of the private sector. I have yet to discover a company that has given a bond that has had to be called upon to fulfil the obligation to which it has exposed itself. No business that wants to stay in business and make profits over a long period could afford to behave in the way that the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone hypothesised.

The hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) talked about the safety record of the private sector. The mines and quarries inspectorate imposes a very tough regime —rightly so—upon all mining and extractive operations, and the private sector is subject to that regime in the same way as British Coal. It has no reason to fear investigations into its safety record. It is arguable that the safety record of the private sector will be enhanced and improved by the changes because it will now be in a position to have large enough operations to take advantage of larger and more expensive equipment and to spread the cost of investment in it over a larger area. That should lead to an improvement in conditions in the industry as well as to cheaper coal.

The overall benefits of liberalisation are many. This is not an anti-coal Bill but a pro-coal Bill, as a result of which the lot of the mining communities will be much improved.

8.51 pm

Mr. George J. Buckley (Hemsworth): We have had a far-reaching debate. The Secretary of State opened by referring to the praiseworthy results achieved by the British mining industry in the past three or four years. He commended the 70 per cent. increase in productivity that miners have achieved. He also outlined the continuing closure programme that has taken place over the past four years and said that 90 mines had been closed as a consequence of the rundown of the industry. As a result of the Government's policy, manpower has been reduced by 130,000.

The tragedy of the Government's policy is that it has had a devastating effect on mining communities. The Secretary of State congratulated British Coal Enterprise Ltd. on the regeneration of jobs. I can tell him that he is under an illusion. A considerable number of jobs have been lost in my area but British Coal Enterprise Ltd. has provided little of the available alternative employment. Ackton colliery was sold to a private developer on the basis that it was not the job of British Coal Enterprise Ltd. to promote and generate employment. I thought that that was the whole purpose of British Coal Enterprise. Surely its role was precisely to inject money and regenerate employment. I have to inform the Secretary of State that little alternative employment has been provided in Hemsworth, 75 per cent. of whose male population has traditionally depended on coal mining for employment.

The Minister said that clause 1 was intended to give the Secretary of State the opportunity to wipe away British Coal's debts, which he estimated were £4·5 to £5 billion. Many hon. Members have referred to the Government's generosity in writing off British Coal debts. The hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) and the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) claimed that the Government had repeatedly written off the industry's debt. My hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) gave us the answer to that argument. In the 1950s—the era in which the Government are supposed to have written off millions of pounds' worth of National Coal Board debts —the board was prevented from taking advantage of the very market forces by which the Government set so much store. In the 1950s, coal was fetching a price on the international market well above the price paid to the NCB by the generating industry. In effect, British Coal and the British miner were subsidising the Central Electricity Generating Boad. Had the NCB been able to command the world price for solid fuel it would not have needed to borrow from the Government or obtain Government grants; it could have reinvested the capital that it had accumulated. The Government would then not have needed to write off the accumulated debt.

The Minister referred to the rundown in manpower, and Opposition Members envisaged a further rundown as a result of the Bill. A leaked Cabinet document suggests that 30,000 jobs will suffer as a result of the Government's present policy. That would reduce the number of jobs in the mining industry from 90,000 cited by the Secretary of State to 60,000. I suggest that the main reason why the industry is beginning to be economic is that the number of miners' jobs has been reduced.

The burden on the British coal industry has been an accumulation of capital debt incurred in the restructuring of the mining industry over a number of years which has made it a highly productive industry comparable to any deep-mining industry in the world. That debt has been paid for mainly by the reduction in manpower in the industry, yet the Government have the audacity to suggest that the Bill provides the opportunity to write off £5 billion of debt. [HON. MEMBERS: "It does."] I accept that. The most honourable contribution from the Conservative Benches was that made by the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Woodcock), who said that the Bill is the prelude to the privatisation of the coal industry. That is why £5 billion will be wiped off, as it will fatten up the industry for privatisation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) has described the other debts carried by British Coal, as a result of subsidies, contracts and price reductions, which amount to £800 million. British Coal and the miners have subsidised the generating industry. The subsidisation of the electricity industry is paramount to the Government because they must sell the electricity industry on the stock exchange and at a price that the stock exchange is prepared to accept. We take careful note that the stock exchange and investors are interested in electricity generation from solid fuel only and it is that solid fuel which will subsidise the future generation of electricity.

The hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North asked what was wrong with importing Colombian coal if it is cheaper than that produced by British Coal. If the hon. Gentleman believes in competition, why did he advocate in the

[Mr. George J. Buckley]

Committee considering the Electricity Bill that the nuclear industry, which is not efficient, should be kept in the public domain? He believes that the management of private enterprise is more efficient, so why was he afraid to put the nuclear industry into the private sector?

In comparison with the mining industry, nuclear power is not competitive and that is why he was anxious to keep it in the public domain, subsidised by the taxpayer. The leaked papers from the Cabinet suggest that the Secretary of State withdrew the nuclear industry from the electricity sale because private investors would not take on the liability of that industry. The generation of electricity from nuclear power is twice as expensive per unit as the electricity produced from coal.

The Secretary of State made great play of the contract made between British Coal and the generating powers. British Coal will provide 70 million tonnes of coal in the first two years and 65 million tonnes in the third year. Why was that contract struck? The answer is simple. The importation of large tonnages of foreign coal through the ports that were the subject of a Bill that we opposed cannot begin for three years. That is why the CEGB has bargained with British Coal. It is unable to import the necessary coal to make up for the shortfall that would result from forcing down still further the supplies that it receives from British Coal. The CEGB has a monopoly on demand and therefore can blackmail British Coal, as it has done recently in terms of the prices negotiated.

My hon. Friends have already stated why we will oppose the Bill. Clause 4 is a recipe for disaster and a danger to our miners. *[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) wants to make a contribution. I represent a mining constituency and every hon. Member representing such a constituency must make a contribution.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) has already said that clause 4 is dangerous as it will allow private companies to extend opencast and other mines. The Bill will allow the expansion of private mines, so the danger of injuries in those mines will increase. Parallel to that, however, is the fact that the regulations governing mine safety are to be reviewed, much to the consternation of people who work in the industry. Regulations are being liberalised as a consequence of improving profitability in the industry. I foresee that the number of people injured and the number of fatalities in the industry will escalate as a consequence of changing the regulations. Every hon. Member who represents a mining constituency must take that into account before going into the Lobby tonight.

The hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) has constantly badgered us about the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill. The Nottinghamshire miners and other hon. Members representing Nottinghamshire should know that he supports opencast mining. Such mining usually takes place in areas where deep mines have been closed and, as a consequence, many jobs lost.

Opencast mining is no substitute for the large reduction in employment in mining communities, and local authorities will show greater and greater resistance to it —as they do now, even to the small scale currently permitted by legislation. There will be greater resistance as a result of expanding opencast mining to 250,000 tonnes. Local authorities will demand public inquiries about why opencast mining on such a scale should be permitted, and those inquiries will be the order of the day in mining communities.

Hon. Members should deeply consider the factors inherent in the Bill, and I hope that Opposition Members will oppose it when we divide.

9.5 pm

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): The Bill is one——

Mr. Eadie: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. With the exception of 45 minutes, I have attended this debate since it started. Is it not an abuse of the procedures of the House that an hon. Member should be called who has scarcely been in the Chamber at all? *[Interruption.]* It is monstrous that many of my hon. Friends who have attended the whole of the debate have not been called.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order for the Chair. I hope that before the winding-up speeches begin I shall be able to call another hon. Member who is seeking to catch my eye.

Mr. Brown: When I listened to the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) earlier—I cannot recall whether the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) heard that speech——

Mr. Eadie: I made an intervention in it.

Mr. Brown: If the hon. Gentleman was listening to the hon. Member for Gordon as intently as I was, he will recall that the hon. Member for Gordon had some worries regarding clause 4. Those concerns have been expressed elsewhere in the House today. I remind not only the hon. Member for Gordon, but Opposition Members generally and even my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart), whose speech I had the privilege of hearing from beginning to end, that clause 4 benefits the British coal industry. It is no coincidence that my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood, the hon. Member for Midlothian, who raised the interesting point of order, and the hon. Member for Gordon have been opposing a private Bill with which I am associated.

Clause 4 enables the British coal industry—both the private and the nationalised sectors—to compete against foreign coal. All hon. Members who have a view about the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill must take into account what they are doing when they face the House and speak as eloquently as they have in opposition to that Bill and then express their opposition for clause 4 of the Bill before us. In doing that, they are saying that they want to keep cheap, foreign imports of coal out of this country. Yet when legislation is presented to the House enabling the United Kingdom's coal industry to compete on fair and equal terms, they are anxious to reject the clause.

It is fantastic that the hon. Member for Gordon should say as glibly as he did that we must recognise that Australia, Canada and South Africa have massive supplies of opencast coal, but that we in this country have environmental considerations and thus could not possibly allow ourselves to do the same as they do. He said that by rejecting the clause he was prepared to expose this country's coal industry to more unfair foreign competition than anything that the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill could do.

I can tell Opposition Members and those of my hon. Friends who have opposed the private Bill with which I have had some association that if they want effectively to scupper the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill the best way to do it is to support this Bill and especially clause 4. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) could scupper it even more effectively than that.

I was amazed when I heard that the Opposition opposed the injection of £5 billion of taxpayers' money as proposed in the Bill. The Opposition will rue the day they opposed the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill, this Bill and, in particular, clause 4.

9.10 pm

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): I understand why the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) made such a speech. He is only a young lad and he has not lived yet. I listened to the speech by the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart), and I should like to respond to his comments. He is a farmer's boy who knows nothing about coal mining. I spent 35 years underground before I came here. I went into the pit in 1944 and came out in 1979 to come to this marvellous place. I had three years under private enterprise before the industry was nationalised and I know what the privatised mining industry was like. The hon. Member for Sherwood should not scowl like that.

Mr. Andy Stewart: I am listening to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Haynes: I am putting an honest point of view and I did not butt in when the hon. Gentleman was speaking. He does not understand what he is talking about.

I have a friend in the other place who was 94 in September. He was victimised for 11 years by the private coal owners. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) knows all about that. His family also know about it because they suffered under private ownership of the mining industry all those years ago. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman keeps bawling, but I listened to him and I want him to listen to me.

I can tell the Minister that we shall have a whale of a time in Committee and that he and the Whip will have a rough time. The Government Whip cannot speak, but the Opposition Whip can—and by God I shall make good use of that when I get upstairs. There was a recent pit closure in my area but there was no argument about it because the trade unions agreed. British Coal wants to sell the land for housing development.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): People want houses and they will get them.

Mr. Haynes: The hon. Gentleman has just walked in. The people had a public meeting because they wanted industry. There is nothing there for a population of 4,500. Where are the youngsters to go? Youngsters who want to go into the mining industry are turned away from apprenticeships and training. The Secretary of State for Employment talks about the kind of training that exists in the nation, but that is a load of rubbish. We want a proper system of training. We had that in the mining industry until the Conservative Government got in in 1979 and ruined everything. The Bill will ruin things even more.

We had 13 pits in my constituency, but we are now down to three. The leaked document says that two more are to close, which will leave only one. Where is everyone to go? Industry is not coming into my constituency, but opencast mining is rolling in thick and fast. My constituents have had a bellyful of that and they do not want any more. It is all right for the hon. Member for Sherwood—the farmer's boy—to talk about opencast mining being the saviour of the industry but I can tell him that it is not the answer to the problem. He should listen to some of his colleagues who have already said that they are against it.

Mr. Michael Brown: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Haynes: No, I am not giving way—sit down.

While I was working underground at the coal face the hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) was pushing a pen in Hobart house—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes is bawling and shouting and not listening to what is being said. When I was underground, we used to talk about the pen pushers in Hobart house not giving an ounce towards the production in the mining industry. The hon. Member for Tatton made a contribution about opencast coal, but he did not declare an interest as an adviser to the body involved with opencast mining. He declared his interest in the Register of Members' Interest but not in his speech. He is two-faced as well—*[Interruption.]* I have taken worse from the hon. Member for Sherwood, but I do not bawl and shout about it. He is a stupid beggar.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am shocked. I so enjoyed the contribution of the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes)——

Mr. Skinner: When did you come in?

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: About 26 minutes ago.

Are we allowed to call hon. Members two-faced without saying which face we are talking to? It is outrageous and appalling to talk like that.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I would rather not hear such expressions in the House, but I have no authority to ask the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) to withdraw them.

Mr. Haynes: I suggest that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) should walk down the Corridor, buy himself an aeroplane ticket and fly off to where he usually goes. I have been here all the time.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: On a point of order. Madam Deputy Speaker—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. If the House would settle down, we could all hear one another.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: I have never been so saddened as to have to rise again. I thought, Madam Deputy Speaker, that what you said was holy writ. I thought that you asked the hon. Member for Ashfield to withdraw "two-faced". If he does not do so, where do we all end up?

Madam Deputy Speaker: If the House had been a little quieter, hon. Members might have heard what I said. I said

[Madam Deputy Speaker]

that I would rather not hear such comments in the House but that I had no authority to ask the hon. Member for Ashfield to withdraw them.

Mr. Haynes: If the hon. Member for Selly Oak would listen to what is being said from the Chair and keep his mouth shut, we might hear what is going on. I have lost my time. The hon. Gentleman wanted to squeeze me out of the debate by raising stupid points of order. He is a stupid man with a stupid point of order. He should buy a plane ticket and fly away—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I know that Second Reading debates are wide, but this one is becoming elastic.

Mr. Haynes: I will sit down and give the Floor to my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron).

9.18 pm

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): It is always a pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) in debates on energy. I am not sure that I should give advice to the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown), but perhaps next time he will do the House the courtesy of reading the Bill that the Whips tell him to speak to because the Government are running out of speakers. I suggest that he takes it home tonight, reads its four clauses, and gains a knowledge of its contents in case, if the Bill is passed, he is involved later.

Mr. Michael Brown: I accept the hon. Gentleman's injunction. I ask him to read the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill.

Mr. Barron: I have read it several times. Unfortunately, it is unamended, but I hope to look at an amended copy one day.

I enjoyed the contribution of the Secretary of State for Energy. It was interesting that most of the Government Back Benchers who spoke in the debate said how much they welcomed the Bill as a way forward to privatisation of coal. I have here an official press release from the Secretary of State for Energy on the day that the Bill was published, in which he says:

> "However, this is not privatisation by the back door."

We can safely assume that it is privatisation by the front door.

The Secretary of State found himself in a situation that is never very nice for a coal miner—alone down a mine when the lamp goes out. He tried to defend the independent review body procedure and the way it looks into pit closures and said that each pit goes through a "detailed procedure before closure". I shall give him a brief lesson on what happened at a colliery in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, East (Mr. Patchett), Barnburgh colliery, which is now closed.

In November of last year, British Coal introduced a new scheme for redundancy payments, with a nine months lifetime. One had to leave the industry on or before 26 August this year. In February this year, the mine manager at the colliery sent a letter to the work force saying that the colliery had to close. In March this year, the work force, in a ballot that was far more independent and private than the ballot to be held in Committee Room 12 tomorrow afternoon will be, and that had more independent scrutineers, decided against the closure of the colliery and in favour of an appeal to the independent review body. On 8 May, an area memorandum sent to the colliery was suspiciously leaked to the workers. It said that if they did not accept redundancy by 3 June they would forgo any payments under the redundancy scheme. Consequently, in another ballot shortly afterwards, it was decided to close the colliery.

The National Union of Mineworkers complained about what had happened to the independent review body, set up many years ago to take decisions about whether a colliery has to close, and consisting of three eminent Queen's counsel. Its decision on that complaint has not yet been published, but I have it here. In the preamble it says:

> "(c) It follows from this that we take the view that the apparent change in dates affecting the eligibility to enhanced redundancy did interfere with the IRB procedure. If this were to occur again it would undermine our function as an Independent Review Body and thus put the whole review procedure in jeopardy.
>
> (d) Should a similar situation occur again we can see no reason why British Coal should not suspend the operation of the scheme during the period between the IRB reference and decision for the colliery concerned."

At this stage there has been no debate in the industry about the report. British Coal has not gone to any meetings convened about the report. In June, British Coal refused to give evidence to a meeting of all parties concerned that led to the report.

I have a letter signed by Mr. Kevin Hunt, employee relations director for British Coal, dated 26 October 1989, about a letter from one of the QCs involved in the independent review body. Mr. Hunt's letter says:

> "As you may know, British Coal are now entering the most intensive phase of negotiations for coal contracts following privatisation of the electricity supply industry. The outcome of these negotiations will have profound implications for the future shape of the industry; and in these circumstances it seems to us sensible that any discussions about the future of the IRB should wait until this matter has been resolved."

If it is true that the matter has now been resolved, and that there is a bigger future for the British coal industry than people thought, I ask the Secretary of State for Energy to contact British Coal and to ask if it is going to introduce another redundancy scheme for the industry. Will the Government support the proposal that any scheme introduced now will run to the end of the financial year 1992-93, which is mentioned in clause 2, so that we do not have the blackmail to close pits that we have had for a number of years in Britain?

Mr. Hardy: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for mentioning that episode. Would he suggest to the Minister that it would be appropriate for him to advise British Coal that letters of the sort Mr. Hunt sent to the independent tribunal are improper and should never be repeated?

Mr. Barron: That goes without saying, and I hope that the matter will be investigated by the Minister with direct responsibility for British Coal, which is a wholly public company, and that we ensure that it does not happen again with any future colliery closures.

I do not often say this about Conservative Members, but the hon. Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) made a good speech about the future of British Coal and how its employees see the outlook at the moment. In an intervention in the speech of the Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) asked about the likely effects of an increase in electricity generation using gas. The Secretary of State said that he was sorry that he could not predict the future. That is exactly what we have been saying for many months—we cannot predict the future.

I thought that the Secretary of State was telling us that the British coal industry had a rosy future when he was talking about the coal contracts signed today. However, one cannot predict the future when short-term market reactions take the decisions in the coal industry and as a consequence, a lot of damage is done.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I am most impressed by the hon. Gentleman's scathing indictment of nationalisation. Does he not regard it as ironical that he is complaining about what is happening in a monopoly controlled industry? Does he not see the opportunities that privatisation opens up for the people who work in the industry? They may claim that a pit has a commercial future, but at the moment there is no means of countering British Coal's view because no one else can take over a pit. With privatisation, that would be a possibility, and that is the ultimate test.

Mr. Barron: I shall comment on that later in my speech.

Right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House have said that there is nothing in the Bill to put right the wrong caused by coal mining subsidence damage throughout Britain, and we have offered our full co-operation on that. All those involved with the issue say that they want the Government to take action and to introduce comprehensive legislation to ease the predicament that is faced by many thousands of people.

It is typical that the major contents of the Bill are confined to enhancing privatisation prospects or profits of private mines rather than solving subsidence problems throughout the British coalfields. Those people whose homes are in a state of disrepair and who are struggling to cope with the results of coal-mining subsidence have a right to feel badly let down by the Tory Government. There is nothing in the Bill to get over that problem, although it would have commended support from both sides of the House. This is yet another example, if we needed one, of the Government putting the interests of profit for private investors before people's lives and livelihoods.

Much has been said about clause 1 and the allowances in it for the coal industry's debt. We have often debated the historic debt that British Coal carries. It would be carried by no other industry. We are not opposed to any write-off of debt. I must correct Conservative Members in that respect. They say that we refuse to write of £5 billion of debt. Clause 1 says that it may be written off. We shall give the Government an opportunity in Committee to replace "may" with "shall" to see whether they are as enthusiastic about it as they seem to be today.

The Secretary of State said that the increase in the ceiling of money to be allowed for redundancies and restructuring of the industry was a broad-brush figure. I have heard it called many things, but that belies his earlier statement about there being no danger to the industry and there not being the redundancies that we have talked about. The British Coal press release belies it too when it speaks of a £1·5 billion ceiling for redundancies and restructuring during the next three years.

It seems that there will be further pit closures, and more than the Government are prepared to admit. My hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, East spoke of the high youth unemployment in his constituency. I think that he said that it is 29 per cent. That figure is repeated in other mining constituencies because of the lack of recruitment, which many hon. Members have highlighted. It is no use talking of restructuring and redundancies and people being left with plenty of money in their pockets when they leave voluntarily or otherwise because the damage is being done by lack of recruitment in the industry. The industry is losing its ability to teach skills, as those who can teach are being lost.

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): Perhaps I can reinforce my hon. Friend's argument by quoting a British Coal letter which has gone out to all concessionary coal recipients. It says:

> "We have to acknowledge that there is a shortage of Welsh Housecoal".

That is because we do not have enough Welsh miners or Welsh mines. It continues:

> "For example, concessionairs will find English coal easier to light and it will be more 'free burning' than its Welsh counterpart. Some English coals have a slight tendency to 'cake' in the firebed and this requires gentle poking, once is usually sufficient, to enable the coal to burn right through.
>
> One particularly important feature is that, because English Housecoal produces more smoke than Welsh, it is recommended that more cleaning of chimneys is undertaken to keep the flues clean."

That is a disgraceful state of affairs. We have to burn this awful English coal because we do not have enough Welsh miners or enough Welsh pits.

Mr. Barron: I do not know whether to thank my hon. Friend for that intervention, but I do not think that any coal mined in the Rother valley in any way resembles that description. We heard earlier about the lack of anthracite coal being mined in south Wales.

I now come to what the Opposition most strongly oppose. Clause 4 reveals the Government's values in terms of the British coal industry. It is primarily designed to increase the private sector's stake in coal. I am curious to know how the clause came to be in the Bill. At the Tory party conference in 1988, the right hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Parkinson) gave his historic pledge to privatise coal after the next election. At the next Department of Energy questions on 7 November, the hon. Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) asked him if there would be some liberalisation of the private sector by amending the nationalisation Act. The Secretary of State said that he knew that several people were promoting that idea but that he would prefer to tackle the problem as a whole in the next Parliament.

When the Bill was about to be published, a press release was issued by the chairman of British Coal saying that it was "surprised" at the announcement about clause 4. Like the right hon. Member for Hertsmere, British Coal assumed that the changes had been overtaken by a decision to privatise British Coal. However, that was not the case. The chairman of British Coal also said that the clause would cause operational problems for the coal industry and that British Coal proposed to discuss with the Department of Energy the implications of the proposals. I ask the Under-Secretary why the Government did not discuss the implications and effect of clause 4. Was it because he knew that he would be opposed by British Coal

[Mr. Barron]

before the Bill was published, as he was opposed by the previous Secretary of State on liberalisation of the private sector?

Private pits have a deplorable safety record. In 1987-88 there were about three deaths and 27 major injuries in private pits with a work force of about 4,000. In the same year, there were nine deaths and 718 major injuries in British Coal with a work force of about 89,000. In 1988-89 there were two deaths and 25 major injuries in private pits, while the 80,000 work force of British Coal suffered 18 deaths and 684 major injuries. Private pits have a terrible record when compared with public sector pits.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) mentioned a television programme on Yorkshire Television called "Dangerous Lives". It was shown in August this year. It made a comparison between public sector mining in the United Kingdom and private mining in the United States of America. More enlightening was the section on the private licensed sector, which will be expanded if the clause becomes law.

In the television programme, the chairman of the Federation of Small Mines was asked to comment on accident figures in the United States, which were more than three times the figures for British pits. He said:

> "I don't think the figures show it has a bad safety record."

He went on to say that the sector compares well with the National Coal Board when it operated in the same manner —that is, in a non-mechanised form. It is precisely the move away from non-mechanised mining that has greatly reduced the rate of accidents in the public sector. We cannot have a sector of British coal mining that has a safety record that claims comparison with mining methods used when three to four miners are killed each day.

In defence of the Secretary of State, may I say that he said that lifting the limit would make modern methods available. I do not think that he has yet talked to the private sector about clause 4. I should like to read to the Secretary of State an extract from an article in the *South Wales Argus* of 4 December this year. It contains a quotation from Crispian Hotson, the chief executive of Ryan International, one of the bigger private companies in this country and a worldwide concern. On the Government's limit he said:

> "The government has indicated that it is considering raising the limit to 150 but that would still not have been enough to enable us to operate the pit."

The pit in question was Marine colliery, which had been kept in mothballs by British Coal because it was trying to put together a package to save it. The idea that raising the limit from 30 to 150 will change deep mining methods in private mines is nonsense. Everyone knows what will happen. It cannot be done.

The same television programme reported on a death at Wrytree colliery when a steel cable snapped. The mines inspector said that it was not an accident as the cable had not been properly lubricated, was badly corroded and should have been found by routine maintenance. The owners were prosecuted under the Mines and Quarries Acts and fined £3,000. Many more similar accidents have occurred in the private sector, with prosecutions and owners fined small sums.

How many more deaths and major injuries must there be before the private sector learns its lesson? How many more inspectors will there be to control the sector? There are 160 private mines, but the number who work in them is unknown. What is the Department's estimate of the expansion of private-sector and opencast coal mining? Where will the coal go when it comes on to the market from the expanded private sector? My hon. Friends and I think it is likely that the Government will close more public mines than they have closed already.

The Government are always consistent when it comes to the British coal industry. They are always looking for a way of turning it back to the good old days when profit came before the people who worked in the industry, and safety was balanced against the need to cut costs. The Labour party has consistently fought for public ownership of this national resource and for the safety, health and welfare of its work force. We shall carry on doing so and try to stop the privatisation of the British coal mining industry.

9.40 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Michael Spicer): Tonight, the Opposition have gone over the top of the slag heap, to borrow the colourful imagery of my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart). On the day when we introduce a measure to spend yet another £6 billion to £7 billion on the coal industry, on top of the £10 billion that we have already spent—the cost is still running at £2 million every working day—the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) has the brass neck to talk about us neglecting the coal industry. The mind boggles at what we would have spent had we been looking after the industry.

The sad truth is that the Labour party is beginning to turn our coal debates into a ritual war dance around the totem pole. Perhaps one day we should all strip off our clothes and paint our faces. Then the television cameras would have something on which to focus.

Since the hon. Gentleman was promoted to his present office we have learnt that if the Labour party were ever returned to office and he were Secretary of State for Energy, the coal industry would be not just neglected but abolished. In his first few weeks he has come up with a brand new idea for energy policy to which he referred again tonight—that electricity generators will run on a merit order based on environmental costs. Presumably, the greatest polluter will be at the bottom of the pile.

In those circumstances, we would not need a nuclear levy, as my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) implied. Nuclear energy would be the only source of power that we would be allowed to have. Coal would disappear from sight, overtaken by nuclear energy, gas and oil, even allowing for the clean coal technology to which the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) is so committed. Indeed, we, too, are committed to it. We have just spent a further £8 million of taxpayers' money on it. At least we can agree on one point: we are in favour of the coal industry and the Opposition are against it for environmental reasons.

The hon. Members for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) and for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) and my hon. Friends the Members for Sherwood, for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) and for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Dr. Woodcock) asked why the question of subsidence has not been addressed in the Bill. I am tempted to give the answer which my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) has just whispered in my ear

—because this is a subsidy not a subsidence Bill. That sums up the position, but I suspect that the House will want me to say more about the subject than that.

Mr. Ashby: Can my hon. Friend say when we shall have a Bill that reflects the Waddilove report? Such a measure is long overdue.

Mr. Spicer: We intend to legislate on the basis of the White Paper as soon as possible. It is for others to decide when the Bill will be introduced. I can tell the House——

Mr. Meale *rose*——

Mr. Spicer: I shall respond to my hon. Friend's question first. It deserves an answer.

When legislation is introduced, it will be quite complex. We do not think that it is suitable to tag on to this financial measure—it is designed to support British Coal, and we hope that it will pass through all its stages by early spring because it is necessary to provide moneys to British Coal —a complex measure to deal with subsidence. A considerable amount of work is under way, and it will have to be completed before legislation on subsidence can be introduced. We are reviewing the dispute procedures, which will form a crucial and complex part of any subsequent legislation. We are reviewing also British Coal's early notification procedures. We are considering the results of certain trials and undertaking various analyses. Our aim is to get subsequent legislation right. I can tell the House that half the Waddilove recommendations have been implemented. In 1983-84, there were 52,000 unsettled claims, and now there are 31,000. British Coal has made provision of £260 million in its accounts and is spending about £50 million a year on subsidence. That shows that the matter is being treated seriously.

Mr. Meale: The Minister said during a debate in June that half the recommendations were being implemented. It is the other half that we are bothered about. Fourteen hon. Members from both sides of the House have raised the matter. We have had Adjournment debates, other debates and early-day motions, and dozens of written and oral questions have been asked. I have introduced three Bills on the subject, all of which have been objected to in the Chamber. That has happened on 26 occasions. When will the other half of the recommendations be implemented? That is what we are waiting for.

Mr. Spicer: I have said that we shall introduce legislation that will be based on the White Paper. We have produced a White Paper and the Labour Government, which the hon. Gentleman supported, never dreamt of producing such a document in their day. That must be put on the record. We are committed to introducing legislation on subsidence, but we are not prepared to tag it on to the Bill, which we require to be enacted rapidly.

I shall move on. I have been allowed only 20 minutes to respond to the many issues which have been raised during the debate. I rather agree with the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), who made an interesting speech: it is strange that the Labour party should be voting against a Bill that will provide for further financial assistance for the coal industry. My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) described Labour Members as a whingeing Opposition. I think that he spoke of opposition for opposition's sake. It seems that they like some parts of the Bill, and it is surprising that they did not table a reasoned amendment. Instead, they will vote against the Bill lock, stock and barrel. That is an extraordinary step for an Opposition who are apparently committed to preserving and developing the coal industry.

The justification for the Bill is simple. It has nothing to do with the phantom of fattening up for privatisation that is favoured by the Opposition. The Bill has been introduced because British Coal's finances have reached a point where, unless something is done about them, its ability to meet its financial obligations might increasingly be called into doubt. In particular, its debt-to-asset ratio now places a question mark over its ability to service this debt. That is one reason why, since August 1988, British Coal has been financed entirely through voted sums, rather than through borrowing from the national loans fund.

Yes, we wish to privatise British Coal after the next general election; yes, we believe that that will involve the licensing issues raised directly by the hon. Member for Gordon and others; yes, British Coal must make a proper return on its capital. Far from fattening up the industry, however, clause 1 will merely prevent it from dying on its feet from consumption and emaciation. More particularly, it provides for deficiency grants to be paid to British Coal, with the effect of allowing it to trade while remaining solvent.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: Speak up.

Mr. Spicer: Hon. Members are making it important for me to do so, as I have a good deal of interesting stuff to get on the record.

During the debate, understandably, hon. Members have asked whether the deficiency grant payments are commitments will be open-ended—understandably, because this so-called uncaring, coal-neglecting Government have already put £10 billion of my money and yours into the industry—*[Interruption.]* I imagine that you pay your taxes as I do, Mr. Speaker: indeed, I am convinced of it.

That money is invested at a rate of £2 million for every working day, so it is only natural that some of my hon. Friends should raise a sceptical eyebrow or two when the Government ask the House to allow them to spend another £5 billion or so. I can assure them that clause 1, which deals with deficiency grants, will cover only the accumulated losses and deficiencies incurred at 31 March 1990. They will comprise three broad categories.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Spicer: I have an awful lot to get through and I have been given only 20 minutes, but I will give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) very quickly, because there is always some fun when I do so.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Most of us understand that the House and the country have considerable respect for the miners, whether they be from Wales or from Scotland. Does my hon. Friend agree that the £10 billion that we suggest should be invested in the mining industry is composed of two parts? We believe that mining has a future in this country, and we want as few people as possible to have to go down the mines. We also want those who do go down them to be well remunerated, and we want privatisation—if it happens—to make them better off rather than worse off. Is that not a fair guarantee to give the mining industry?

Mr. Spicer: Yes, it is.

Mr. Skinner: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Spicer: I am beginning to run out of time. I will give way if I have an opportunity to do so, but I think that hon. Members will enjoy the next part of my speech.

Clause 4 has clearly been of considerable interest to Labour Members. It has received a good deal of hostility, which my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton), in a brilliant speech, claimed was an unusual reaction from them. It is only fair that I read out a letter received by our office and headed "Office of the Leader of the Opposition". The letter is dated 26 June and has not, I think, met the public gaze before. It reads as follows:

> "Dear Secretary of State,
> You will be aware that discussions and assessments have taken place involving British Coal and private concerns such as Ryan International Ltd. about the feasibility of private companies working collieries or parts of collieries that have been closed. The present regulations would of course prevent the establishment of any private colliery that employed more than 30 workers."

So far, so good.

> "Could you please tell me"—

the Leader of the Opposition says—

> "(a) are you contemplating any changes in the law that would have the effect of altering the present arrangements;
> (b) how you view the prospect of part-collieries being worked?;
> (c) whether you take the view that even within the terms of the existing laws it would be possible for different operations in different parts of closed collieries to be regarded as different private mines?
> Yours sincerely"—

squiggle, squiggle—

> "pp Neil Kinnock, MP."

The House must form its own judgment about the contents of the letter, but it is at least open to argument that what lay behind the questions that the Leader of the Opposition put to my right hon. Friend the previous Secretary of State for Energy was his concern that jobs might be lost because the private sector would be unable to work mines that British Coal did not wish to maintain.

If that is what the Leader of the Opposition is suggesting, he seems first to be out of step with his new Front Bench energy team and secondly to be correct. We certainly know of small specialist mines which under the terms of the Bill will be able to be opened and will sell their products in competition not so much with British Coal as with imports.

One example is a proposal to open a mine at Pentreclwyde in south Wales. It would employ over 100 people in an area of high unemployment and would produce tens of thousands of tonnes of anthracite that would otherwise be imported. That is precisely the point that was underlined by my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) in his excellent speech. Even the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) said that British Coal has not done much about anthracite.

The point has, quite rightly, been made time and again that British Coal has a licensing role. After the next general election, we shall certainly take away British Coal's licensing role, but so long as it has it, I hope that it will bear the ability to displace imports in mind when granting licences and setting royalties for the private sector. I hope that that answers the question asked by my hon. Friends the Members for Ellesmere Port and Neston and for Tatton.

Mr. Skinner: The Minister has referred to the Leader of the Opposition's letter. Will he shed light on recent meetings between the Prime Minister and representatives of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers, together with or without the last Secretary of State for Energy? Were these meetings held with a view to providing finance for the UDM? If so, what form did that sweetener take? Has that money been paid to the UDM? If he cannot answer those questions now, I hope that he will answer them in Committee.

Mr. Spicer: I can answer precisely the hon. Gentleman's question. The Union of Democratic Mineworkers, unlike the National Union of Mineworkers with which the hon. Gentleman is closely connected, is interested in pits being developed and worked for the benefit of its members and the country. The future of British pits was discussed by the Prime Minister and the UDM.

If Parliament agrees to this measure, it will be up to those who manage and those who work in the coal industry to make full use of the assets which have been placed in their hands. In stark contrast to the tone of many of the speeches we have heard tonight from Opposition Members, we believe in the future of the British coal industry. This Bill is the plainest possible manifestation of that commitment.

What we are doing today is putting British Coal on its feet, lean and hungry for business—not fattening it up. Once it has been placed on a proper financial footing, it will be able and required to trade without taxpayers' support. This will apply whether it is in the public or the private sector. That is the answer to Labour Members when they talk about fattening up the industry for privatisation.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 272, Noes 184.

Division No. 7] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert
Alton, David
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beith, A. J.
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cran, James
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*

Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Rowe, Andrew
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, Sir William
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Tom Sackville.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*

Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Rooker, Jeff
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert N. Wareing and
Mr. Ken Eastham.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

COAL INDUSTRY BILL [MONEY]

Queen's recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Coal Industry Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any sums required to enable the Secretary of State to make grants to the British Coal Corporation of amounts not exceeding in aggregate—

(a) the amount identified in the consolidated accounts for the financial year of the Corporation ending in March 1990 directed to be prepared under section 8(1) of the Coal Industry Act 1971 as the accumulated group deficit at the end of that financial year regarding any such grants, or

(b) in the case of grants made in advance of the preparation of those accounts, the amount that the Secretary of State is satisfied will be so identified in those accounts; and

(2) any increase in the sums so payable resulting from—

(a) increasing to £1,250 million, with power to increase by order to £1,500 million, the limit imposed on the aggregate amount of grants made under section 3 of the Coal Industry Act 1987, and

(b) enabling such grants to be made in respect of costs falling to be charged to accounts in respect of financial years ending March 1992 but not later than March 1993.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

Appropriation (Northern Ireland)

10.14 pm

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. John Cope): I beg to move,

That the draft Appropriation (No. 4) (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 14th November, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.

On this occasion, the House is being asked to approve a Supplementary Estimate to cover additional funds for two particular votes—the Department of Economic Development vote 2 and the Department of Health and Social Services vote 4. The Department of Economic Development's vote 2 includes expenditure on local enterprise and assistance to the aircraft and shipbuilding industries, while the Department of Health and Social Services vote covers expenditure on those social security benefits which are not dependent on national insurance contributions—contributory benefits are not covered by this order. The draft order is seeking in total an additional £95·7 million over those two votes. The Estimates booklet giving full details of the additional expenditure is, as usual, available from the Vote Office.

The Supplementary Estimate for the Department of Economic Development, on which an increase of £61·3 million to the 1989-90 provision is sought, taking the total expenditure on the vote in question to some £434 million, covers expenditure on local enterprise initiatives, assistance to the aircraft and shipbuilding industries, grants to small and medium-sized firms, capital grants, industrially related research and development and the development of tourism. However, only two of those areas —local enterprise and assistance to the aircraft and shipbuilding industries—require extra funds.

The most significant increase is the £58 million required to meet further costs associated with Short Brothers plc up to 3 October 1989. My hon. Friend the Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers), who was responsible for this matter at the time, introduced the draft Appropriation (No 3) (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 on 20 July 1989. He referred then to the requirement for the Government to fund the losses incurred by Shorts from 1 April 1989 until the completion of the sale to Bombardier on 3 October. The Department of Economic Development has also retained the financial liabilities and obligations associated with aircraft sold in the past by Shorts, and funding is also required to cover those costs within this financial year. Those costs could not be determined in time for the July draft order, and consequently provision is being taken now, following the completion of the sale.

Hon. Members will also be aware that the privatisation of the shipbuilding business of Harland and Wolff was completed in September. Under the arrangements for the sale, the new company, Harland and Wolff Holdings plc, will receive from Government repayable loan stock, rationalisation grants and intervention aid on new merchant orders. The old company, Harland and Wolff plc, will no longer trade but will continue to be responsible for certain pre-sale commitments, including redundancies and ship-financing arrangements.

There is, in consequence, a reduction of £45·9 million in the amount of funding required for Harland and Wolff plc, the old company, but extra funding of £79·9 million is needed for the new company, Harland and Wolff Holdings plc. In addition, an increase of £741,000 is needed to cover costs incurred by the Department of Economic Development on the privatisation. The Estimate now before the House accordingly provides for an increase of £34 million, to just under £94 million, for assistance to shipbuilding during 1989-90. This will be offset by appropriations in aid of £28·5 million, representing the payment for the assets and business by Harland and Wolff Holdings and the repayment of grants by the old company.

It may be necessary to draw advances from the Northern Ireland Civil Contingencies Fund before this order is approved in the Privy Council. If so, these advances would be repaid to the Contingencies Fund under this Supplementary Estimate, in the usual way.

I hope that the House will acknowledge that the successful privatisation of Shorts and Harland and Wolff was a notable achievement. We fully recognise the importance of those two companies to the economy of Northern Ireland, and we are convinced that their return to the private sector affords them the best opportunity of commercial success. The capital restructuring required, and the packages of assistance offered to the new owners, involve a cost to Government, but we were determined that the two companies should be returned to the private sector adequately financed to promote their future success. I believe that the Government's financial contribution in each case is adequate and appropriate to meet our objectives, and that Harland and Wolff and Shorts will flourish in the private sector.

The other area for which additional funding is required under this head is the Local Enterprise Development Unit, LEDU, Northern Ireland's small business agency. An increase of £365,000, partly offset by savings of £265,000 from economies elsewhere in LEDU's budget, is required to enable it to continue its work of encouraging the development of small businesses in Northern Ireland. The additional funding is mainly required to enhance LEDU's involvement in the special initiatives for Belfast and Londonderry.

Finally, in this vote there is a reduced requirement of £3 million on capital grants. This results from a continuing decline in the number of firms seeking assistance under the capital investment grants for industrial development scheme. As some hon. Members will be aware, the scheme has been abolished but applications for grants for expenditure up to 3 March 1988—when it stopped—can continue to be made up to 31 March 1990. The scheme was always quite separate from industrial development boards and LEDU's selective industrial grants which are the main instrument of industrial support in the Province, and will continue.

The other vote involved in the order is for the Department of Health and Social Services, where an increase of £34·4 million is sought for the social security programme. Hon. Members will appreciate that expenditure under these heads is very largely demand-led, and that it is fairly routine for the estimates to be adjusted during the year.

The largest element of the increase sought—£33·1 million—is for income support, due mainly to average payments to claimants being higher than originally provided for. Similarly, higher average payments account for the increases of £1·4 million for housing benefit—mostly for rent rebates. Additional provision of £3·6 million for attendance allowances and £1·7 million for child benefit is sought because of increases in the numbers of claimants.

[Mr. John Cope]

Two new subheads have been included in the vote. The provision of £200,000 sought at section F in the vote will enable the Department to extend transitional compensation to hostels for loss of revenue resulting from the changes in the rules governing income support payments to claimants in such accommodation. In section G, the other new subhead, provision is sought for £10,000 for residual payments to claimants in line with adjustments to the retail price index.

The additional requirements that I have outlined are partly offset by estimating adjustments of £5·9 million elsewhere in the vote, and £5·6 million of this relates to family credit, where the uptake is lower than originally anticipated despite a strong and ongoing publicity campaign to encourage applications. The remaining £300,000 is due to a revised estimate of requirements for rates rebates reflecting lower than anticipated take-up.

I have been brief in outlining the order so that hon. Members will have time to contribute to the debate. I shall do my best to respond to any points raised by hon. Members. I commend the order to the House.

10.25 pm

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): I note that there are substantially more hon. Members here for the debate than is the custom on such occasions. I notice a cluster of hon. Members behind the Minister and I am tempted to believe that that may be because of factors other than the order that is before us. If I am proved wrong, I hope that Conservative Members will maintain their interest in Irish affairs throughout the remainder of the Session. My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) is here because he always likes to hear what I say to ensure that it is in line with his views and those of the parliamentary Labour party.

The Minister has taken us clearly through the details of the order and we are all delighted that he has managed to do it so concisely. I hope to follow his example. He rightly told us that the order is in two parts. Vote 2 continues the Government's commitment to the privatisation of Harland and Wolff and Shorts. Vote 4 deals with various changes in social security.

The order is quite narrow but fortunately for the House the two votes which have been chosen allow a brief discussion on economic trends in the Province and on the consequences of the Government's recent social security changes.

Hon. Members will notice that such debates are becoming somewhat ritualistic. The Minister stands up and expeditiously takes us through the details of the order and usually, though not on this occasion, pats himself and the Government on the head for increasing public expenditure and achieving an economic miracle in the Province. I am sure that that was not a deliberate omission by the Minister and that it will be rectified when he winds up the debate. The ritual then continues and I congratulate the Minister, but everything is not as it would seem from the Minister's remarks. It is always my duty on such occasions to introduce a note of realism and caution, and it will come as no surprise to the House that that is my role today.

Repeatedly we hear from the Northern Ireland Office that the Province's economy has been transformed and that Northern Ireland faces a viable future led by the flagship of privatisation. That view is wildly optimistic and flies in the face of all the available evidence. I should like to cite three examples of the danger facing the economy in the Province. The Minister will be aware that the Economic Council recently published its report for the year to 31 August 1989. It said:

> "Despite significant improvements in the Northern Ireland economy over the past year, these are primarily a reflection of unusually rapid growth in the United Kingdom economy as a whole and do not suggest a fundamental change in the performance of the local economy."

It concludes by saying:

> "It will be difficult for the Province's economy to build upon the gains made over the past year."

The second example comes from a recent survey of the construction industry for the third quarter of 1989—that is, July to September. It was carried out by the Federation of Building and Civil Engineering Contractors. If anything, it was even more pessimistic. Its report shows clearly that output and activity are falling and that the number of firms reporting less work has increased by 21 per cent. to 44 per cent. In other words, nearly 50 per cent. of construction companies in the Province are reporting less work than they had earlier in the year. It also shows that the number of firms expecting to operate at less than 50 per cent. capacity has increased by 6 per cent. to 16 per cent. of the total number of building firms in the Province.

The third example is a study of manufacturing performance which is reported in volume 23·5 of the 1989 regional studies document. It shows that the low average productivity level in Northern Ireland is persisting and shows little sign of increasing. It is still hovering around 80 per cent. of that in Britain.

Those three example show beyond a shadow of doubt that, despite the Government's claims to the contrary, there has been no economic miracle in the Province. If we are to maintain the slight improvement that has been achieved in the past five years, there is still a need for indicative planning in the north of Ireland and for continued public expenditure on economics as well as on social matters.

The Minister mentioned both Harland and Wolff and Shorts. I am a little concerned about Harland and Wolff. I know that the Minister has the excuse of saying that he is not responsible for the future of the company now that it has been privatised. We warned against that situation prior to privatisation. Nevertheless, I hope that he will attempt to answer the questions that I put to him.

The Minister will know as well as anyone that currently there is only one ship in the yard and that all steel work on that ship has been completed. The three ships ordered by Fred Olsen have still not come on line. I am informed that the steel for those ships is not readily available. I am not aware of all the reasons for that. I understand that there is some problem with the ordering of it. If those three ships do not come on line quickly, there is a strong possibility that up to 500 steel workers could be laid off by the end of this year. If there is a problem, I hope that the Minister will be able to tell us what it is and the likelihood of resolving it before the end of 1989.

Although the Minister is new to the Northern Ireland Office, he will be aware that under the old management there were regular meetings between the management board and the work force and its representatives. I should have hoped that that would continue after privatisation. However, my understanding is that Harland and Wolff has now restructured itself into five operating units, and the holding company is insisting that discussions and negotiations should be with the five operating units and not with the holding company board. I hope that the Minister will agree that that is not the best situation for developing good relationships between the new company and the work force and its representatives. I hope that if the Minister continues to have influence with Harland and Wolff he will urge the management and the new holding company to have direct discussions about all the issues which will affect the new company and thus its work force and its future. I hope that the Minister will provide answers to those two specific questions.

My party condemns the two bomb outrages at Shorts some days ago. Despite the differences that we have had with the Government about the privatisation of Shorts, in no circumstances are we prepared to accept bomb attacks on Shorts, which will further undermine the weak economic base in the north of Ireland. All parties are united in their determination to ensure that, despite terrorist attacks and atrocities, prosperity will come to the north of Ireland and all communities—the majority and the minority—will be free from threats of terrorism, from whatever quarter, and will be able to achieve full economic wellbeing. Beyond any shadow of doubt, we condemn those attacks on Shorts.

I say that also because Shorts represents a toehold for the Province in the high technology industries which will provide the wealth of the future. It would be to the lasting shame of each and every one of us if that toehold were lost as a result of terrorist activity. It is ironic that the Provisional IRA should pick on Shorts. The new owner of Shorts, Bombardier, is as firmly committed to fair employment opportunities in the Province as are all of us who supported the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1989. I am sure that Bombardier, and through it Shorts, will actively implement the provisions of that legislation.

The Minister will think that I am being churlish and uncharitable about the increases that he has announced in social security payments. If he thinks that, so be it, but my role is to point out the financial hardship that many people in the Province are facing. If the Minister reads back copies of *Hansard* in the relatively small amount of spare time that he may get, he will see that in previous debates on appropriation orders I have repeatedly warned that the Government's changes in the social security system would increase financial hardship and indebtedness in the Province. It gives me no pleasure to say, "I told you so", but that situation has come about.

The Minister is probably aware of a recent survey conducted by the Andersonstown citizens advice bureau which shows that indebtedness per person in west Belfast is approximately £1,814 compared with a national figure of £350. That is a colossal amount of debt per individual. To my mind, and I think to all fair-minded people, it is a sign of the financial hardship that many people in the Province experience. They are unable to make ends meet with social security payments, and they are unable to get money from the social fund, so they are driven to increased indebtedness, many of them into the shadier side of loans. I urge Ministers to press their colleagues to change the system, not back to what it was before, but to something that offers universal benefits and assistance to people in need.

The Minister will also be aware that electricity disconnections have increased by almost 30 per cent. in and around Belfast. That also shows the extent of financial hardship in the Province. The order will do little or nothing significant to improve economic or social conditions for the least well off in the Province. For that reason, if for no other, it is to be regretted.

10.41 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): It is right that we should voice our concern about the economy and the social services of Northern Ireland. My first remark must be that, once again, we protest at the way in which Northern Ireland business comes before the House. We protest that, at this hour, we have to deal with matters that are relevant to the basic needs of the whole community of Northern Ireland. How different it would be if we were discussing legislation or administration matters for any other part of the United Kingdom.

It is only right that, as we come once again to appropriations, we, as representatives from Northern Ireland, voice our indignation that the rulers of the House have not given us long since what is ours by right—the right to deal with legislation like any other part of the United Kingdom.

Seeing your unease, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall not pursue that topic further, but I thank you for your condescension in giving me the liberty to make my protest. I trust that Ministers will take heed of what I have said, and that right hon. and hon. Members on the other side of the Chamber will support me.

I think that I discerned a tinge of jealousy when the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) rose to speak because nobody was behind him, but I noticed that, after the first part of the Minister's speech, his companions fled because there was no more image of them to be seen in the debate. I am not fond of images, so that will not affect the type of speech that I shall make.

The hon. Member for Leicester, South was right to call attention to our deep anxiety about the Northern Ireland economy. We are not convinced that the coming days will witness any significant change in the economy. I do not want to be pessimistic. I want to be optimistic because Northern Ireland representatives have the most to lose. It is our business to see that Northern Ireland prospers, that the economy is in good shape and that the prospects will help all sections of our community. It does not help us in the least to draw attention to worries, but it is our duty and we must do it as ably as we can.

The Minister mentioned the Local Enterprise Development Unit. Far be it from me to cast aspersions on what it is enabled to do. Most Northern Ireland Members would say that on the whole it has done a reasonably good job. I trust that it will be able to continue to do so. But some of us are concerned about its present policies. I was naive enough to think that LEDU was involved in supporting all small industries that could give employment and seemed to be viable; indeed, that it was to help those that have been giving employment and need further aid to extend their business. According to LEDU, that is no longer the proposition.

When we assist applicants to make their case we are told that LEDU is not tied to such guidelines and that certain small businesses cannot obtain grants under any circumstances. I am thinking of local newspapers. I do not

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understand why a newspaper that is putting out the news in a community and providing employment cannot be supported. It is beyond my comprehension. I know of a newspaper in Banbridge in County Down that in the past days has had to pay off about 16 employees. It is amazing and alarming that LEDU says that it cannot support that newspaper. I cannot understand why community newspapers that are circulated freely in particular areas and paid for by advertisements cannot be assisted. I trust that the Minister will shed some light on this matter and tell us what LEDU's guidelines are and what we are voting money for. Is it for certain businesses only or for all sections of the community that are endeavouring to provide employment?

I trust that when I leave the House tonight I shall understand what the Minister understands the money for LEDU is for. I do not want to go into the details of further cases because I intend to meet the directors of LEDU once again to put these cases. I think that it needs to be highlighted in the debate.

I shall leave it to my hon. Friend the Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) to deal with Shorts and Harland and Wolff, which are in his constituency. I shall leave it to him also to deal with the matters which were raised by the hon. Member for Leicester, South from the Opposition Front Bench.

There is a great need for respite facilities for the families of the profoundly handicapped. I am sure that their position will strike a note of sympathy and support with all hon. Members. It is a great affliction when one member of a family, or two members, are profoundly handicapped. As a minister of a congregation for over 40 years, I have some pastoral experience of the effect of that on a family. One sees manifested immediately the care, the love and the compassion of both parents and the other members of the family for the disabled person. In many instances, the entire family revolves round the one person, or two persons, who needs, or need, careful care and attention.

That brings a strain on family life. It brings a strain for father and mother and for mother and the other members of the family, but these parents do not want to be rid of their handicapped children. To suggest otherwise is a slander on their compassion. They want to be able to care for and have the child for as long as possible, but they need respite facilities.

I know that the Minister will tell us that there is fostering, that fostering is good and that there are those who are dedicated to it. We all remember the terrible calamity when the British Midlands Airways plane crashed. One of the victims was a foster parent of profoundly handicapped children. Her loss was one of the greatest losses experienced. Parents were able to call upon that lady at a time of tension, and she was always willing to give them the benefit of the care that their children needed. The parents said that her death was a calamity for her own family and a calamity for the entire community in which she lived.

I do not want the Minister to say that fostering should not be spoken against because I am not doing that. However, a foster parent cannot always be called in a moment of intense need and pressure, because that person has commitments like everyone else. Sometimes there is a crucial moment when help must be given, and if it is not available the result can be the breakdown of the family. There can be a colossal effect on the entire family.

I accept that helpers can be sent into the home. It is not always the best help, but it provides some relief for the parents. I am sure that the Minister will be aware that on the western side of the Bann, the Stradreagh part of the Gransha hospital, in Londonderry, is used to give respite to parents by caring for profoundly handicapped children. The Minister will know of the very successful pilot scheme that operated last summer at Harberton house in Londonderry. A unit was set up in which four children could be placed under supervision for a week or a fortnight, allowing complete respite to their hard-pressed parents—especially the mothers. It was, however, only a pilot scheme. Such units are needed throughout Ulster, across all the various board areas: I am not speaking only for the area east of the Bann. That would enable us to launch a three-pronged attack on the problem, adding the units' work to the help provided through fostering and assistance in the home.

The advantage of such a unit is that its existence is evident to parents, who, whatever the circumstances, can arrange for their children to be taken in at times of crisis, thus removing pressure from themselves.

I am told that it would cost £90,000 a year to set up a unit serving approximately 30 to 40 children. That is not much in terms of the Government's budget. I understand that the Government's policy is that the old and infirm should not be isolated, but should be related to the community so that the community can make every effort to help them. I am asking for the same kind of community care to be provided for those profoundly handicapped children.

The Minister will correct me if I am wrong, but I understand that it is in his power to designate allowances granted to the various boards. I ask him now to designate certain sums for such care, and for respite for parents. I want boards to be told that they cannot use the money for any other purpose. I make that plea on behalf of children who cannot speak.

A dear mother who came to my church had two handicapped children, one aged five, the other three. One took a virus and died; five days later, the other took the same virus and died as well. I had always known what was in a mother's heart for such children, but now I saw that mother place on the shrine of her little boy a note that read, "I know you could never see me or understand, but I did love you." She went to the grave with a little parcel, saying, "This was his Christmas gift: bury it with him."

That illustrates how mothers feel about their handicapped children. I may be termed emotional, but I do not mind; this is an emotional subject. If the Minister were to designate sums as I have asked, I believe that he would bring honour on himself and the Government. People would know that he was a man of feeling, and that he felt for those who really need help.

I am worried about the proposed cuts in the home help services. They should be extended rather than diminished. Northern Ireland has a large number of elderly people who need help.

I am concerned about the privatisation of the health and social services. I fear that it will lead to a grave reduction in the standard of service.

Pensioners need realistic pensions. They should also be able to travel free of charge on public transport. Free television should be offered to those pensioners who still live in their own homes. If they live in sheltered accommodation where there is a warden, they pay practically nothing for their television. Pensioners who still live in their own homes should not therefore have to bear the burden of a large television licence fee.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I appeal for brief speeches in a brief debate.

11 pm

Mr. A. Cecil Walker (Belfast, North): I join the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) in condemning in the strongest possible terms this unacceptable and undemocratic system of bulldozing Northern Ireland matters through the House without meaningful debate or powers of amendment.

My leader, the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), succinctly and clearly expressed the views of our party in a debate on the Queen's Speech. He said:

> "only minor amending legislation would be required to sweep away the monstrous colonial rule Order in Council procedure which was introduced as a temporary device when Stormont was abolished in 1972. Its perpetuation for 17 long years constitutes a standing reproach to this Mother of Parliaments and arguments for its retention have lost any validity that they ever had. If the Poles and East Germans are entitled to parliamentary democracy, there can be no justification for denying it to the parliamentary representatives of a part of the United Kingdom."—[*Official Report*, 21 November 1989; Vol. 162, c. 53.]

I am sure that everyone in Northern Ireland who wishes some degree of democracy to be restored to the Province agrees with those sentiments. Their implementation could be a first step in the slow process of building meaningful relationships between the communities. I hope that the Government will see the sense of redressing that imbalance. Perhaps the next appropriation order will benefit from the application of the same parliamentary structures as apply to the rest of the United Kingdom. We cannot amend the order, but at least we can make our views known, in the hope that action will be taken later.

As for vote 2, needless to say the Northern Ireland community is incensed by the terrorist outrages carried out by the IRA against our aircraft industry. Those barbaric acts are obviously designed specifically to cause suspicion and dissension among the work force. I hope that there will be no lack of Government resolve to take whatever action is necessary, for the benefit of all, to protect one of our largest employers from the murderous attacks of those whose goal is to promote anarchy and disruption through their evil intention to undermine the efforts of those who wish the Province to prosper.

I refer also in the same vote to the excellent efforts by our tourist board to promote the Province. The tourism awards, sponsored by British Airways, are highly commendable and go a long way towards enhancing Northern Ireland's image by making it a more attractive proposition to the outside world. It is important to realise that tourism can flourish only in a settled community. It is gratifying to know that the industry transcends all boundaries and religions, which is generally recognised as the reason for its richly deserved success. In this connection, it is imperative that the world should be aware that the fight against terrorism will be the Government's first priority and that there will be no ambiguity in this commitment.

One of the greatest tourist attractions in the Belfast area, of which the citizens in the north and west of the city are justly proud, is Cave hill, which is a landmark for travellers, whether they enter Belfast via Aldergrove or from the Belfast lough. Cave hill, with its beautiful wooded slopes, is appreciated by nature lovers and conservationists alike. The Belfast zoo is also situated on the hill, and there are plans afoot for a development of a further 700 acres on behalf of the citizens by Belfast city council.

The proposal to grant a prospecting licence for exploration of the hill was, understandably, received with great trepidation and anger and prompted bitter reaction from all strands of political opinion. The public and their representatives were unanimous in their condemnation of such a proposal and, following meetings with the Minister, I understand that they have been assured that, irrespective of the outcome of the test drilling exploration, mining is definitely out of the question. Although I accept the Minister's word that there will be no desecration of this wonderful tourist asset, I am naturally concerned that permission was given to allow test drilling when subsequent mining was not to be considered.

Further to vote 4, I pay sincere tribute to the work of the Northern Ireland hospice, which caters for the terminally ill in the Province—a function which could not possibly be matched by the general health service. Only those who have witnessed the traumas affecting the terminally ill can really appreciate what the dedicated and caring staff in this hospice can do for such unfortunate people in making their lives more bearable in their final days on earth. I am worried that, although promises have been made by the Government that help is on the way, such help has not yet been translated into hard cash. We need a commitment now from the Government that the necessary cash will be made available immediately to put this great caring facility on a sounder financial footing.

I draw a comparison with the Scottish Office, which is giving £1 for every £1 raised, up to 50 per cent. of the running costs of a unit. As far back as 1985 when the matter was raised, the Government stated that they recognised that the hospice movement could not be expected to bear its costs alone. The public have been very supportive—that is a tribute to the efforts to the hospice's director, Mr. Peter Quigley—but it is unrealistic to expect it to raise running costs of nearly £1 million per year. I trust that the Minister will take the necessary action to enable it to continue its great work on behalf of the terminally ill in our community.

I welcome the additional funding for the Housing Executive. The Government should be more involved in determining how these funds should be allocated. I criticise the Government and Ministers for staying aloof from the executive's activities in its commitment to the Province. Many activities under this autocratic umbrella are not being addressed. Scarce resources have been wilfully wasted in many hare-brained schemes which have little bearing on housing requirements. The Government auditor has exposed many of these anomalies, but little seems to have been done to redress the examples of gross mismanagement.

In my area, I am concerned at the lack of progress in the executive's maintenance and improvement schemes. The

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cut-off dates for grant applications are leading to a serious deterioration of housing stock. Tedburn estate in Ballysillan is a striking case in point where a cowboy builder sold substandard housing to an unsuspecting public who cannot now obtain grants to keep their homes wind and water proof.

I also condemn the lack of progess in the provision of defensible space for the elderly. Those members of the population are receiving grants and housing benefits, and are involved in support schemes, but they are living in terror of the vandals who are systematically defacing and destroying their houses which, incidentally, are run by the Housing Executive. The executive should now look realistically at social needs and the provision of housing in north Belfast. That area has suffered more than most from deprivation over the years. Many of the houses there are more than 100 years old, so a programme of planned renewal is required urgently for the benefit of that community, which has had the tenacity to remain and to subscribe to that neglected part of the Province.

The proposals for the establishment of area committees would bear closer examination when considering the management structure of the Department of Health and Social Services. There is consternation in Northern Ireland that the decision to replace the present district health and social services committees with four new area committees will not accomplish what the Minister intends. The National Health Service review stated that the area committees would represent consumer interests in the services and focus on the quality and standards provided for patients and clients. There is some doubt about the realistic function of the proposed area committees as the new management boards will wholly exclude local government representatives, professional bodies and other interests. In those circumstances, there is a vital need for a strong advisory body to provide consumers and clients with real say and influence. Such a body would have to have meaningful responsibility, and to be truly representative its membership would have to be drawn from the community and from voluntary organisations to ensure a proper mix. Secretarial and adminstrative support would have to be of the highest order and to be associated closely with management functions. Members' expenses would have to be commensurate with the responsibilities of the job.

There have been many responses to the proposals from responsible groups which are intensely interested in the proper administration of the Health Service and I hope that the Minister will give due attention to those submissions. There must be no suggestion that the new committees will have a low priority in terms of consultation and democracy, or the whole exercise will be of little consequence and will lead inevitably to more insecurity and chaos in the Province.

With regard to vote 4, under the new social security order which comes into operation on 9 October applicants must satisfy the Department that they are taking active steps to find a job if they are to qualify for unemployment benefit, income support or national insurance credits. Those steps can include applying for a job, contacting employers and taking part in schemes designed to help people to return to work. The job seekers will need to show what they have done in their search for work. They are expected to keep a record and progress may be reviewed from time to time. They should also keep all letters from prospective employers to prove that they have applied for jobs.

Apart from the general point that such legislation is wholly inappropriate to Northern Ireland, where applications per job vacancy far outnumber the ratio in the rest of the United Kingdom, the legislation also fundamentally contravenes the new fair employment legislation for Northern Ireland. The Fair Employment Commission specifically outlaws contacting employers directly, which is called "speculative application". It prefers employers to recruit personnel by placing advertisements in places which are generally available to both Protestant and Catholic communities, such as central job markets and advertisements in the local newspapers. The Department of Social Security directive to claimants to contact employers directly drives a wedge through the fair employment legislation by encouraging speculative applications.

In practice, the legislation is a charter for pestering employers, who will have to give refusal letters to all the claimants who contact them direct. It will also mean large numbers of unemployed people applying for jobs for which they are unsuitable and, in some cases, for jobs that they do not want, just to obtain an employer's letter of refusal so as to satisfy the Department of Health and Social Services. In some instances, claimants have already stretched the resources of the Department of Health and Social Services by applying for jobs in the Department itself. Replying to such applications takes up staff time and makes the work of the Department—administering benefits—much more difficult.

I am concerned that top management at the Fair Employment Commission has not complained about the new legislation, which encourages speculative applications. By that omission, the managers are inviting the accusation that their own lucrative jobs were obtained by that method of application. I ask the Minister to examine those allegations carefully. It would be extemely difficult for some people to conform to the instructions, which would be detrimental to their right to benefit. It is also wrong, in my opinion, to expect such draconian measures to be implemented by the unemployed, especially given that jobs are so scarce.

11.15 pm

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): It is pathetic that so few hon. Members are present for this important appropriation debate and deplorable that we have so little time.

The time available to me is extremely limited, and I must therefore dispense with all that I wished to say about employment and industry in Northern Ireland, except to comment briefly. There is no doubt that the economy of Northern Ireland is fragile, that the image that Northern Ireland presents abroad and the campaign of terror waged by the IRA deter people from investing in the Province and that we need investment. It is the policy of the IRA to bomb the employed—Protestant and Catholic—on to the dole heap. That is a policy that we all condemn, and in that respect I agree with the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) who opened the debate for the Opposition.

I repeat to my hon. Friend the Minister that it would help the cause of reconciliation in the Province if a delegation made up of Nationalist and Unionist politicians went abroad—particularly to the United States of America—to seek investment, although I am not too sure whether all hon. Members would get on with members of another party. I believe in the cause of reconciliation and that Ulster Members ought to be heavily involved in the task of bringing people together and bringing money and jobs to the Province.

As time is limited, I propose to confine my remarks to the vote for the Department of Health and Social Services. Last week during our debate on the Queen's speech, I paid tribute to the devoted service provided for our senior citizens by home helps in my constituency of North Down. Those elderly people have given a lifetime of service to the community. I was disappointed to learn, therefore, that the Eastern health and social services board had refused permission for a deputation of home helps to speak at its monthly meeting a week ago. I am perplexed that the board should deny such a dedicated body of workers an opportunity to comment, from their own direct experience, on the home help service in their area. I urge the board to change its mind; perhaps the Minister will induce it to do so. The home helps wish to show that cuts in the service are having a detrimental effect on elderly people in my area. I endorse that view.

I have lodged a protest with the board relating to the new restrictions imposed on the service. I have also protested to the Minister responsible for the Department of Health who sits in the other place. The bureaucracy emphasises that there are no cuts, but that is not so. I had a letter from the board which stated clearly that the board is in the process of reviewing the existing provision of home help services to reduce the hours available to the elderly and, in some cases, to stop that service. The reason is lack of finance. The letter also said that the board would not be able to offer home help services to most new applicants. That is an extraordinary and disgraceful state of affairs.

My constituency has a higher percentage of retired people than elsewhere in the Province and that number is increasing as more people retire to live in my constituency because it is so delightful, as I am sure the Minister knows.

I shall illustrate the scale of the problem by quoting one example—one of many—of a lady called Elizabeth who is 84 years old. She has been in hospital for heart treatment and suffers from arthritis of the spine. She must wear a surgical corset, is unable to stoop and also suffers from diabetes. Because of her medical condition she desperately needed home help to clean her home and to change the bed clothes during the week. She had made arrangements with her home help to do that cleaning, but that came to the notice of the Eastern health and social services board which said that the home help could not clean her dwelling. Even though she is unable to stoop, the board concluded that the cleaning was desirable, but not essential. The help provided to that lady has been restricted to one hour a week for laundry alone. That example shows the callous face of the social services, which should be there to help the elderly to enable them to live out their remaining years in dignity and comfort. I made that point in the debate on the Queen's Speech.

Yesterday I attended the annual christingle service at the Clifton special care school for the handicapped. I attend that service every year and yesterday, as usual, the church was packed with relatives and with mentally handicapped people. The young people at that school performed much of the music for the Christmas service of carols and lessons. That service speaks volumes for the dedication of the principal and the staff of the school and also makes one aware of the tremendous demands on the parents. For them there is no respite and, for some, looking after their mentally handicapped offspring is a 24-hour vigil.

I urge the Government to recognise the service performed by parents. Although it is a labour of love, none the less it causes sheer physical and mental exhaustion. There is an overwhelming need for more places in North Down where the sons or daughters could stay for one or two weeks to give some respite for their hard-pressed parents.

I know of a case in which the parents were told that their daughter was too much for the specialised staff of one unit, and were asked to take their daughter home after she had been there just one night. Surely this should not have happened. I appeal to the Minister, for whom I have great respect, to intervene in this case. I know that it does not fall within his Department, but I hope that he will ensure that my words are carried in the right direction.

Reference is made in the appropriation order to cold weather payments. Pensioners are already suffering from the cold and we are only at the beginning of December. There is a need to consider their sorrowful condition. Many reduce the heating in their homes because they cannot afford to pay large electricity bills. We can best judge our society—as I am sure you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would agree—by how we look after the vulnerable groups in our community, of which the elderly are one. Heating is essential to them.

Some elderly qualify for the heating cold weather payments when the weather is extreme. But should they have to wait until then? Many are on the border line and do not benefit at all. Therefore, I urgently appeal to the Government to ensure that more elderly people receive payment to enable them to heat their homes in the winter.

11.26 pm

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): I concur with the remarks of the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) in protesting against the methodology of dealing with Northern Ireland legislation. I renew the offer to him, and the other Northern Ireland Members who have spoken, to sit round a table and discuss new ways and means of providing new institutions that would enable us not only to debate legislation, but to frame it in such a way that it is tailor made to the needs and the people of Northern Ireland.

We have a limited debate tonight on votes 2 and 3. Time, of necessity, makes me brief. The Minister said that the substance of vote 2 was substantial moneys for Harland and Wolff and Shorts Brothers and enterprise in the towns of Belfast and Derry by way of additional funding. That is welcome and will be of great benefit to those for whom it is intended, but it will not give a great deal of impetus or heart to those in the rural communities of Northern Ireland who will not substantially benefit from the announcements that the Minister has just made.

The industrial development boards and their sub-agencies, the local enterprise development units, should concentrate more of their research and development on the base industries which make up Northern Ireland: the produce of the land and sea. Agriculture and fishing are not producing the jobs or values for their labours by way

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of enhancement of value before exportation, which they could. They are renewable natural resources of nature, fertility and the sweat of the brow for both the farmer and the fisherman.

I draw particular attention to the plight of the fishing industry in the harbour of Ardglass, which seems to have been left behind in the provision of docking facilities for the three main fishing harbours in Northern Ireland: Ardglass and Kilkeel in my constituency and Portavogie in the constituency of the hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder). A small amount of money is required to make the harbour of Ardglass safe. It has been promised for many years, but has yet to be put into effect or to give safe anchorage to the enormously increased number of boats anchoring there. Over the years, the number has increased from three to 21.

Enhancement of value and diversification are methods of stabilising the rural populations and giving them a better standard of living. I was disappointed at the poor way in which the Department of Economic Development handled the funding from the international fund for Ireland and its budget for diversification.

The other matter that must be dealt with is that of packages that are often talked about for rural development in various guises. I do not have time to go into that now, but it seems that we are chasing around in circles about providing a basic infrastructure of rural development for farmers, the tourist industry and the crafts industry which will sustain the rural population of Northern Ireland and prevent the drift to the cities which creates housing, transport and environmental problems in the greater cities.

I urge the Minister or people in his Department to take a look at the structure, ideas and hopes of a small community group in my constituency, the See Connell community committee. That is the embryonic method by which a vital renewal of the rural population can take place and provide sustainable incomes to keep people in the place where they are most happy—their home towns.

Vote 4 contains many issues demanding attention, such as the paltry pension increases to the over—75s, the continuing insult to pensioners of the £10 Christmas bonus, and the poor allowances for people in need of care and to people caring for those in need. They are the subject of legislation and I should like to speak about matters that have to do not with legislation but with its administration. There is a crisis in community loans and on how the scheme is being administered in Northern Ireland. From my constituency work and some brief research, there seem to be differing approaches to people who are entitled to crisis loans. Such people are suffering enough from deprivation and need and should not be put off by administrative bureaucracy over the application of the loans.

There is definitely a dichotomy in the attitudes of the DHSS offices in Belfast and those in the rural areas. That is certainly the case in relation to my constituency. There is leniency in Belfast and harshness towards those who apply in rural areas. I ask the Minister to ask his colleagues who cannot answer in the House to have an urgent review of attitudes before Christmas.

My final comment on vote 4 is about family credit. In opening the debate, the Under-Secretary of State expressed a concern about the low uptake. The reason for that is simple. It is that the forms are grossly bureaucratic. They are far too complex and the only people who can render them with some ease and get family credit are people on a straight wage or salary. Our community is built upon small farmers and workers in the building industry, almost all of whom are sub-contractors and therefore self-employed.

Farmers and self-employed building workers are in the low-income sector and have to provide accounts or statements of earnings. The bureaucracy that that incurs and the questions that the Department asks have to be seen to be believed. People are being turned away by the dozen or put off by the gross and insensitive bureaucracy. That means that small farmers, sub-contractors and small self-employed people are not benefiting from the rights to which they are entitled under the family credit legislation. I again ask the Minister to review that in the next few weeks if at all possible.

There was a bottleneck on or about 8 October when allegedly new regulations were introduced by the Department of Health and Social Services. I and no one else to my knowledge has been able to obtain a copy or even find out the content of those new regulations. I do not think that they exist but are a bureaucratic reason for stalling on the payment of family credit to people who richly deserve it.

Now that the fibre optics links are in place, in the so-called start programme, with the nodes of that system in many towns and villages, the Department of Economic Development in Northern Ireland should take a positive initiative and locate rural areas which would be suitable for low level, sensitive office development so that jobs could be imported from Europe and America, as has happened successfully in some places, so providing more employment.

A well trained, intelligent work force, updated in technological matters, is waiting for jobs to be provided. The Minister should urge the task force, which he has set up, to take a more practical approach. In that way we could greatly reduce the number of unemployed, particularly among our young people.

I hope that the Minister will give urgent attention to the points I have raised, and in particular before Christmas that he will examine the issues of family credit and crisis loans.

11.36 pm

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): I join the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) in protesting at the despicable way in which hon. Members who represent Northern Irish constituencies are obliged to deal with extremely important matters. I shall leave the matter there because if I protested at greater length I should not have time to comment on the issues under discussion. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the way to deal with these matters is not simply to debate them in a Committee of this House, as is our right, but to have them dealt with properly in an Ulster forum, powers having been devolved to Norhern Ireland giving us our own institutions. I hope that that will happen before long.

I wish to raise two points. The first concerns vote 4 and the Department of Health and Social Services. A few days ago a constituent told me that having attempted to fix a neighbour's car he had been informed by the Department that because he was doing a task for which a reasonable employer could be expected to give him remuneration he would be taken off benefit and he might even be taken to court. He said that, although he was not receiving any finance for doing that job, that was not the Department's criterion.

I was surprised to hear that a certain individual in Northern Ireland who is an elected Member of this House —although he has never come here—is to be forced to go on a training scheme if he wishes to continue to receive benefit in Northern Ireland. I was shocked to learn that that individual—the hon. Member for Belfast, West (Mr. Adams)—is in receipt of state benefit. If the criteria being applied to my constituent were applied to that hon. Gentleman, he would receive no such benefit. After all, he is telling the people of Northern Ireland that he is doing a job, being a Member of this House. By doing that, and by doing the constituency work of an hon. Member, according to the Department's criterion he would not be able to receive state benefit.

May we be assured that there will not be two laws applying in Northern Ireland—one for the hon. Member for Belfast, West and one for my constituent? After all, the electorate offered that hon. Gentleman the job of representing them, and his position and salary are waiting for him here. Because he does not want to take the oath to Her Majesty he will not darken the door of this Chamber, though perhaps that is to our advantage.

My second point concerns Shorts' premises on Alanbrooke road in east Belfast. The Minister must be holding his breath, knowing what I am about to say. I refer to a decision over which the Minister has abused his powers in an atrocious manner. He has given Shorts authority under the emergency powers to close Alanbrooke road. Anyone else wishing to take such a step would have to apply to the Department, advertisements would be placed in local newspapers, the providers of all local services would be asked if they had any objections and all concerned, including local residents, would have their say and be able to raise objections. The Minister has bypassed that whole procedure on what he claims are security grounds. I understand that the Royal Ulster Constabulary headquarters has not objected, but there are objections at a local level. The Ulster Defence Regiment and the fire services will be affected because they are close by and an entire industrial estate will be jeopardised. Will the Minister tell my constituents who have premises on that industrial estate what recompense they will receive? They took 20-year leases on the basis of having access to their premises, which the Minister has flagrantly closed off. Will the Minister inform residents of the area what compensation there will be for them as he has cut off access to many parts of my constituency?

The Minister's communication suggests that there is to be a pedestrian approach through the area. How does it enhance the firm's security to have a pedestrian route through the area after the road has been closed off? Security in the road is a sham. If the premises were secure, there would be no need to close off the road. Will the Minister explain the security advantages of his action? Why is additional security required for the firm? Is a stockpiling of missiles taking place? The firm tells me that that is not so. Does the Minister have some other information that he wishes to divulge to the House?

11.40 pm

Mr. Cope: Hon. Members have packed many diverse points into the debate, not least the complaints about the system of holding debates such as this. I understand fully the views of hon. Members, many of whom mentioned the way in which Northern Ireland business is dealt with. There are arrangements for conducting other Northern Ireland business in the House, but I should warn hon. Members that debates on appropriation orders take place in additional time which applies only to Northern Ireland. Therefore, although hon. Members may have a point in respect of other matters that come before the House, debates on appropriation orders provide an additional opportunity to raise issues about Northern Ireland expenditure. However, such time is not available to hon. Members representing English, Scottish or Welsh constituencies.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Cope: I hope that the hon. Gentleman does not mind, but I will not give way as I have little time and I want to do my best to answer the debate.

Generally, I and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State are willing to meet hon. Members to discuss these matters to see whether we can improve the system. However, hon. Members should be careful about the appropriation orders in any proposals they advance to my right hon. Friend for his consideration.

The hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) spoke about the economy generally. I did not do so because I thought that somebody else would and that I could then respond. I was anxious to concentrate on the order. The hon. Member for Leicester, South can always spread gloom, but he did admit that there had been a slight improvement in the economy. I can always produce some optimism. For example, the Province has the lowest level of unemployment for almost seven years and there has been a steady increase in the number of people in employment. That is the other half of the coin, and it is extremely important, particularly in the Province where the demographic time bomb is not as acute as in other parts of the United Kingdom. The latest annual figures —up to June—show that manufacturing output rose by 12 per cent. and construction output, to which the hon. Member for Leicester, South referred specifically, has risen by 9 per cent. However, I do not want to overdo it.

One hon. Member was right to mention the fact that terrorism and the image of the Province are important in trying to attract jobs to the area and improve the economy. I agree with hon. Members who mentioned the recent appalling and outrageous attack on Shorts.

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business).*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Appropriation (No. 4) (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 14th November, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.

PETITION

Deaf Television Viewers

11.44 pm

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): I have a petition from 958 constituents and others living in Greater London, who say that the broadcasters are not providing complete access for deaf television viewers, for example, with subtitles or sign language. At least 4 million deaf viewers are affected, and they say that, as equal members of the general public, they are entitled to equal access to television programmes. In their prayer they ask

> that legislation be passed placing an obligation on television channel operators to make their programmes more accessible to deaf people by using Teletext subtitles, sign language or other means and to reach complete coverage by a fixed date.

I have the honour to be the president of the Harrow deaf club, and I, along with my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes), know that its work helps deaf people to feel less lonely and isolated. Accessible television for the millions of deaf people will make an enormous difference to them.

To lie upon the Table.

Open Air Music Festivals

Moton made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

11.45 pm

Mr. Robert Hicks (Cornwall, South-East): I welcome this opportunity to discuss the extent and range of problems which are undoubtedly associated with the holding of large open-air music festivals which last for two or three days. This is not a new problem. In 1972, my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) introduced a Night Assemblies Bill, and I served on the Committee which considered that Bill. It contained provisions which received wide support on both sides of the House but regrettably it was talked out on Report, largely as a result of civil liberty arguments. That was a pity, because many of the difficulties that many of my Friends are experiencing in their constituencies might have been curtailed if that legislation had been passed.

I appreciate that these events are not solely a phenomenon associated with south-east Cornwall. A number of colleagues have contacted me in the past week to express their concern about the holding of such events. The holding of these large-scale gatherings attracting people from all over the country is not a new development there. For many years an event known as the Elephant Fair was held annually at St. Germans, organised by my noble Friend the Earl of St. Germans. By and large, it was well contained. It was attended by local people as well as visitors. However, it is not without significance that the holder of that event stopped it some five years ago as a direct consequence of the activities of a small minority of people who were attracted to the function but whose behaviour could only be described as sordid.

This year, in my constituency, a local farmer decided to hold such an event at Treworgey, a small hamlet just two miles north of the market town of Liskeard, over the weekend of 28-30 July. At least three weeks before it, individuals of a certain type, euphemistically described as travellers, began to arrive in the vicinity. The men dressed distinctively, in a way that I can only describe as having a certain commonality with paramilitary denim uniforms. They wore army boots without laces. Their method of transport was varied, and included converted buses—single and double-decker—old ambulances, lorries, vans and even a pony and cart. Inevitably, they owned dogs. Their behaviour in the three weeks before the Treworgey tree fayre, in Liskeard and a neighbouring village called St. Cleer, can only be described as provocative. Local residents, particularly elderly people and those with young children, were genuinely frightened and appalled by their behaviour and as a consequence their presence required enhanced high-profile policing.

Of the 40,000 or so who subsequently attended the Treworgey tree fayre, the group of travellers who came in advance formed only a small minority of about 1,000. Unfortunately, because they came early, they set the tone for the event and conditioned local reaction and attitudes to the event. It is not without significance, as I represent a law-abiding electorate who are conservative with a small "c"—and, I hope, with a big "C" at election times—that they were horrified that such people could openly flaunt around Liskeard, with state benefits probably their only source of income. I do not intend to labour that point as

I hope that the revised regulations introduced a couple of months ago may have the desired effect and that benefit entitlement will be tightened up for such people.

The source of the problems at the event was, I believe, lack of preparation and organisation. I said that 40,000 people attended. The vast majority of them were young people who wanted to spend a few days at a music festival in a lovely part of the world but, because of the lack of organisation, it displayed the usual characteristics—no running water and inadequate toilet facilities. I spent three hours at the event incognito on the Saturday evening. The few inadequate toilet facilities were not working. They were all blocked up. There was no running water and there were virtually no refuse collection facilities. There was also a lack of car parking areas. I could continue.

The weather was dry and dusty, and the effect of having 40,000 people in a confined area could only be described as squalid. At the time, I described conditions as those that one would associate with a shanty town on the edge of some Third world capital, and that was no exaggeration.

How does such a situation develop? I have no doubt that it reflects the lack of adequate, and clearly defined, procedures governing the holding of such events. At present, we have a system of entertainment licences which are administered by district councils according to the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982. I understand from colleagues in local government that there is confusion about the procedures, let alone their effectiveness. In addition, there are powers under section 14 of the Public Order Act 1986 which the police may use not to prohibit but to control public assemblies. Section 16 of the same Act defines a public assembly as being

> "of 20 or more persons in a public place which is wholly or partly open to the air."

If 40,000 people descend on a particular location for a specific purpose, no one has a chance of imposing public health regulations, public order or public safety should the need arise.

The effects of the event on our local community in south-east Cornwall were considerable. Again I provide a factual and not an exaggerated or subjective account. First, enhanced policing was required over the two-month period. During the event, 280 police officers were involved. To put that in perspective, that is the same figure, purely fortuitously, as the total police establishment for the whole of the eastern half of Cornwall. The additional cost of policing before, during and after the event over and above normal policing levels for the area was £191,000. That was the estimate provided by the chief constable of Devon and Cornwall.

The second effect was that the travellers came early and remained long after the event. That led to subsquent problems of trespass and illegal camping. Naturally, when they were obliged to leave the site in question, they found the point of nearest weakness, which was either an adjacent farm or a common moor on the southern margins of Bodmin moor. Livestock and property were damaged. More than 60 animals had to be slaughtered in advance of the event, largely due to the activities of the dogs owned by the travellers. A couple whose home was right in the middle of the area were obliged to leave for about a week. When they returned to their home it was filthy.

There were legal consequences. Some 310 arrests were made, 180 of which related to drug offences and 50 to public disorder. Finally, but not least, there was the inconvenience, annoyance and disturbance caused to the local population.

It is insufficient to say that local authorities have powers to lay charges against an organiser after the event. Caradon is doing that.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): I am well aware of the problems that my hon. Friend describes. Does he agree that those of us with constituencies on the M25 have similar difficulties with acid house parties? Is he aware that I support everything that he says about the need for action on public order and criminal justice legislation?

Mr. Hicks: I am obliged to my hon. Friend for his support. Although he represents a constituency with entirely different geographical characteristics, the nature and extent of the problems are identical.

The Government need urgently to clarify and define procedures governing the control of the issuing of licences before an event. It should be mandatory on local authorities, before granting a licence for an event, to insist on adequate public health provision and conditions which will allow public order to be maintained and public safety ensured.

Furthermore, local authorities could and should require the payment of a financial bond in advance to cover additional costs to public authorities and damage to property. In the light of experience in the part of the country that I represent, the local authority should ensure that the cheque is cashed before it issues a licence. In the case to which I have referred, a cheque for £10,000 was written in advance, but it bounced.

With that requirement there is a need also to examine the law of trespass and its enforcement. The problem of trespass is linked intimately to the other problems that I have described, given the character of the minority who are attracted to pop festivals.

It does not worry me too much how the Government go about realising these objectives. I have submitted some ideas this evening. I do not expect my hon. Friend the Minister to respond to all the detailed points that I have raised, but I expect a commitment that Her Majesty's Government acknowledge the range and extent of the problems and are prepared to act.

12.1 am

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): My hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks) has done a service by raising an important matter, and especially for the county which he and I have the honour to represent. The problem stretches, as he acknowledged, from his constituency to my constituency at the other end of the county, in the west.

There was a pop festival in my constituency about a year ago. It was not on the dramatic scale of the one to which my hon. Friend referred, but it caused untold irritation and damage. There was intimidation, especially of elderly people, and I believe that some of the police were fearful of the people who came to the festival.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East is right to call for a complete review of the law. I believe that the Public Order Act 1986 is insufficient. The provision that there must be 12 caravans before the police can act is far too onerous.

[Mr. David Harris]

The law of trespass needs to be examined and reviewed. As my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East said, many of those who come to pop festivals stay on. In west Cornwall, there have been many examples—they are still to be found—of people trespassing on private land and causing untold damage and many other problems, especially for landowners. I beg my hon. Friend the Minister to carry out the review which has been called for tonight. Let us put an end to a scourge which has extended beyond Cornwall to many other areas.

12.2 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Peter Lloyd): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks) for setting out his case so clearly. I recognise the genuine concerns which he has expressed and the great disturbance and inconvenience that some of his constituents have suffered. He is not alone in voicing concern, and that was demonstrated by the brief but welcome interventions of my hon. Friends the Members for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) and for Esher (Mr. Taylor).

The essence of the problem is control of very many people at open-air gatherings. The congregation of large numbers of people is not a new phenomenon but it is, perhaps, becoming more common. It is easier today than it was in the past to publicise events to wider audiences, and it is easier for people to travel considerable distances from their homes. Moreover, it is a fact of life that young people like to congregate to listen to music, to dance and to enjoy themselves.

Large meetings are not a matter for concern as such, although they may pose significant administration problems. They usually create traffic difficulties, but it is particular difficulties arising out of particular circumstances that cause the trouble. A mass meeting to hear the Pope is unlikely to result in disorder, but there are security problems. Son et lumière may not create excitement leading to almost mass hysteria, but that could happen at a pop group meeting. A boy scout jamboree does not lead to expectations of drug abuse but an acid house party carries that risk. An acid house party does not normally lead to alcohol misuse, but a jazz festival may do so. What is needed, I suggest, is flexibility for the police and the local authorities to impose beforehand such conditions as they think necessary, and for them to react to the particular circumstances as they arise. I think that the law already provides for that.

The law—described accurately by my hon. Friend—which governs the licensing of public entertainments outside Greater London enables district councils to take powers to control pop festivals and other outdoor musical entertainments. If they choose to do so, a licence will be required for any event of that kind that is held on private land. The controls are limited to private land because other methods of control exist for public land.

A licence must be obtained in advance from the district council concerned. Applicants for licences must give notice of their intention to seek a licence to the police, the fire authority and the local authority itself. The grant or renewal of an entertainments licence is at the discretion of the district council, but in reaching its decision it must have regard to any observations submitted by the police and the fire authority.

The legislation empowers the district council to attach terms, conditions and restrictions to a licence for certain specified purposes. Those are to ensure the safety of performers and others present, to secure adequate access for emergency vehicles and the provision of adequate sanitary appliances—that covers particular concerns expressed by my hon. Friend—and to prevent unreasonable noise disturbance to people in the neighbourhood.

If a pop festival takes place without a licence on private land in a district where those licensing arrangements have been adopted, the organisers of the event, and anyone allowing his property to be used for it, are liable on summary conviction to a fine of up to £2,000—as they are if there is any breach of the conditions of a licence. We have recently been considering—in the light of the development of so-called acid house parties, which my hon. Friend mentioned—the need for substantial increases in the penalties for offences against the entertainment licensing laws, and the possibility of confiscating the profits made by offenders.

My hon. Friend wanted the organisers to pay the extra costs of policing, and I sympathise with his view. Under section 15 of the Police Act 1964 a chief officer of police may provide, on request, "special services" at any place within his police area, subject to payment to the police authority of such charges as it may determine. If, for example, the organisers of a pop festival want police officers to maintain order inside the ground where the event is being held, they can request a police presence for which they will then be charged. A charge for "special police services", however, can be made only when officers are provided at the request of the organisers.

The review of public order law that led to the White Paper of 1985 considered the possibility of making demonstrators meet all or some of the costs of policing their own demonstrations, but the potential restrictions on police operational flexibility, and the difficulties of apportioning costs, were found to be too great for the idea to be pursued. It is, however, possible for local authorities to stipulate as a condition of a licence that the organisers should themselves provide adequate stewards: that is open to them now.

The phenomenon of acid house parties is a recent one and has produced much debate, because such parties have provided opportunities for drug trafficking. The police are alert to the risks and have powers to deal with such offences, but the problems that concern those who are in the vicinity of the parties are more to do with noise and nuisance. Such gatherings as the one described so graphically by my hon. Friend may not be held without a licence under the entertainment licensing laws, and local authorities may impose conditions to prevent noise and nuisance. But—and here I come to my hon. Friend's justified concern—the penalties for failing to obtain a licence, or for breaching its conditions, are at present far too low to provide a positive deterrent. My right hon. Friends the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for the Environment will be making statements tomorrow in which they will explain what steps the Government believe should be taken. I do not wish to pre-empt what they will say, but it will be clear from what I have said that the

Government believe that to strengthen penalties is the right way to proceed. At the same time, profits should be at risk, to ensure full and proper observance of the law.

In the meantime, the police have established a central intelligence unit to obtain advance information about such parties. They are developing tactics to assist in dealing with them and prosecuting offenders. I believe that the existing law, in addition to the increased penalties, will provide the effective sanction for which my hon. Friend and his constituents are rightly looking.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at ten minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 5 December 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

SCOTTISH EPISCOPAL CLERGY WIDOWS' AND ORPHANS' FUND ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

Considered; to be read the Third time.

Oral Answers to Questions

EMPLOYMENT

Training and Enterprise Councils

1. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many training and enterprise councils have received development funding in the northern region; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Norman Fowler): I have approved applications for development funding for five training and enterprise councils in the Training Agency's northern region. This means that councils are now being established in all parts of the region —Teesside, Tyneside, Wearside, county Durham and Northumberland. In addition, four further councils are being established in Yorkshire and Humberside.

Mr. Brown: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that encouraging reply. Will he confirm that the number of training and enterprise councils in the United Kingdom is touching the 50 mark? He said that consideration was being given to setting up TECs in Yorkshire and Humberside. Will Brigg and Cleethorpes feature in the list?

Mr. Fowler: Yes. I understand that Brigg and Cleethorpes feature on the list. They will be covered by the bid for a Humberside TEC, which is expected to be made early in February. I am sure that we shall establish a TEC in my hon. Friend's constituency. On the general position, more than 40 applications have been processed and given development funding and more applications are coming in. I am confident that in the next months we shall cover the whole country with TECs.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is the Secretary of State aware that between 2,500 and 3,500 people are to lose their jobs on the Thorpe construction project in west Cumberland and other construction projects in the nuclear industry? Is he satisfied that the TEC will be able to train all those people so that we can retain them in west Cumberland to rebuild our industrial base for the future?

Mr. Fowler: I think that it will be a combination of both. The TEC will improve training in the region but in addition we shall need to use the experience and skill of the employment service. I shall look into the matter that the hon. Gentleman raised to see what further action we can suggest.

Mr. Jack: Will my right hon. Friend do all that he can to ensure that west Lancashire is included in his plans for TECs? Will he tell the House what is happening in the north-west as a whole? Will he concentrate his efforts on areas such as Blackpool which are still unemployment black spots and need particular help?

Mr. Fowler: Yes. My latest information shows that in the north-west about eight TECs have been given development funding. Other applications are being considered and I have no doubt that we shall consider Blackpool and the surrounding area. Indeed, we shall consider all areas where unemployment is an issue.

Mr. Blair: Is the Secretary of State aware that only a third of British employees have occupational qualifications compared with two thirds in West Germany, and that Britain has only 30 per cent. of the number of qualified electricians and technicians in France? Two weeks ago a British Minister told the world:

> "We are only just developing in the United Kingdom the recognition of the importance of encouraging a high level of skills."

Does the Secretary of State agree that the training gap with our competitors is not merely serious but critical? What steps is he taking to ensure that TECs offer not only a Government programme for the long-term unemployed and young people but a strategy for adults already in work, who will form the bulk of the work force?

Mr. Speaker: Long questions take up a great deal of time.

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman almost made an Adjournment speech and I shall try to set out what is happening. With training and enterprise councils we are seeking to narrow the training gap, which has not appeared suddenly in the past few years but has been a feature of this country literally since the war, if not before. The encouraging feature about training and enterprise councils is the way in which employers have responded to them. With the new programmes we shall be able to train some 450,000 unemployed people through employment training and 260,000 young people through YTS.

Now that the hon. Gentleman has joined the Opposition Front Bench on employment, I hope that he will reverse the Labour party's position and support employment training for unemployed people.

Ms. Short: That was a long answer, too.

Mr. Speaker: I know, but long questions lead to long answers, so let us have less of them.

Unemployment Calculations

2. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make a statement on the calculation of unemployment rates in local travel-to-work areas.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Patrick Nicholls): Since October 1989, my Department has published unemployment rates for travel-to-work areas both as a percentage of the work force and as a percentage of the unemployed plus employees. The former provide comparability with the rates published at national and regional level and full details were given in the November edition of *Employment Gazette*.

Mr. Holt: Does my hon. Friend agree that these figures are a lot of mumbo-jumbo to most people and that travel-to-work areas should be dropped? Why not simply take constituencies, such as mine? One can find the answer for each ward. We have had a drop of 53·3 per cent. in unemployment since the peak in 1984. Does my hon. Friend agree that all that proves that while Communism is disappearing from eastern Europe, so Socialism is disappearing from north-east England?

Mr. Nicholls: I am sure that my hon. Friend will be the last person to accuse the Government of producing figures which are mumbo-jumbo. He is right that the figures show how successful the Government have been in reducing unemployment figures. My hon. Friend has personal experience of that in his constituency.

Mr. Battle: Does the Minister agree that because of the nature of the boundaries, travel-to-work areas disbar cities, such as Leeds which have pockets of high unemployment, from applying for European social fund moneys for inner-city projects? Is he prepared to relax the criteria for travel-to-work areas to ensure that, for example, women's training projects can be supported by the social fund?

Mr. Nicholls: I accept entirely that there is no ideal way of identifying a particular travel-to-work area, but there must be some basis on which that is done and the present system is probably the best device in the circumstances.

Training and Enterprise Councils

3. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received regarding training and enterprise councils in Shropshire.

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Mr. Tim Eggar): Representations from a number of groups have been made to Training Agency officials regarding the formation of a training and enterprise council in Shropshire. Discussions are taking place locally to ensure that a training and enterprise council is formed as soon as possible.

Mr. Gill: What assurance can my hon. Friend give me that any training and enterprise council established in the county of Shropshire will not be dominated by the large concentration of industry in Telford, to the detriment of the surrounding rural areas?

Mr. Eggar: In forming TECs local business men will have to take account of all parts of their community, particularly the kind of area for which they are seeking to train and into which they seek to introduce and improve enterprise. The national training task force will ensure that those factors are borne in mind when it examines TECs' business plans.

Labour Statistics

5. **Mr. Raffan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest unemployment figures for the constituency of Delyn; and what were the figures two years ago.

Mr. Nicholls: In Delyn, unemployment is about half what it was two years ago. In October 1989 there were 1,892 unemployed claimants in the Delyn parliamentary constituency, compared with some 4,020 in October 1987. The figures are slightly affected by the change in benefit regulations for under 18-year-olds in September 1988.

Mr. Raffan: Does my hon. Friend agree that the fact that unemployment in Delyn has been dramatically cut by half in the past two years shows the effectiveness of Government regional policy which gave my constituency the highest level of development area status—something that the Labour Government never did—and the Delyn enterprise zone, which the Labour party opposed?

Mr. Nicholls: My hon. Friend is right. Once again, the figures highlight the experience of his constituents and show how successful the Government have been. Since the last election there has been a reduction in unemployment in Delyn of some 54 per cent. That is a remarkable achievement, and it is obviously one of which my hon. Friend thoroughly approves.

Mr. John P. Smith: Does the Minister recognise that the October unemployment figures show the smallest reduction in unemployment since January 1987, and an increase in unemployment in the west midlands and in East Anglia?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That question is not about Delyn.

Mr. Wigley: In view of the answer given by the Minister, can he confirm that he has detailed responsibility for unemployment in Britain, for example in places such as Delyn in Wales, which was transferred from the Welsh Office? In view of the success of the policy that he has announced in Delyn, can he arrange for a general review of general development boundaries to ensure that those places with substantially higher unemployment than Delyn will have the advantages to which he referred?

Mr. Nicholls: The hon. Gentleman, with his usual ingenuity, has taken a question about Delyn and asked me to answer it in other terms. The rate of unemployment in Delyn is not only below the average for the United Kingdom, but below the average for Wales. It might therefore be more appropriate if the hon. Gentleman stood up and said, "Thank you".

Training and Enterprise Councils

6. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what response he has received to his plans to create training and enterprise councils in the west midlands areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fowler: Five training and enterprise councils are being established in the west midlands—at Birmingham, Walsall, Wolverhampton and Dudley, and in Staffordshire. Work is also well advanced in a number of other areas, and there is no doubt that there has been an excellent employer response from the west midlands.

Mrs. Hicks: I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer. We are positively encouraged by the speedy response to the TECs in the heart of the manufacturing part of Britain. Will he give an assurance that when the Wolverhampton TEC is established there will be sufficient staff and adequate incentive funding fully to meet training needs and to give the response that we need in the area? Will he tell me, in general terms, whether he recognises the policy of resources for the enterprise element of the councils?

Mr. Fowler: Yes, I think that I can give my hon. Friend an assurance on both counts. Certainly, we recognise the importance of enterprise. We have considered the position in Wolverhampton and we are satisfied that staffing will be adequate at that TEC.

Mr. John Evans: Are any of the training and development councils running courses on democracy and the conduct of ballots? If so, will the Minister attend one and explain why trade unionists have to have postal ballots for the election of their leaders, but Tory Members have a workplace ballot for the election of their leader and——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Simon Coombs: Can my right hon. Friend tell the House what efforts his Department and the national training task force are making to ensure that best practice from those TECs already established, or in the process of being established, is being made available to those still in the process of formation in the west midlands and elsewhere?

Mr. Fowler: One of the aims of the national training task force, under the brilliant chairmanship of Brian Wolfson, will be to spread good practice around Britain. The west midlands will benefit from experiences in other parts of the country. One of the aims of the TEC movement will be to share best experience.

Mr. Fatchett: In relation to the west midlands TECs, is it not the case that, as with other TECs, the pressure will be on numbers and reducing costs? Against that background, what steps and assurances will the Secretary of State take and give to make sure that disabled workers, particularly the blind, receive training opportunities of the quality that they previously enjoyed? Is the Secretary of State aware that organisations for the blind are concerned that training courses will be lost as a result of the introduction of TECs?

Mr. Fowler: I hope that we can set their minds at rest, as there is absolutely no question of that. We want the provisions for disabled and blind people to continue. The purpose of the TECs is not to save money, or to be a cost-cutting exercise, but to provide good training and to ensure that the training is delivered locally. That is the point of the reforms that we are carrying out.

7. **Mr. Trotter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will discuss with the chairman of the training and enterprise councils the need for flexibility in their agreements so as to pay regard to local circumstances and facilitate local initiative.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend and I have had a number of meetings with TEC chairmen and other interested individuals. We are confident that TECs will be given the flexibility that they need to enable them to operate effectively in their local area.

Mr. Trotter: Is my hon. Friend aware that there is enthusiastic support for TECs on Tyneside and Wearside, where it is recognised that such institutions are vital to ensure an adequate and skilled work force for the region in the future? Can he assure us that there will continue to be adequate public funding for those bodies, that there will be sufficient flexibility in their operation to enable them to encourage local initiatives, and that they will not be subjected to undue central control, particularly financial control and regulation?

Mr. Eggar: I can certainly give my hon. Friend those assurances. Perhaps I can tell those in the community that he represents, through him, that we recognise the widespread support that his local TEC enjoys. We trust that that will continue.

Mr. Eastham: In response to four questions so far, Ministers have told the House how successful their employment policy is and how many training facilities there are. If that is so, can the Minister tell us how many years it will be before unemployment is brought down to what it was 10 years ago? There are now 1 million more unemployed people than there were in 1979. How many more years will it be before the Government can tell us of a success story in reducing unemployment?

Mr. Eggar: How many more years will it be before Opposition Members recognise that we now have more people in employment than ever before? Why does the Labour party spread bad news? What about the good news in Britain?

Mr. Colin Shepherd: Is my hon. Friend aware that the answer that our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave in respect of the blind will be much appreciated at the Royal National College for the Blind in Hereford, where a keen interest is taken in these matters?

Is my hon. Friend further aware that in our part of the world we have a large number of comparatively small employers, all of whom are enthusiastic about TECs? Can he tell us what progress is being made with the TEC for Hereford and Worcester?

Mr. Eggar: I hope that I can reassure my hon. Friend in regard to the blind and the disabled. It is important that local organisations for the disabled work closely with local TECs so that the needs are fully understood by both sides. Good progress is being made in Hereford and Worcester. I take my hon. Friend's point about the number of small employers.

Industrial Disputes

8. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many working days have been lost through industrial disputes in the period January to September 1989; and what was the figure for the comparable periods in 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Fowler: It is provisionally estimated that 3,237,000 working days were lost through industrial disputes in the period January to September 1989. In the corresponding period in 1987, 3,284,000 days were lost, and in 1988 the figure was 3,427,000.

The annual average of days lost through industrial disputes in the 1970s was almost 13 million.

Mr. Wallace: As recent figures are clearly much lower than those for the 1970s, and as the figures that the Secretary of State gave appear relatively stable for the past three years, why does the right hon. Gentleman see a need in this Session for further hostile measures designed to put even more restraint on people in employment in relation to the right to strike? Is it not time to seek more constructive ways to improve industrial relations through partnership in industry?

Mr. Fowler: I certainly agree about the importance of partnership in industry, but our proposals concern unofficial action, as a result of which we still lose a tremendous number of days each year. We are also putting an end to the pre-entry closed shop. I hope that the hon. Member will support us and that the Labour party will get its act together and support us, too.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Has my right hon. Friend noticed that whereas in 1979 private sector strikes accounted for three quarters of all strikes, today private sector strikes account for only 50 per cent. of all strikes, showing that the public sector is becoming more irresponsible as the private sector becomes more responsible? Has he also noticed that unofficial strikes are now a third of all strikes and is not that why we need the proposals contained in the Green Paper and a Bill as soon as possible?

Mr. Fowler: What my hon. Friend says about unofficial strikes is undoubtedly the case. We are losing far too many days through unofficial strike action. I believe that when the House sees the legislation that we propose it will have the support of the great majority of Members.

Ms. Short: Does the Secretary of State agree that the industrial dispute that concerns everybody in Britain is the ambulance workers' dispute? He will know that overwhelmingly the people of Britain think that the Government are wrong and that the dispute should be settled. Will he now use his office, in the spirit of the approaching period of Christmas, to agree to arbitration so that we can obtain a settlement and get the ambulances back on the road? That is what the people of Britain really want.

Mr. Fowler: I hear what the hon. Lady says, but the position on the ambulance dispute has been set out only today by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health in one of the national newspapers. Arbitration has never been inserted into the Whitley council procedure in the Health Service——

Mr. Cryer: As ordained by God and Mrs. Thatcher.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fowler: —and it would not be right to set such a precedent now.

Channel Tunnel (Tourism)

9. **Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will hold discussions to ensure that, following the opening of the Channel tunnel, Suffolk and Norfolk are fully promoted as tourist centres.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 28 November that the Government funds that the regional tourist boards receive to promote and develop tourism in their regions, including East Anglia, will almost double from 1 April 1990.

Mr. Porter: Will my hon. Friend accept the congratulations of those involved in employment in the industry in East Anglia on his answer, but will he bear in mind that many people are worried that when the Channel tunnel has opened, Suffolk and Norfolk will be rather left behind? Isolation is all very well for tourism, but people need to be able to get to a place in order to enjoy it.

Mr. Nicholls: My hon. Friend makes a fair point. A number of challenges are open to the tourist industry in relation to the Channel tunnel and we should be mindful of them. The White Paper, "Roads for Prosperity", shows that there could be real advantages for communications between his area and the Channel tunnel. However, it is fair to remind us of that point and I accept it.

Mr. Michael Welsh: The Channel tunnel will play an important part in tourism and I hope that its opening will come quickly. Will the Minister take steps to ensure that it does, so that business people in the north, especially in Doncaster, can benefit from it?

Mr. Nicholls: I am sure that the people in the north will want the Channel tunnel as much as everyone else. I accept the implication of what the hon. Gentleman says—that the Channel tunnel has advantages for all areas of the country, not merely the south-east.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: My hon. Friend accepts the importance of good communications in ensuring that more tourists from the continent and elsewhere visit Norfolk and Suffolk, but does he also accept the need for a greater emphasis on rail links? Will he do all that he can to persuade his right hon. and hon. Friends that the terminal link should be at Stratford rather than King's Cross.

Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Nicholls: It seems that I have unwittingly entered into a source of private disagreement and grief. I would only say that in 1988 British residents spent about 40 million nights and £555 million in East Anglia, so whatever the state of the rail links it seems that East Anglia is not doing too badly.

Health and Safety

10. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how he plans to extend health and safety protection at work.

Mr. Nicholls: Increased resourcing for the Health and Safety Commission is enabling new risks from changing modern technology to be tackled on a number of fronts. Excellent progress has been made with our programme to modernise health and safety law, and to extend it as necessary. The Health and Safety Executive's programmes for advice, inspection and published guidance are being expanded to stimulate industry to improve safety performance.

Ms. Armstrong: How will cuts in the staffing of the Health and Safety Executive enable us to make sure that the regulations about which the Minister has talked, and which I very much support, are put into effect?

Mr. Nicholls: I shall say something to the hon. Lady that I have to say all too often to Labour Members. There is no question of resources to the HSE being cut. Those resources are at least as good as what was spent under the last Labour Administration. For three years running, its public expenditure survey bid for resources has been met in full. That analysis is the correct one. The analysis that the hon. Lady advances is not.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Can my hon. Friend confirm that one of the problems with health and safety lies in the construction industry and the failure of many workers to wear hard hats on site? How can he justify exempting Sikhs from having to wear hard hats?

Mr. Nicholls: My hon. Friend makes at least one valuable point by reminding us that the prime responsibility for health and safety on constructions sites, and in the workplace generally, has to lie with those who are there. It is not up to the inspectorate to act as the police men of safety on sites. However, my hon. Friend will be the first to admit that the question whether Sikhs should wear helmets on sites is a difficult one and not one on which it was easy to reach a quick and simplistic conclusion. We think we got it right. My hon. Friend thinks that we did not get it right, and on that we shall have to differ.

Mr. Cryer: As the Minister has plans to extend the health and safety at work provisions, can he tell us what has happened to the legislation on manual handling of loads, which has been in draft form since 1982, and would contribute greatly to preventing industrial injuries? If the Government can pour out a torrent of legislation against trade unions, why can they not produce legislation of this importance, to reduce injuries at work? As the Minister knows, days lost through that far and away exceed the number of days lost through strike action.

Mr. Nicholls: Presumably, the hon. Gentleman cannot be aware of the fact that the Health and Safety Commission is a tripartite body. Therefore, before any regulations or proposed legislation can be put to Ministers, they have to pass through a complicated process to ensure that all sides of industry have their say. There is no question of the Government having dragged their feet, but if the hon. Gentleman is interested in tripartite structures, he will have to accept that bringing proposals forward might not happen as speedily as he would want.

Mr. Hind: Is not Britain far ahead of our EEC partners in health and safety protection at work? Does my hon. Friend agree that when it comes to protecting the worker in the workplace, in terms both of employment and health and safety, we need no lessons from the Europeans and certainly no social charter?

Mr. Nicholls: My hon. Friend is entirely right. We are very much in advance in this, and the Europeans have nothing to teach us either in regard to legislation or in the vigour with which it is implemented.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: If the Minister is serious in saying that we need no lessons on health and safety, how is it that every year there are over 200,000 injuries at work and that every working day two people die? The Government's response has been to cut by over 100 the number of factory inspectors responsible for monitoring that situation. Is the Minister not guilty of the most disgraceful complacency when he tells my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) that we have to wait for seven years for proposals to see the light of day? Are not the Government simply indifferent about what happens to working people at their place of work?

Mr. Nicholls: The fact that the hon. Gentleman is even capable of making such a remark shows how unwise it is to write a supplementary question before hearing the answer to the main question. I have already pointed out to the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) that the resources to the Health and Safety Commission have not been cut, are at least as good as under the last Labour Administration and, for the past three years, have been met in full. If the hon. Gentleman thinks that one can abolish accidents and fatalities at work simply by increasing the number of inspectors, he has an attitude to these matters that is so simplistic that, even coming from the Labour Benches, it is quite staggering.

Training and Enterprise Councils

11. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many training and enterprise councils have received funding in London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The response from employers in London has been encouraging. Development funding has been awarded to a TEC covering Kingston and Merton; other applications are currently being developed.

Mr. Greenway: Is my hon. Friend aware that hundreds of new businesses have been established by the Ealing enterprise agency and that thousands of jobs have been created as a consequence since I founded that body some years ago? Is there a chance that we could now have funding for a TEC in Ealing so that the work of my Ealing enterprise agency, which only operates in the private sector, may be furthered?

Mr. Eggar: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his initiative in the Ealing enterprise agency. I am sure that it has been a significant contributor to the local economy. We understand that representatives from Ealing are participating in the development of a bid for a west London TEC and we anticipate that the application may be submitted by the end of January.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Can the Minister tell us what efforts will be made to ensure that the interests of education, local government and employees are represented on TECs in London and elsewhere?

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has recently appointed a chief education officer to join the national training task force. A number of chief local government officers and education officers are already represented on different TECs, and we are confident that the education interest will be adequately represented.

Labour Statistics

12. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are now in employment; and what was the figure in 1979.

Mr. Fowler: In June 1989 the work force in employment in the United Kingdom was 26,343,000. This is the highest level ever in the history of this country. The figure for June 1979 was 25,365,000 so there has been an increase of nearly 1 million over the 10-year period.

Mr. Pawsey: As unemployment in Rugby is now less than 3 per cent., I cannot say that the figures that my right hon. Friend cited are particularly surprising. But does he agree that those figures vindicate the policies of his Department and of the present Government? Does he further agree that our country's economic situation is reflected in growing prosperity and an increasing number of jobs?

Mr. Fowler: I think that that is unquestioned. My hon. Friend is exactly right. He could have added that our rate of unemployment is now below that of virtually every other country in the European Community.

Mr. James Lamond: Before the Minister gets carried away with his own boasting, should he not remember that the 26 million people in employment include many hundreds of thousands—perhaps millions—who have been forced into part-time employment? They also include many hundreds of thousands who have lost good jobs—for example in the hospital cleaning services—and who have been forced by privatisation to accept longer hours, shorter holidays and much worse conditions just to get back to work.

Mr. Fowler: It would be a great pity if the hon. Gentleman sought to give the impression that part-time work somehow does not count. It may not count for him, but every survey conducted by the labour force survey has shown that nine out of 10 people in part-time employment want part-time jobs. That fact should be recognised by the Opposition. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I ask hon. Members to desist from private conversations, as it is very difficult to hear hon. Members who have the Floor, even from this end of the Chamber.

Mr. Barry Field: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the fact that we have one of the lowest unemployment rates in the whole of the EEC means that we should proceed with the utmost caution in the adoption of the social charter, which is likely to destroy jobs rather than create them?

Mr. Fowler: The acid test of the social charter must be whether it creates jobs. We must be concerned that a number of provisions set out in the charter and the action plan add to labour costs and will therefore destroy jobs rather than create them.

Mr. McLeish: Does the Secretary of State accept that between 1979 and 1989, the employment gap between north and south has widened dramatically? Is he aware that while 1,156,000 jobs in civilian employment were created in the south, the north lost 358,000 jobs? Would he describe that as a regional policy or a regional sell-out?

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman ignores the reduction in unemployment. The position has improved steadily throughout the country and it has improved in the north and also in every region. It is a great pity that the Opposition do not acknowledge the real improvement in employment in this country.

Mr. Evennett: How many self-employed people are there in the work force in 1989 and how many were there in 1979?

Mr. Fowler: There has been a substantial increase of about 1·2 million since June 1979 to 3·1 million today. In other words, self-employment has undoubtedly expanded very quickly to the benefit of the public in this country.

Job Creation

13. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make it his policy to discourage the creation of more jobs in south-east England.

Mr. Eggar: No, Sir. We wish to see more jobs created throughout the United Kingdom, including in the south-east.

Mr. Wardell: While thanking the Minister for that reply, may I ask him to have urgent talks with the Secretary of State for Transport and the Secretary of State for Wales to ensure that there is a reduction in public expenditure in the London docklands to bail out speculative development in transport which is leading to overheating of the economy and the generation of inflationary pressures? In Wales we continue to suffer because we are the only country in the United Kingdom with an incomplete motorway in the form of the M4. That motorway has still not been completed after 10 years of this Government. Higher tolls on the Severn bridge have been proposed and funding for the road programme in Wales is to be cut as a consequence of EC funding reductions. Will the Minister stop overheating the economy in that way?

Mr. Eggar: I am surprised at the hon. Gentleman. Why did he not use the opportunity in his question to point out that unemployment in Wales has fallen by over 40 per cent. in the past two years? Why does he not talk to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales about the vast amount of public money that is going into the valleys initiative and the redevelopment of Cardiff?

Mr. Rowe: Does my hon. Friend accept that in Kent we are perfectly willing to share our jobs with the rest of the United Kingdom? However, one of the greatest single obstacles to achieving that will be if British Rail builds a railway line that cannot carry freight wagons of the European gauge. If that happens many firms will choose to set up in Kent because it will be too difficult to get their freight through the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Eggar: I have nothing but admiration for my hon. Friend's ability to get in questions about the rail link through his constituency and mine under almost any excuse whatsoever. I congratulate him on that.

Mr. Ron Brown: Is the Minister aware that many jobs in Scotland and the north of England will go down the shute—namely the Channel tunnel—because the Government have put forward no guarantees on jobs?

Bearing in mind all the wheeling and dealing backed by Government, is it not an absolute disgrace that they have not come forward with any guarantees for the future of the people who matter? What is the Government's philosophy for the future? Will they say that the EC is all right or do the British people not matter?

Mr. Eggar: I am not sure whether I entirely followed the hon. Gentleman.

East Lancashire Training and Enterprise Council

14. **Mr. Lee:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the progress of the East Lancashire training and enterprise council.

Mr. Eggar: On 12 July this year my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced that development funding had been approved for the East Lancashire TEC. The group is now working on its corporate and business plans with a view to becoming operational in April next year.

Mr. Lee: My hon. Friend will know of my support for the TEC programme in general and for the East Lancashire TEC in particular. I thank him for his answer. Given the excellent range of training facilities in north-east Lancashire, particularly at the Nelson and Colne college and the Pendle training group, where will the vital pump-priming resources come from to provide lifetime training for those in work?

Mr. Eggar: I readily acknowledge my hon. Friend's major role in the development of the policy on TECs and the way in which he has supported his own TEC. Of couse, he will want to talk to his TEC, which will want to consider how it can play a role in helping employers in his area in the development of lifetime training.

New Businesses

16. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will detail the number of small firms which have started business in the last year and over the past decade.

Mr. Eggar: In 1988, the latest year for which figures have been published, the net increase in the number of VAT-registered businesses was 64,000, an average of just over 1,200 per week. Since 1979, the net increase has been 285,000, an average of around 600 a week over the whole period.

Mr. Fearn: Does the Minister recognise that tourism plays an important part in those figures, which are extremely good, but that it needs help? Does he recognise that some small tourism businesses are in great difficulties because of the withdrawal of section 4 grants? Does he intend to give any more assistance to small tourist businesses?

Mr. Eggar: Of course, tourism has been a great success story over the past 10 years. There has been a massive increase in employment in tourism, and I note the hon. Gentleman's point.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Wood:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 December.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have my regular audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Mr. Wood: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. Will my right hon. Friend join me in welcoming the reaffirmation of NATO at yesterday's meeting of Heads of Government in Brussels, and also the renewal of the United States commitment to keeping American troops and nuclear weapons in Europe?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Mr. Speaker. We had an excellent summit in Brussels yesterday, all of us reaffirming the importance of NATO for the stability and security it has brought and also welcoming the reassurance of the President of the United States that he will station significant armed forces and nuclear weapons in Europe as long as his allies wish it. We felt also that the negotiations on conventional weapons take place through the NATO pact and the Warsaw pact and that, therefore, both must continue. Altogether it was a very successful summit, and the President gave us an excellent account of his talks with Mr. Gorbachev. We welcome the changes that are taking place in eastern Europe.

Mr. Kinnock: Does the Prime Minister agree with President Bush's view that changes in eastern Europe absolutely mandate new thinking on East-West relations and on the European Community? What new changes is the right hon. Lady now making in her thinking?

The Prime Minister: At the summit yesterday, as I indicated, it was agreed that it is important to keep NATO going. Its security and the concept of NATO have been a winning combination and have been the reason for some of the changes that we are witnessing in eastern Europe. It has not been through our being weak with the Soviet Union, but through our being strong with them that we are now seeing some of the moves to freedom.

Mr. Kinnock: It will be apparent that there was neither newness nor much thinking in that answer. Is it not obvious that the Prime Minister has great difficulty in coping with the great changes that are taking place in eastern Europe? Is that not the reason, as many in her own party agree, that she is being increasingly pushed towards the margin in both the Alliance and the Community? What good does that do to our country?

The Prime Minister: Nonsense. The right hon. Gentleman was never very much in favour of NATO because he could not underwrite its nuclear deterrent, which is an essential force. Closer European integration causes us no problems. It was we who proposed the single market completion by 1992, and it was also we who implemented most of the directives. With regard to President Bush and his views on the European market, the right hon. Gentleman will be interested to know that he telephoned me shortly before I came into the House to say that his views on European integration had not changed in any way and that there was no change in his position, which is one of full support for completion of the single market in 1992 and for an open and liberal Europe. That is what we stand for, but it is not what the right hon. Gentleman stands for.

Mr. Kinnock *rose—[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinnock: Does that not provide us with an interesting insight into the Prime Minister's present thinking—if she has to receive a reassuring telephone call from the President before she can say anything?

The Prime Minister: That is absolute nonsense. If the right hon. Gentleman is reduced to making that accusation, I must remind him that he has been totally isolated on NATO for years and isolated in many ways on the European Economic Community. We are up to date. In fact, our actions have been responsible in many ways for the very good changes that we have seen.

Sir Bernard Braine: Will my right hon. Friend today give consideration to the fact that all the peoples of eastern Europe are now moving towards freedom, but the Poles are experiencing acute shortages of basic foodstuffs and medicines and people will die unnecessarily this winter unless urgent relief is sent? Since the Roman Catholic Church—thank God—in Poland has the necessary means of distribution, will my right hon. Friend order an airlift straight away?

The Prime Minister: As my right hon. Friend knows, this matter was raised both at the economic summit and at the recent Paris summit. During the last part of the current year, we have provided £60 million to purchase food and to send it to Poland. We are assured that the supplies are getting through, and more will be committed for next year. I have also been in touch with some of the voluntary organisations, and in particular with Lady Ryder of Warsaw, who has told me that the organisations are ready to let their lorries roll and to take more food into Poland. I shall be keeping in touch to see whether that is necessary. There is no shortage of money for providing the food.

Mr. Ashdown: Despite the Prime Minister's words, is it not the case that she will end up totally isolated at the forthcoming summit at Strasbourg—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ashdown: What will the Prime Minister do to end that isolation in these last remaining days before Strasbourg, or is she determined to remain in the past and to condemn this country to a future without friends, without influence and without a role in Europe in the future?

The Prime Minister: What nonsense. The right hon. Gentleman comes out with that question almost every time like a cracked gramophone record. He is isolated if he thinks that this House would accept stage 2 or 3 of the Delors report, because it has indicated clearly that it would not. I hope that he will support us on 1992 and on the measures necessary to complete the single market. I would also hope—although I do not have very much faith—that he will support us on a liberal open-market economy.

Mr. Gardiner: Will my right hon. Friend act to dispel any baseless suggestions that she is some kind of "narrow little nationalist"? Will she emphasise that she has always advocated a sharing of responsibility and of sovereignty where that is to the clear economic advantage of all members of the European Community?

The Prime Minister: I think that this country has probably done as much as any other country in the European Community over the years for the freedom of Europe, for staunchness as allies in NATO and to move forward the Common Market. Yes, we continue to act as a sovereign country in respect of everything coming before this House. We believe that the future of Europe is best achieved through sovereign countries co-operating together rather than by trying to force us into a mould which would not fit all the countries of Europe.

Q3. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Prime Minister is she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Mahon: Since this might be the last time that the Prime Minister answers questions at the Dispatch Box—*[Interruption.]*—will she tell us her proudest achievement? Is it the number of homeless? Is it the deeply unpopular poll tax or is it the image of a Government who resort to seedy bribes to get their privatisation programme through?

The Prime Minister: I shall hope to see the hon. Lady in her place on Thursday as usual, she in her position and I in mine. My proudest achievements have been bringing Britain from the decline of Socialism to the prosperity of Conservatism, spending almost half as much again in real terms on all the social services, being a staunch ally, and known to be a staunch ally, the world over and restoring the respect for Britain overseas.

Q4. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Bowden: In making an assessment of the most direct and cost-effective Channel tunnel rail link between the United Kingdom and continental Europe for passengers and freight will my right hon. Friend give full consideration to the advantages of Stratford over King's Cross as the London interchange?

The Prime Minister: That will be a matter for the Chairman of the Committee which will consider the petitions against the Bill. It will be for British Rail and its joint venture partner, Eurorail, to persuade the Committee that they have made the correct choice of route and terminal.

Mr. Bidwell: Will the right hon. Lady consider dismissing the Secretary of State for Health for his gross incompetence in failing to solve the ambulance workers' dispute and for his ill-treatment of decent people?

The Prime Minister: No. As the hon. Gentleman is aware, other workers in the Health Service accepted similar offers to those that had been turned down by the ambulance service way back in April or May. Since then the ambulance workers have been offered more on an 18-months basis. I very much regret that the ambulance service is out. I am afraid it is the sick and ill who suffer.

I am glad that the ambulance service is in and operating in a number of places where it is providing accident and emergency services, but where that service is unable to do so the police and army are fulfilling its duties.

Q5. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hague: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the main pressure for the European social charter comes from trade unions and their political backers in some member states mainly because they fear that the single market is a threat to their long-established restrictive practices and their cosy co-operatives?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I agree. There are some countries that have high costs in the Community that want to saddle the rest of the Community with high costs so that those who wish to invest in the Community do not go to the lower-cost countries. Those high-cost countries call it social dumping to go to the low-cost countries. That hardly seems very communautaire to me. My hon. Friend will have seen the report that quantifies the employment prospects in this country if we adopted the social charter as presently drafted. If the minimum wages were half male average earnings it could mean that we had some 500,000 extra unemployed within three years. If the minimum wage were two thirds of average male and female earnings it could mean that about 1½ million extra people would be unemployed within three years.

Mr. Wigley: In view of the impending renewed tragedy in Ethiopia will the Prime Minister give an assurance that this Christmas rich Britain will not be impervious to the plight of those people and will give a full, generous and urgent response?

The Prime Minister: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman heard the statement by the Minister for Overseas Development who announced a further £2 million of emergency aid on 27 November. That brings the total commitment of food and emergency aid to nearly £13 million so far this year. We are in regular touch with the British voluntary organisations. The hon. Gentleman will know that one of the problems is distributing that food so that it gets to those in need and, in addition to other things, he will know of the civil war in Eritrea and Tigre.

Q7. **Mr. Knowles:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Knowles: Does my right hon. Friend—[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."] It is no good the Opposition being envious of Tory intellectual ability. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the sale of Rover to British Aerospace not only ensured that the company remained British, but ensured its long-term viable future?

The Prime Minister: Yes. The British Leyland-Rover group was a constant drain on the British taxpayer to the tune of £3 billion. At one stage in late 1988 its overdraft, which the Government had to guarantee, was of the order of £1·6 billion and showed little sign of going down. It is good to have got both British Leyland and Rover into the private sector, removed the burden on the taxpayer, kept the confidence of Rover and its distributors, and given its employees good prospects for the future.

Mr. Ron Brown: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I shall take the point of order after the statement.

Atomic Weapons Establishment

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Tom King): With permission, Mr. Speaker. I should like to make a statement on the future organisation of the Atomic Weapons Establishment. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will hon. Members who are not remaining for this important statement kindly leave quietly?

Mr. King: In its fifth report 1988-89, the Select Committee on Defence drew attention to the problems that if believed risked delay to the progress of the Trident programme. The Government have been considering the best way to address these issues.

The present position is that we believe we shall achieve the intitial production at Aldermaston and the AWE sites that will enable the Trident in-service date of the mid-1990s to be met. However, the need for increased production from 1992 for later Trident deliveries, against the background of the keen demand for skilled labour in the Thames valley area, poses an increasing challenge, and one for which a greater production management capability is required.

The Government consider that the best way to address these problems is by full contractorisation, with the land, facilities, and other assets remaining in the Government's ownership. Legislation will be required to implement this and will be introduced in due course. Under this legislation, provision would be made for the present work force to be employees of one or more operating companies.

In the meantime, and until the necessary legislation is introduced, the Government intend to appoint a management contractor who will concentrate initially on manufacturing work and site support. The contractor will strengthen the establishment by bringing in, during 1990, a small number of experienced managers from the private sector. The contractor will be selected by competition, and invitations to tender will be issued as soon as possible.

There will be no change in the purpose or direction of the establishment's programme. The first objective is to reinforce rather than to replace existing AWE management, and all the existing AWE sites will continue in operation.

The Government remain fully committed to the Trident programme, together with a strong research base to underwrite nuclear weapon capability for the future. Safety will continue to be the highest priority. A compliance office, led by a senior and suitably experienced Government official based at AWE, will monitor contract compliance and observance of safety, quality and security requirements.

Under the initial arrangements I have described, AWE personnel will remain civil servants. The work force at the establishment's sites are being informed today and consultation is being set in hand with the relevant trade unions. A consultative document which sets out in greater detail the background and the proposals I have outlined will be placed in the Library of the House this afternoon.

These changes will not affect the Aldermaston new building programme, which has been managed satisfactorily since 1988 by a private contractor operating under a Government contract.

The British nuclear deterrent is committed to NATO in support of the agreed NATO strategy of deterrence based on an appropriate mix of adequate and effective nuclear and conventional forces. The arrangements that I have announced today seek to address the valid concern of the Select Committee about the need for improvements at AWE and to ensure that the Trident programme is successfully implemented. I commend them to the House.

Mr. Martin O'Neill (Clackmannan): We have grave reservations about the privatisation of the Atomic Weapons Establishment. Frankly, we shall have to await the publication of the Bill to obtain more details, in view of the thin statement that the Secretary of State has made.

Our first concern is safety. The first report, for 1978, produced by Sir Edward Pochin, criticised the procedures. Although those procedures have been improved, we are anxious to know more about the relationship between the compliance officer and the nuclear installations inspector, for there will exist a totally different set of arrangements from anything that existed previously.

As for security, will the MOD police retain their existing responsibilities? What arrangements will exist for the four AWE sites at Aldermaston, Burghfield, Cardiff and Foulness? Will they be transferred to the same contractors and operate under the same organisational structures as at present, remembering that there is now the concept of a team approach between the four institutions?

The dockyard contractors had to await the passing of the legislation before they could take control. What statutory authority does the right hon. Gentleman have to put in management contractors before they even have any legal standing?

As the main problems concern recruitment and the retention of staff, may we be told what steps the Secretary of State proposes in the short term to ensure that, following his statement, morale will not be further damaged? For example, will he be taking any steps to enhance the pay and conditions of the work force before the contractors come in? Will there be any improvement in the present situation, with about 400 staff needed to reach the establishments' staffing levels? Will there be less need for compulsory overtime? Present staff shortages mean that people must work 12 out of every 14 days.

Does he appreciate that a tight contract the like of which I imagine he will try to introduce will have to sacrifice either staff or wages? It is clear that he will not be able to increase staff numbers and pay, if he expects contractors to come in under the sort of arrangements that were made for the dockyards.

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the experience of the privatisation of the dockyards has not been altogether happy? For example, progress at Devonport has been such that we have a long way to go before there is any improvement in the management of that plant as a result of contractorisation.

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the morale of the staff in the four establishments, who have already produced the necessary up-to-date requirements of the programme, will be severely damaged by what is proposed? That applies especially to those in middle management who have been looking forward to promotion and enhanced remuneration. Their avenues of enhancement will be blocked by the introduction of a core of professional managers.

The staff of the establishments, rather than welcoming these steps, will feel a sense of betrayal by the Government, who have not backed them with the money and support that should have been given in the past. The result is the shabby and cheap deal about which we have heard this afternoon.

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman asked a number of serious questions that deserve serious attention, but in his peroration he got carried away into an unworthy and wholly unconnected series of remarks. I am grateful to him for clearly setting out some of the problems and concerns at AWE. He referred, for example, to the problems of compulsory overtime and of retention of staff. He clearly set out why action is needed—yet when the Government come forward with proposals he accuses us of shabby action.

The Select Committee made it clear that the Government should take action in these respects. I do not accept that our action will lead to a loss of morale. We are seeking to reinforce, not to replace, the existing arrangements. The Select Committee correctly pointed to the fact that this is very much a research-dominated establishment. The production programme has particular requirements and people are being moved across from the research side to contribute to the urgent needs on the production side. The Select Committee criticised that. The hon. Gentleman should reflect on my statement and read the fuller consultative document, from which he will see that we are seeking initially to reinforce the production side so as not to draw on the valuable expertise on the research side.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the different sites; in my statement, I referred to one or more companies. Under the proposals for full contractorisation—the legislation for this will not come before the House this Session but will be introduced as soon as possible thereafter—the whole of the AWE will be covered, but exactly where the contractors are based is a matter for further consideration.

There will be no change in security arrangements or in the role of the Ministry of Defence police—that is important. As the hon. Gentleman may know, since he has taken a close interest in this, we have been taking certain steps to enhance security.

This is not privatisation: it is what is known in the jargon as GOCO—Government-owned, contractor-operated. In case anyone thinks that an incredibly radical and unheard of concept, may I say that the whole United States weapons programme for 40 years, including the Los Alamos research and development by the university of California, has been operated under this system, so it may not be quite as novel as Opposition Members think.

Mr. Michael Mates (Hampshire, East): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Select Committee will be gratified to hear that its advice has been taken, and that it is grateful to him for his kind remarks?

Is my right hon. Friend further aware that, far from ruining morale at the establishments, this is likely to cause a great rise in morale and a great sense of relief among the scientists who want to get back to their jobs and of the members of these establishments who do not feel that they have had the best management over the years? An example of this came at the end of my right hon. Friend's statement, when he said that since the contractors went into the new building the contract has been working on time and to cost. That is precisely what we all want to happen in the rest of the establishment, and we wish the changes well.

Mr. King: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's comments. He made a valid point—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) keeps muttering.

The Select Committee drew attention to the problems of retention of staff and of the difficulties posed by transfers from the research to the production side, and those are the points with which we sought to deal.

We have already moved one contract at Aldermaston from the public sector to the private sector. All who have seen the development of the new facilities there recognise the obvious success of the management of that contract in the private sector.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): Does the Secretary of State accept that there is an apparent paradox in attempting to introduce a greater degree of privatisation into nuclear energy for military purposes so soon after the failure to do so in relation to civil purposes? If suitably qualified staff have been difficult to attrct to Aldermaston because of the existence of higher salaries in the private sector, will not the introduction of a private contractor have the effect of increasing the costs of the programme? What calculation has been made of those costs, and what is the likely effect on defence spending in other areas? Will the Secretary of State take time to consider, in the light of what he has just said, whether the four-boat Trident system cannot be as effectively deployed with the same number of warheads as the existing Polaris system without going to the increased number of warheads that the D5 system apparently requires?

Mr. King: I should take up too much of the time of the House if I deployed the whole argument about the Trident system, about the problem of the sophistication of the threat against which it would be deployed and about our intention to ensure that it remains an effective and credible deterrent. We are committed to that and that is part of our commitment to NATO. I understand that the Labour party supports that position as well and that the next Labour Government will accept the financial and strategic responsibilities of inheriting the Trident programme. I welcome that, and the whole House recognises the importance of our contribution to NATO in that respect.

There is no paradox, as the hon. and learned Gentleman maintains. I thought that his party recognised that one of the great benefits of privatisation, which eastern Europe now seeks to achieve, is that one can have better wages, better performance and better productivity at lower overall public cost. The message has been learnt in British Steel, in National Freight, in Associated British Ports and in the other organisations that are now privatised. Those benefits are available to the work force in AWE as well.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his practical solution to a difficult problem. Although we all hope for the day when nuclear weapons are no longer required for our security, I assure my right hon. Friend that Conservative Members do not think that that day has come and we welcome his commitment to the Trident programme.

Mr. King: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's comments. It is true that, although I have made clear beyond question from this Dispatch Box our support for the improvement of relations between East and West, for the conventional arms reduction talks, for the START negotiations and for a reduction in strategic nuclear weapons, neither side believes at present that there is not a need to maintain adequate defences and the credible deterrent of NATO. In that connection, it is necessary to make these changes to ensure that we maintain the credibility of our contributions to NATO.

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): Will the Secretary of State accept that the main threat to Trident warhead production has been the inability of Aldermaston to recruit and to retain the key industrial staff who are needed? Will he assure us that the new arrangements will enable the contractors to operate without the dead hand of Treasury control and to offer the competitive wage rates that are necessary? If that is the case, what additional cost will be added to the Trident programme?

Mr. King: I was quite sympathetic to what the hon. Gentleman said until he came to his final remark. I have sought to make the point that, with the best possible production management expertise, and with properly motivated and rewarded staff, who have properly recruited skills and who are properly organised, we may see rather better remuneration for those working in some of the key areas at Aldermaston and they will be operating under efficient and well organised production systems. That will lead, very possibly, to no increase in costs, but to a far better guarantee of performance and an assurance that the Trident programme will be implemented.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): Can my right hon. Friend say what difference contractorisation will make to the role of the director of the establishment? Can he give some assurance about employment security for the 7,000 employees, most of whom are my constituents? Would it not make sense for Burghfield to be included with Aldermaston as both are called atomic weapons establishments and are the only two in the county?

Mr. King: I apologise to my hon. Friend if I did not make that clear. It includes Burghfield, Cardiff and Foulness. It covers all the establishments of the AWE and the Blacknest activity contained within Aldermaston. The director is due to retire in the middle of next summer and I then envisage that the management-contractor will become the chief executive of AWE.

On redundancy, the problem—particularly at Aldermaston—is one of considerable shortage, not a surplus, of people. As hon. Members have said, there is a need to improve recruitment.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the Secretary of State accept that, when the Select Committee on Defence examined the contractorisation of the dockyards, it rejected the idea in two reports? Will he also accept that what is being suggested today is the privatisation of plutonium and nuclear warheads? That is not acceptable to the vast majority of Opposition Members. Will the right hon. Gentleman concede that he is creating competition to supply nuclear warheads to Her Majesty's Government?

Mr. King: In kindness to the hon. Gentleman, he should read the document containing greater detail which is in the Library and he will then see how inaccurate his comments are.

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): Will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity to acknowledge the contribution made by AWE Foulness to the overall atomic weapons programme? Is he aware that employees at Foulness do not enjoy all the financial benefits of those employed by AWE in the Thames valley? Will he ensure that those employees have a competitive salary now so that they can be retained rather than pay a competitive salary later to regain them?

Mr. King: I should like to look further into my hon. Friend's point as I have not heard it raised before. I can assure him that either myself or the Minister will look into it.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Contrary to the belief of the Secretary of State and the Government that commercialisation can solve all problems, will the right hon. Gentleman give some thought to the probability that the setting up of a single purpose commercial organisation to increase production at Aldermaston may create a different form of problem for Aldermaston and Cardiff, which is where many of my constituents work? If the Trident system becomes the subject of multilateral negotiations, one problem will be how one has a commercial organisation able to handle—with the same flexibility as when it is under Ministry of Defence control—the conversion of factories. For example, the AWE factory at Llanishen needs to be retained as one of the premier precision engineering factories in south Wales so that we do not lose those skills if the Trident programme becomes part of disarmament negotiations in the next couple of years.

Mr. King: This proposal is intended to reinforce production skills and the capability of production organisation and management. That is important as there is a production job to be done. It is generally recognised by all who have studied that problem at Aldermaston that there is a shortage of adequate production management expertise. We are seeking to address that problem in an effective way while retaining Government ownership of all the assets and facilities involved. That must be right.

The compliance office will be responsible directly to me for safety and security, which are obviously of great concern to the House. However, we see no early prospect of any change. We have made it absolutely clear that we are not prepared to leave the country defenceless while other countries retain nuclear weapons. Therefore, although the Trident programme represents only a modest and limited deterrent when compared with the Soviet Union and its scale of nuclear weaponry, we believe that we should maintain our limited but credible and effective deterrent. That is the Government's policy, but others may intend to get rid of it. If I were a constituent of the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan), I would be worried about that.

Sir David Mitchell (Hampshire, North-West): Can my right hon. Friend assure me that the changes he announced today will have no effect on the status of AWE housing in Tadley, Baughurst and other places where employees are now housed in property owned by those establishments?

Mr. King: I give an absolute assurance about interim arrangements. As far as I know, it will make no difference to subsequent arrangements after the House has approved the legislation for full contractorisation. In the short term there will be no difference, but we shall need to give that point careful consideration when drafting the legislation. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising it.

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): The Secretary of State's statement was extremely thin. As a member of the Select Committee, I do not welcome it because I do not know what it involves. All that the Secretary of State says is that it is contractorisation. The report of the Select Committee referred to the problems with contractorisation at the A90. The "World in Action" programme on Balfour Kilpatrick also referred to those problems. Contractorisation is already causing great problems. Exactly what does the Secretary of State mean by it? The Select Committee found that pay and conditions and staff shortages were a problem. Contractorisation will achieve nothing. It is a smokescreen.

Mr. King: We recognise that there are problems in retaining staff and there have been complaints about pay and remuneration in this area, which is probably the most competitive in the United Kingdom for skilled labour. I say that in respect of Aldermaston and Burghfield; it is not so true for Cardiff. Against that background, as the hon. Member knows—he is a member of the Select Committee that studied the matter—there are real problems in this research-dominated establishment. There is a shortage of production management expertise. With such a shortage of skilled labour, it is important that labour is properly and effectively organised—

Mr. McFall: And properly paid.

Mr. King: Exactly—under schemes that ensure that productivity is achieved and that people are rewarded for it. Perhaps hon. Members did not hear what I said to the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright). I made it clear that there will be new contractors with properly organised production management and arrangements under which it is likely that people will be better rewarded for productivity in a well-run production unit.

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North): Although I welcome the statement, nothing that my right hon. Friend has said should be seen as a reflection on the factory in my constituency in Cardiff where an excellent work force strives for the highest standards. On the contrary, he is proposing a way to create a better basis for employment for all the employees in the Cardiff factory and in other AWEs which remain a vital part of our country's defences.

Mr. King: As we know, that has been the experience. We do not have to make extravagant claims because the experience is firmly established. It has attracted the attention of many other countries, not least in eastern Europe, which sees the great damage that state ownership and public control and management can cause and the benefits from contractorisation.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Does the Secretary of State understand that some Opposition Members unambiguously welcome any problems and delays in the implementation of the Trident programme? Why does he expect the attempt partially to privatise the military nuclear industry to be any more successful than the attempt wholly to privatise the civil nuclear industry?

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman and his party are entitled to their view about the need for Britain to maintain a nuclear deterrent and to be a loyal and effective member of NATO. I am not sure what his party's defence policy is, but if it does not support NATO, it is in a small minority in the House and in the country.

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): I applaud my right hon. Friend's decision. I believe that it will be widely welcomed. Is he aware that a handful of my constituents who work at Aldermaston will be apprehensive? Will he address himself to the familiar argument, which I expect that we shall hear again, that any delay in the Trident programme has been caused more by private contractors than by public servants and that the introduction of private management will not get to the heart of the problem?

Mr. King: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his broad welcome. I understand entirely the initial feeling of the workers there. When any change is announced it creates uncertainty and anxiety. That is why I have sought to ensure that full consultative arrangements and consultative documents are available. In that way the proposals can be explained as quickly as possible to the people involved. The proposals can only be of benefit and will be of material advantage to many of the workers because of the problems that we face. Any competent management contractor will need to get the support of the work force if he is to do an effective job. Indeed, that will be one of his objectives and he will seek to address those points. The proposals are not bad news for the work force.

My hon. Friend asked for the reasons for the delays. A shortage of management expertise in production has been identified. We have addressed that shortage in construction, and I reported to the House that that is going well, but we must still address that problem on the production side. That is why I have made the statement. The other issues which hon. Members have raised—what about this, what about that—will become the responsibility of those who can bring considerable expertise and abilities to tackling the problems.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must have regard to the subsequent business. There is a heavy demand to speak in the debate, so I shall end questions on the statement by 4.15 pm. If hon. Members ask brief questions, I shall be able to call all of them.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): May I voice extreme technical scepticism? Even given the Government's assumptions on Trident, why is more research and a greater capability needed if the programme is going as smoothly as we are told? What does the Secretary of State say in answer to the anxiety expressed at the recent Royal Society meeting that our real problem is that, whereas the Japanese spend 2 per cent. of their research and development budget on military research and the Germans spend 12 per cent., we in Britain spend 47 per cent? A shortage of technical skill is precisely one of the problems of the British economy and British industry.

Mr. Speaker: Briefly, please.

Mr. Dalyell: Is that not adding to the problem? Is not the Secretary of state being taken for a technical ride?

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman asked my permission to express extreme scepticism. I doubt whether I could prevent him from expressing scepticism on any issue which he chose to raise. I explained the background and said that the programme seemed to be going well, so the hon. Gentleman asked why there was a need for change. As I said in my statement, we believe that we shall achieve the initial in-service dates, but there is a need for increased production for Trident deliveries from 1992. We face real problems with the operation in the Thames valley area and there is no realistic prospect of relocating those facilities. It is perhaps the most difficult area in which to recruit scarce skilled labour resources. Against that background, the Select Committee identified problems of retention and skills shortages, and we have taken the action that we have.

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): My right hon. Friend can rest assured that those of us who have major defence interests in our constituencies understand the difference between contractorisation and privatisation, and that we welcome the sensible way forward. Will he, however, clear up the confusion that arose at the start of questions following the statement? Reference was made to the Ministry of Defence police role. Surely what is meant is the role of the Atomic Energy Authority constabulary. Will he confirm that Mr. Reddington, the chief constable of that authority, has been consulted and that operational arrangements in particular for atomic energy transport and for guarding nuclear convoys will not be changed?

Mr. King: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what he said about the arrangements and for his emphasis on the clear distinction between contractorisation and privatisation. I can confirm that there is no change in security arrangements.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): Does the Secretary of State accept that safety and security are extremely important matters and that both of them are as important as productivity? Is he not creating a fragmented management structure and chain of command, which is likely to cause difficulties? Is he not insulting the standard of management at the establishments, including the one in Cardiff, in a way that seems gratuitous, or is he simply confessing that he and the Government have not done a good job of managing resources over the years?

Mr. King: The hon. Member is giving the problem serious consideration and I agree with the first part of what he said. On reflection, he may recall that I said that safety will continue to have the highest priority. I also made it clear, when I set up the compliance office, that it will have direct responsibility to me for issues of safety, quality and security. That is important, and I shall certainly insist on it.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is nothing radically new in involving contractors in work at the AWE at Aldermaston? When I worked there as a project manager for an outside company in 1985, there were many other companies on site. Does he also agree that the greatest single problem, apart from pay, in terms of job satisfaction which faces scientists there is that they are not able to get on with science? They are sucked into production or other peripheral management duties. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the statement will enable them to get back to the work that they want to do and that the nation needs them to do?

Mr. King: I never cease to be amazed by the breadth of my hon. Friend's management experience. The whole House has listened to his first-hand and interesting report, and I am grateful for his strong endorsement of the changes.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Is it not true that the real reason for contractorisation is that the Government have lost confidence in the science-based management at Aldermaston? Is it not true that there have been repeated arguments between departmental officials and the people who run the site there? If all that I have said is true, would it not have been better to have cleaned out the management and put in a management representing the state rather than the curious system of contractorisation that is being proposed?

Mr. King: I think all hon. Members know of the hon. Gentleman's ability to translate any situation into the most malign scenario.

There have been problems needing the transfer of people on research, and the Select Committee commented on that in its report. That was due to shortages on the production side. Being science-based does not mean that one is a great expert on modern management and production techniques. We believe that contractorisation is the best way to approach the problem and get the most effective people available.

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, if the new system works effectively, it will be possible for scientists to get on with their research, and to spend a lot more of their time doing so, rather than being bogged down in red tape? Will he also confirm that security will be considerably enhanced because turnover should drop dramatically, and that will lead to greater stability in the work force and to a more secure work force?

Mr. King: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that important issue. It is not satisfactory when, albeit under public management, a number of people are recruited but not retained. We incur considerable costs and requirements for vetting procedures are obviously necessary. If we can establish a stable and effective private management contractual operation, which will be subject to the normal vetting requirements, the operation will be able to retain people, and we are likely to have a more secure operation than in the present unsatisfactory situation.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): When one considers the implications of the subject, is it not the height of folly to introduce any element of profit or privatisation into it? After the events of the past few months, and the talks in Malta and elsewhere, is it not the height of frivolity to continue the production of what are, presumably, bigger and better weapons? Who are we likely to use them against? Is it not true that the only safe way forward for contractors and the rest of humanity is to end the proliferation, and is that not best achieved by Britain taking the lead?

Mr. King: I know that the whole House recognises the consistency of the hon. Gentleman's position, but his argument is really more with his Front Bench and the leader of his party, who made it clear that the next Labour Government will accept the financial and strategic responsibilities of inheriting the Trident programme. The Leader of the Opposition said that Labour has an "absolutely dependable defence policy". The hon. Gentleman had better direct his questions in that direction.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the explanation is rather more simple than the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) suggests with his conspiracy theory? The very good quality people at Aldermaston were trained as scientists, not as industrial engineers and production managers. They should be allowed to get back to the work they do best and people who can do the other job best —outside contractors—should be brought in. If that were not done, the Government would be failing in their duty to defend the country, as we would not have the fissile material we need for our submarines.

Mr. King: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He has explained the situation simply, clearly and precisely. That is why we have taken these steps.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): Despite all the Secretary of State's bluster about defence, was he not faced with the straightforward problem of staff shortages and difficulty in recruiting people because conditions of employment do not match up to what can be obtained in outside industry? Instead of allowing the law of supply and demand to work, he has put forward this extraordinary solution of putting the work out to contract. The contractors will have to pay better wages and provide better conditions to attract the men they want. They are not like contractors in the Health Service and elsewhere for cleaning services, who can force people who cannot find work anywhere else to accept low pay and poor conditions. The people whom the Secretary of State is trying to recruit are in what they regard as a seller's market, so it must cost the country more to pursue this solution.

Mr. King: When I was Secretary of State for Employment, we conducted a study of the training needs of, and skilled labour problems in, the Thames valley. Every firm that identified a shortage of skilled labour as the greatest difficulty for the coming 10 years said that it would poach staff from the firm next door. Putting up wages is manifestly not the whole solution to the shortage of skilled labour. We must ensure that skilled labour, which I believe will continue to be a scarce commodity in the Thames valley, is managed and used efficiently and effectively.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hoped to be able to call all hon. Members who have been rising in their places, but I shall call only two more from each side and then move on to the next business.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): As major changes such as this, however well directed, cause great distress and uncertainty about pensions, promotion and housing, will my right hon. Friend tell many of my constituents who work in Foulness whether they will get a small pamphlet, not a bulk consultation document, setting out the implications of the changes for employees and giving the name of someone who can be consulted if there is any doubt? Will he use as a guide the especially bad performance, sadly, of the Treasury's announcement in the Autumn Statement of the decision to move about 700 jobs from Southend? Will he try to consult employees and tell them all the facts promptly and where they can go if they do not know the answers?

Mr. King: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, and entirely agree that statements such as these often confuse more than they clarify. I am willing to respond. If my hon. Friend would like to give me the questions that he thinks his constituents would like to be answered, I shall try to reply to them.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Does the Secretary of State understand that the real anxieties being expressed, not least by Conservative Members, arise because we all know from reading the history books, not from consulting a crystal ball, that contractorisation inevitably leads to worse working conditions, including pension rights, training and hours of work? What assurance can he give that, under the new arrangements, such rights, which have been hard won, will be protected? In view of recent events, what assurance can he give that a contractorised service will not be a far greater security risk than a public sector service?

Mr. King: I sought to address the hon. Gentleman's last point when I answered the interesting question put by my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) when I said that we faced some unsatisfactory situations with the rapid turnover of employees, some with quite short service. That is not at all satisfactory from the security point of view. The background against which the proposals have been made is an acute shortage of people and a recognition of the fact that there may well have to be some improvement in opportunities for people within the plants so that we can attract people with the skills that we need, and against that background the hon. Gentleman's comments do not stack up. It is not open to the sort of criticisms that he seeks to make.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): Should not this be seen as a thoroughly sensible management decision to deal with a particular production problem in this area? My right hon. Friend also mentioned the American experience —publicly owned, privately run—and many of us feel that that example could be followed throughout his Department. Will he give us some guarantee that it will have further application?

Mr. King: I am not sure whether my hon. Friend is suggesting that that is the way that we should operate the Ministry of Defence, but I shall take his suggestion seriously. The application where possible of that principle can have benefits. What it comes down to, as several of my hon. Friends have perceptively said, is the need to get the best people available to do the jobs that need to be done. That is not a radical concept, and it should be applied wherever possible.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): In view of the acute shortage of workers, will the Secretary of State reassure the work force on safety at the AWEs under

[Mr. Roland Boyes]

the new procedures? The right hon. Gentleman has said that safety is important, and we welcome that, but has he studied the problems in the United States, particularly the Savannah river arms plant in south Carolina, which caused two of its four plants to be abandoned and two others to be temporarily closed because production was placed above health considerations and a safe environment?

Does the right hon. Gentleman recall what Admiral Watkins, the Secretary of State for Energy in the new Administration, said when he first took over his department? He accused America's crumbling nuclear weapons industry of

"ineptitude, mismanagement and deliberately ignoring safety rules".

Will the right hon. Gentleman give us an assurance this afternoon that our work force will not be subject to such conditions and risks?

Mr. King: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his comments. We looked carefully at the American experience in that respect. There have clearly been difficulties in some areas, but I shall say no more because some legal actions are flying around on some of the comments that have been made. We shall learn from America's experiences. There are some aspects of the American contract that we shall not follow. For example, we shall make sure that the contractor's contract includes incentives on the important matter of safety, quality and security, as well as on production matters. But it is interesting that the Americans are convinced that, whatever the problems that they have to sort out, the Government-owned, contractor-operated system—the GOCO method—is the right approach to take.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I am sorry that I have been unable to call all those hon. Members who wished to speak, but I shall bear in mind their undoubted claims when we return to the subject.

Points of Order

4.18 pm

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, of which I have given you due notice. It concerns an issue of importance to the House —the position of the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee and his role in a broadcast on Radio 4 this morning on the "Today" programme. I attended, as an observer, the first of several sessions of the Public Accounts Committee on the sale of the Rover Group to British Aerospace.

Yesterday civil servants were interviewed and a number of questions were put to them. No doubt in due course a transcript will be available for us all to read and disseminate. Basically, they adopted a defensive posture, as one would expect. This morning, when I tuned in to Radio 4, the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, was being interviewed, and what he said struck me as less than impartial. During yesterday's interrogation of the witnesses, several references were made to sweetners and the fact that the Commission was being——

Mr. Speaker: Order. What is the point of order for me?

Mr. King: If a Chairman of a Select Committee or of an august body such as the Public Accounts Committee has already made up his mind as to what happened in the British Aerospace-Rover deal, what point is there in calling witnesses to determine what happened? Is it not a fact that, from now on, probably no one will get a fair hearing?

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) for giving me notice that he would be raising his point of order. It is a pity that he did not discuss it with me because I would have been able to inform him of what you, Mr. Speaker, certainly know, which is that it is all here in the National Audit Office report to the Public Accounts Committee. The report was agreed with the Department concerned. What I value most is the unanimity of the all-party Committee. That is of enormous importance to me, and it is the strength of the Committee, for which I work all the time.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No. I must make it plain that there can be no appeal to me about the way in which Chairmen of Select Committees see their responsibilities. It is not a matter for me.

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Earlier, the Secretary of State for Defence said that he could not understand a question. Perhaps that was a mental blockage, perhaps it was political arrogance, but something strikes me about this place these days. It has to do with the noise and the acoustics. Could something be done about that? I am giving the right hon. Gentleman the benefit of the doubt, but something must be done.

Mr. Speaker: It is sometimes difficult to hear in the Chamber with these rather old-fashioned microphones. If the hon. Gentleman were to move a little this way and under the microphone, we could all hear him more easily. I am sorry if his question was not heard, but I shall have the matter looked into.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I shall put together the Questions on the two motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Contamination of Feeding Stuff) (England) (No. 4) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Medicines (Intermediate Medicated Feeding Stuffs) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

Orders of the Day

Education (Student Loans) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Speaker: I repeat what I said earlier this week. There is a great demand, and I welcome it, for right hon. and hon. Members to participate in our debates these days. There is a great demand today and I shall have to put a limit of 10 minutes on speeches between 7 and 9 o'clock. Again, I appeal to hon. Members who are fortunate enough to be called before that time to bear that limit in mind.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. We are about to debate the Second Reading of the Education (Student Loans) Bill. In the Queen's Speech, the Bill was announced with the following words:

> "A Bill will be introduced to supplement students' grants with loans."

There is no provision in the Bill that deals in any particular with the loans, their amount, their funding, their arrangements or any other such details. This is a point of order to you to determine whether it is proper that we should debate today a Bill that has none of the detail that we were told that it would have by that short sentence in the Queen's Speech. That is germane and necessary before any proper consideration can be given to the Bill.

Mr. Speaker: The House has not yet heard the Secretary of State explain exactly what is in the Bill. The hon. Gentleman can raise the matter if he is called, and if he does not like what he hears he can vote against Second Reading.

4.25 pm

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. John MacGregor): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

I shall be dealing with the matter raised by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) at some length during my speech.

The House debated student loans only recently—on Friday 20 October—and I do not wish to repeat all the points that I made then, but I think that it is worth restating three basic points by way of background. First, the Bill provides for loans as a top-up to student grants for maintenance, and for maintenance only. That is made clear in the long title, at the very beginning of the Bill.

Our present mandatory grant arrangements were introduced by the Education Act 1962, following the Anderson report, which envisaged higher education student numbers eventually reaching 175,000. There was no conception then of the way in which higher education would expand in the 1970s and 1980s. This autumn, there were more than 1 million full-time and part-time students in higher education, 400,000 of whom are in receipt of maintenance grant awards. That is compared with the 175,000 originally envisaged.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): My right hon. Friend has stated clearly that clause 1 says that the Bill provides for top-up loans for maintenance grants alone. Will he draw attention to the somewhat misleading

[Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman]

petition presented by the National Union of Students, which links student loans and tuition fees, as many of us are very much opposed to tuition fees but in favour of student loans?

Mr. MacGregor: It is made absolutely clear throughout the Bill that the provisions refer to maintenance grants and not to tuition fees. That will be made clear to everybody.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. MacGregor: Very well.

Mr. Greenway: I apologise to my right hon. Friend, but it is an important point. I am grateful to him for explaining that the Bill will deal with maintenance grants. Is he aware that those of my constituents who are in higher education have still not been paid their maintenance grants by Ealing council, and that many of them have been forced into debt in connection with housing, food and everything else and so obliged by the inefficiency of Ealing council to take out loans at high interest rates? Ealing council, which is Labour-controlled, says that it opposes student loans but students have written to me and have been to see me to ask me to support the Bill so that they may obtain loans at a reasonable rate.

Mr. MacGregor: I hope that the Labour-controlled Ealing council will get on with it. There is no doubt that loans at a real interest rate of zero such as those that we propose—I shall deal with that later—would have helped all the students in their present predicament with Ealing council.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. MacGregor: I have hardly progressed with my speech, but I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman if he wishes.

Mr. Straw: I am grateful to the Secretary of State, because, as he says, he has hardly started. He has just said that the Bill will not cover tuition fees. Will he give a categorical commitment to the effect that it is the Government's policy that tuition fees will continue to be met in full from the public purse?

Mr. MacGregor: I should have thought that what we have done this year has made that absolutely clear, despite some of the suggestions that we heard in advance of the Autumn Statement. It was clear in the Autumn Statement —I cannot make it clearer, and the Bill cannot make it clearer—that the loans are for grants for maintenance.

I am aware that many right hon. and hon. Members wish to speak. As I have given way three times and I have hardly begun my speech, I hope that it will be understood that, in the interests of those who want to make speeches, I shall have to contain myself and not give way further.

The expansion in student numbers, unforeseen when the present system was introduced, is reflected in the costs to the taxpayer of the grant system. It has risen, at 1990-91 prices, from £236 million in 1962-63 to more than £600 million in 1989-90. Clearly, both the numbers and the cost to the taxpayer have risen considerably.

My second background point is that our system of student support is substantially more generous than that in any other comparable country. The latest comparative figures are for the years around 1984 but the relative position will have changed little since then, and the figures are revealing. They show that the public funding for students is £30 per student in Japan, £40 in Italy, £70 in West Germany, £180 in France, £275 for the United States and £750 for the United Kingdom. The figures are dramatic and bear out my point.

We anticipate substantial further expansion of higher education numbers in the years ahead. I have already reaffirmed my predecessor's expectations of something like a doubling in the numbers over the next 25 years.

Mr. Simon Hughes: No, the Minister has not done that.

Mr. MacGregor: I have said that so many times that I do not know how often I must continue to say it. I have said it again now, and perhaps the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) will believe me.

At the time of the Autumn Statement, I announced provision of an extra £750 million to fund an expansion over the next three years, which would take the index of participation of the relevant age groups from 16 per cent. to 19 per cent. in those three years. Here is proof of action backing words: if that rate is carried forward over 25 years, it will actually more than double student numbers.

It is not going to be feasible to ask taxpayers to bear the extra burden of student maintenance at that rate over the years ahead. We already have a higher proportion of our university expenditure going to student maintenance support than most other countries. We are indeed generous in this area with regard to maintenance, particularly when we consider how other countries provide for maintenance and residence support. Most other countries have loans systems, some depend on loans heavily rather than grant, but none is so grant-oriented. By our proposals we shall in most cases, be moving only some small way in their direction, and their examples demonstrate that loans do not inhibit access.

It is important for the House to note that most of the taxpayers who are contributing to that support will have earnings levels throughout their working life which will always be lower than the incomes which students can expect to earn for most the time after they have graduated. I must stress that.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon) *rose*——

Mrs. Rosie Barnes (Greenwich) *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: I must make progress, because I have a lot to say. I have already given way a great deal.

I have now set out the background to the Bill. Its purpose is to implement the proposals set out in the White Paper "Top-Up Loans for Students" published in November 1988. It is worth repeating the Government's objectives as set out in that White Paper. They are to share the cost of student maintenance more fairly between the taxpayer, students' parents and the students themselves.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. MacGregor: I will give way to the hon. Lady in a moment, after I have made a little more progress.

Other objectives of the Bill are to reduce, over time, the contribution to students' maintenance that is expected from parents and to reduce, over time, direct public expenditure on grants. The objective is also to increase resources available to students and to implement the Government's decision to remove students from the social security benefits system, which was never intended to be a form of support for student maintenance. It is also intended to reduce students' sense of dependency on the state and promote an awareness of self-reliance and investing in their future, which will bring with it, as in other countries, a greater readiness to obtain value for their investment in their courses.

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. MacGregor: I will give way in a moment.

I am confident that that is the right way forward. Our scheme will benefit students. It will increase the maximum resources available to them while they are studying by nearly a quarter and it will give them greater independence from their parents. It will benefit their parents by cutting the contribution expected of them, over time, by nearly half. It will also benefit taxpayers because part of the burden of student support will be shifted from taxpayers at large to graduates.

Mrs. Ewing: How will the Minister's plans benefit disabled students seeking access to higher education? Additional expenses are built into their courses and they may not find employment at the end of their courses to enable them to repay their loans. In passing, will the Minister refer to the four-year degree course in Scotland and the implications of the new Bill for that?

Mr. MacGregor: I will refer to the hon. Lady's points about disabled students later in my speech. One of the difficulties with so many hon. Members wanting to intervene early in my speech is that they pre-empt the natural flow of my speech.

The hon. Lady's point about Scottish student grants was discussed at length in a previous Question Time. I myself am a beneficiary of a four-year course in Scotland. Although I did not have a maintenance grant, I got scholarships and earnings during university vacations. Those who wish to have and can benefit from the four-year course in Scotland—I am aware that a considerable number of English students wish to do so—will not find that the cost of a small additional loan repayment will outweigh the benefits of that course. The choice is for them to make.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan) *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: I will not give way. I must get on.

I refer next to the Bill, and, later in my speech, I will deal with a number of general issues arising out of the proposals.

I have seen some criticisms of the form of the Bill. I believe that they are totally misguided and I wish robustly to defend our approach. I shall spend some time on this matter, because many hon. Members have raised it.

Our approach is right for three good reasons. First, it follows precedent. The nearest analogy is the Education Act 1962, which introduced the maintenance grant system for which these loans will now be a top-up. This Bill follows pretty well precisely the shape and approach of that Act. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) can make his points later. Perhaps he will allow me to develop mine, instead of constantly interrupting me.

Like the Education Act, the Bill identifies the purpose for which loans may be made and those to whom they may be made, as with grants. Like it, the Bill sets the framework, on eligibility and on qualifying institutions, and the ground to be covered in regulations and other arrangements. Like it, the Bill leaves the detail of loan rates and conditions, just as for award rates, to regulations made under the negative resolution procedure. I have not heard any complaints about the way in which student grants procedures are undertaken, in terms of parliamentary accountability or in other ways. We follow that precedent.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland) *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: I will not give way. I must finish my three points.

My second point is that, like the Act before it, the Bill covers the crucial issues. Schedule 1 is explicit and precise in its definitions of the categories of higher education courses and the kind of institutions to which the loan system will be applicable. Schedule 2 stipulates in some detail—I will come to it—the ground to be covered in regulations and other arrangements. So the notion that the Bill gives me "unlimited powers" to make loans is utter nonsense. I have not heard such charges made about grants.

Thirdly, the Bill follows the 1962 Act in providing the flexibility, through regulations, to revise year by year such things as the amounts of loans, the period and manner of repayments, the deferment or cancellation of a borrower's liability, and even changes to eligibility. I should have thought that that is very much in both Parliament's and the students' interest.

For Parliament, can it really make sense that such details as the size of the loan each year and conditions that we might wish to change in the light of experience should be the subject of regular primary legislation? No one argues that for grants.

I want to mention specifically a very important point. We shall, of course, monitor closely the effects of the introduction of the scheme. We have already carried out, in 1987 and 1989, three surveys of students' income and expenditure. We shall continue to commission periodic surveys in this matter and others if that is shown to be desirable. [HON. MEMBERS: "So what?"] The flexibility that the structure of the Bill gives us will allow us to act speedily and effectively on the findings of our monitoring. That is "so what", and it is very sensible. That flexibility will also benefit students. They will not wish to wait for a place in the parliamentary primary legislative queue to get an uprating in loan amounts or a beneficial change in eligibility.

Let me give a specific example. The House should understand this matter, because the critics on this score are totally wrong. This summer, a case in relation to student grants, which is our parallel, was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier). It related to a very technical point about a clergyman who, for many years, had worked in another European Community country but who had now returned to live and work in the United Kingdom. Owing to the technicalities of the regulations, without a change, the grossly unfair situation

[Mr. MacGregor]

would have arisen that, because the son and daughter of my hon. Friend's constituent had not had three years' ordinary residence in the United Kingdom, they were not eligible for maintenance grants, whereas other European Community citizens resident here for a shorter period would have been. We were able to change that and to make grants available to those students by regulation. Without that approach, as embodied in this Bill, they would have had to wait for primary legislation to make that small change. I do not believe that the House would feel that that is in the interests either of Parliament or of the students.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): Does my right hon. Friend agree with two points on this—first, that it was an exceptionally hard case? The gentleman in question had given his whole working life to the Church and was on an income of less than £9,000 per year, yet he was unable to get any grant for his daughter who was on an extremely expensive music course. Secondly, does he agree that, besides reflecting the sensitive and speedy way in which the Minister concerned handled the application—I saw him about it in July and it had been fixed by September—it could not have been done had we not had a flexible framework in the legislation, depending mainly on secondary legislation?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend is right. It would have deprived a student who, through a technicality, would not have been able to undertake that course. My hon. Friend makes his point very well. Indeed, it would have deprived such a student of ever having the chance to go on such a course, because it would not be possible to find a place in primary legislation for dealing with such a narrow technical point. That is what we are proposing in the Bill.

I hope that the House will agree that these are powerful reasons for having this Bill in the form it is. Those who criticise it have to justify why they are not criticising also the parliamentary arrangements for student grants.

Mr. Wallace: The Secretary of State has made comparisons between the 1962 legislation and the Bill, so will he tell the House what references that Act makes to Scotland? The only specific reference to Scotland in the Bill appears to be, ominously, with regard to insolvency and sequestration of estates. Will separate regulations be made by the Secretary of State for Scotland? Finally, recognising that in recent years the principal of Aberdeen university has talked about reducing the Scottish university degree course to three years, does the right hon. Gentleman agree that this could be yet another burden that puts a nail in the broad-based traditions of Scottish education?

Mr. MacGregor: On the first point, the Education Act 1962, which I have with me, contained some technical requirements relating to Scotland. Such requirements are not really necessary in the Bill. Clearly, it will be for us to decide exactly how the regulations are followed through in any case, but I believe that the Bill applies perfectly sensibly to Scotland.

I turn now to the detail of the Bill itself. The heart of it is in clause 1: this gives the holder of my office power to make loans for student maintenance within the policy described in the White Paper and according to the arrangements set out in schedule 2.

Clause 1 and schedule 1 empower the Secretary of State to provide funding for loans for students' living costs. They define the students eligible for loans in terms for the courses they attend. These must be higher education courses of at least one academic year's duration. They must be provided at institutions which receive support from public funds, or at other institutions to be designated for the purpose under regulations.

The clause also provides for the Secretary of State to prescribe in regulations other conditions of eligibility, such as residence conditions and the exclusion of students aged 50 or over. We intend that students will not be excluded on the basis of their financial record and there will be no means-testing.

Clause 2 enables the provisions, which extend directly to England, Wales and Scotland, to be extended by order to Northern Ireland.

Clauses 3 and 4 make the necessary financial provisions —on which more later—and give the short title, interpretation and extent.

Schedule 2 identifies the main administrative elements of the loan scheme to be prescribed in regulations. It goes into considerable detail and requires the Secretary of State to specify the amount of the loan and the arrangements for repayment, deferment and cancellation. It sets out the basis for calculating the zero real interest rate which will apply to the loans. The Secretary of State shall be empowered to require higher education institutions to issue certificates of eligibility to their students. There is provision to arrange for third parties to undertake administration of the loans, which must include machinery for handling appeals. Finally, the schedule modifies bankruptcy law by excluding from a student borrower's bankruptcy any sum advanced by way of loan and the corresponding debt.

As I have already explained, the details of the loan scheme will be in regulations, and we shall lay those before the House in the usual way. The arrangements to be made will be built on the basis of clause 1 and schedules 1 and 2, just as the whole apparatus of mandatory awards is built on section 1 of the Education Act 1962.

Since I have just mentioned section 1 of the 1962 Act, let me make it clear that that section is to remain on the statute book: local education authorities will continue to have the duty to make mandatory awards: there is no question of abolishing the student grant. Once the loan component of student support reaches the level of the maintenance grant and parental contribution—that, of course, will be some considerable way ahead, in the early part of the next century—we intend that the two will continue in parallel.

Mr. Straw: The Secretary of State has slid over a central part of the White Paper, which proposes that the real value of the grant should be reduced and that the grant should be replaced by student loans. Is that still the Government's policy?

Mr. MacGregor: I did not slide over it. It has been clear all the way through and I have made it absolutely clear here that we are intending that the level of the maintenance grant and parental contribution will be reduced in real terms, of course, because I have talked about a fairer distribution of the burden—*[Interruption.]* I make two points about this. First, that position will not be reached until the early part of the next century, as I have emphasised, and, of course, there is the opportunity for review at any stage during the 1990s. Secondly—I shall come to this later—it behoves those who pretend that we can go on financing that degree of higher education expansion by continuing to place a burden on parents and taxpayers to say how they would do it. I shall come to that later also.

Mr. Simon Hughes *rose*——

Mr. Caborn *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: In fairness to the many hon. Members who wish to speak, I should now get on with my speech. I am sure that that is the mood of the House and that that is what people—*[Interruption]* It is perfectly fair——

Mr. Simon Hughes *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: No, I am not giving way. It is perfectly fair—*[Interruption.]* No, I am not giving way, because it is important that we now proceed with the debate.

I turn now to various issues on which the public debate has also focused so far. I have already referred to the fact that most other comparable countries have loan schemes, but it is worth stressing to the House that we shall continue to be putting more emphasis on grants rather than loans than nearly all of them, and our loans scheme itself will have more generous conditions than most.

For example, loans are a top-up to existing grants and are concentrated on maintenance only. Others have fewer grants and loans for fees. All students may take out a loan; there will be no credit conditions. The interest rate will be in real terms zero, which is clearly a preferential rate. That means it will be beneficial to those students who currently have commercial loans. Repayment will commence only in the April following graduation, and then only if income is above 85 per cent. of the average wage.

Let me illustrate that point by giving an example. A student embarking on a three-year degree course outside London and taking up the loans during those three years to the full extent, and then earning a salary just above the likely deferment threshold in 1994—that is, just above 85 per cent. of the average wage threshold—would make an annual loan repayment of little more than 3 per cent. of his or her net income. That puts the position clearly in context. I would add that deferral terms are much more generous than, for example, in the United States, which is why I would expect default rates and individual difficulties to be much different here from there.

But what is common to other countries is that, even with less generous terms than ours, access to higher education in those countries has not been inhibited. That brings me to access. I do not believe that the introduction of loans to top up maintenance support will impede access. Loans are top-up loans: they will provide more money to students while they are studying—for all students. There will be no credit rating. In that way, the Government will establish the conditions for wider access.

In addition—this is an important point which has not yet had sufficient attention—the parental contribution over the period will be cut by nearly half. We know that some 40 per cent. of parents—two out of every five—do not pay their student children the full sum for which they are assessed. Our scheme will reduce the burden on families with student children. The aggregate parental contribution, and the average parental contribution, will be frozen in cash terms.

The effect is that parents, as their incomes rise in line with the general trend, will pay less and less in real terms. They will feel this as a saving equivalent to the rate of inflation. It will also mean that many students will be less dependent on their parents.

I have seen a recent survey purporting to show that some young people assert that they would not go on to higher education were a loans scheme in operation. Many will share my scepticism about the usefulness of evidence derived from such surveys. If people are asked if they want a loan rather than a grant, it is pretty obvious what they will reply. One would get the same answer about business loans or grants, and so on, but that begs a lot of questions. It is also important to consider some of the questions posed by that survey.

The response to the National Union of Students' sample was limited to 40 per cent. of all those asked. Therefore, the response is more likely to have come from those who are against loans—yet, despite that, many more said it would make no difference to their decisions. It is not at all clear whether those questioned were given a proper account of the loan proposals that we are actually making. Was the alternative put to them? It is unrealistic to suppose that the alternative to a loan is a bigger grant. Unless there is a student contribution, the alternative is a continuing decline in the value of the grant.

Above all, I have serious doubts as to whether such statements represent accurate predictions of what others will do in future. Students know the value to them of a degree—the educational and cash value. Let us fully acknowledge the first and not be ashamed of the second. I have no doubt that increasing numbers of students will wish to invest in their higher education in future.

Mr. Simon Hughes *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: I shall give way, but this must be the last time.

Mr. Hughes: The Secretary of State has said that his proposed scheme will not harm access to higher education. He has talked about predictions. Can he predict whether the number of students applying for courses in the next two years, when the loans scheme is operating, will be fewer or greater than those who would apply under a better funded grant scheme? We believe that loans will be a substantial deterrent to access to higher education, and the people share our fear.

Mr. MacGregor: Since I gave way to the hon. Gentleman, I hope that he will be comparatively reasonable in his speech, as I know that a number of my hon. Friends want to speak. The experience of other countries that operate loans schemes offering much less generous student support than our own is that such schemes do not inhibit access. I do not believe that that survey gives an accurate prediction of the future. There has been a large increase in the number of students going on to universities and polytechnics this year, and they will be the first students to whom the loans scheme will apply. In practice, therefore, the number of students has already increased.

It is in the nature of a loan that it has to be repaid. Most graduates' incomes are well above the incomes of non-graduates. With a zero real interest rate on the loan, they should not find repayment of their loans a difficulty. I have already illustrated that.

[Mr. MacGregor]

We do not propose to exempt any categories of graduate from repayments, but I repeat two points that the Government have already made clear many times. First, those following long degree courses may well need longer periods of repayment, and we are considering that sympathetically. Secondly, as I have already said, students with low or no incomes at any point in time will not be penalised: in those cases, repayments will be deferred.

Let me take this opportunity to repeat that, in the Government's view, the repayments should be real repayments and should not be hidden away in the tax or national insurance systems. Today, one newspaper said that, although it supported the concept of loans—it is important to stress that support to the Opposition Front Bench—there had been no convincing rebuttal of the suggestion that loans should be repaid through tax or national insurance. I dwelt at length on this in my earlier speech to the House. Our reasons for not adopting such a scheme are practical. We do not wish to add to bureaucracy, or to place additional burdens on employers. More fundamentally, we want to encourage students, through the loans scheme, to see their higher education as their own investment in themselves.

Mrs. Maureen Hicks (Wolverhampton, North-East) *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: I am sorry, but I cannot give way again.

The students should know that they are borrowing money from, and repaying it to, the taxpayer.

I know that there are some who continue to argue for a graduate tax. I do not see virtue in a differential tax which affects graduates irrespective of whether their income is low or of how much they contributed to their own higher education costs.

Our estimate is that the social security benefits received over a full year by the average young single student would amount to £210 in 1990-91. Among those in this group who actually claim, we estimate that the average receipt would be £315. So the top-up loan, averaging £420, will more than compensate most students for any loss of benefits. We are, however, setting up the access funds to cater for students who may need further financial help.

It is unhelpful and misleading to take the outside, extreme case and to suggest that that will apply to most or all students. It is clear that that is not so, but in cases of extreme difficulty we have set up the access funds. They will be there for those who genuinely demonstrate that they need further financial help.

Mr. Wigley *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: I am sorry, but I cannot give way again.

The three access funds will be funded under existing powers. I will make regulations under section 100 of the Education Act 1944 to enable me to pay grant to the governing bodies of direct grant-maintained and assisted institutions of further and higher education, in respect of expenditure they incur in giving financial assistance to their students. Sections 131 and 132 of the Education Reform Act 1988 provide that the Universities Funding Council and the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council respectively shall be responsible for administering funds, made available by the holder of my office

> "for the purpose of providing financial support for the provision of any facilities and the carrying on of any other activities".

That provision will enable the operation of the grant.

Concern has also been expressed about disabled students and disabled graduates. The existing support provided for disabled students through the social security system will continue, unaffected by the introduction of loans. Unlike other students, they will not be excluded from the benefits system: the loan will be a net addition to their resources. The deferment provisions were designed with the difficulties of disabled graduates, among others, very much in mind.

As to the banks, I should like to make it clear that we have never asked them to express an opinion for or against the loans scheme as such. That is a decision for Government and Parliament to take.

Mr. Robert Rhodes James (Cambridge) *rose*——

Hon. Members: Give way.

Mr. MacGregor: I believe that it is the wish of the House that I should continue.

We have simply asked the banks to assist in the administration, on a contractual basis, because they have the branch network——

Mr. Rhodes James *rose*——

Hon. Members: Give way.

Mr. MacGregor: It is important that I continue.

Because the banks have the branch network——

Mr. Rhodes James *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: I shall give way in a moment.

Because of the noise from the Opposition Benches, I am not clear whether that point was heard. Let me repeat that all we have asked the banks to do is to assist in the administration, on a contractual basis. We have done so for two good reasons. Those banks have the branch network and the experience of lending.

As the House knows, I announced on 16 November that I had reached agreement with ten major banks on the next steps. Those banks have formed the company, to be known as the Student Loans Company Limited, which is undertaking the necessary preparatory work.

I made it clear that, subject to the passage of the necessary legislation and to final agreements being reached between Government and financial institutions, the Government intend to enter into a contract with Student Loans Company Limited for the administration of the loans scheme itself. I have placed in the Library of the House copies of the memorandum of understanding signed by the participating banks and a report by Price Waterhouse on stage 2 of the preparatory work on the scheme.

It was always clear that some banks would not wish to join in from the outset; that was their decision. We needed enough banks to join in a national network, which is what we have got. Banks and other financial institutions cannot commit themselves to participate in the scheme until they have seen the terms of the brochure which will appear in due course. Those terms are still the subject of negotiations between us. Our aim is to ensure that the scheme is likely to be underpinned by a broadly based network of institutions, the services of which will be available to students. That will also be to the benefit of students.

Mr. Rhodes James: If the scheme is so marvellous, why is it not in the Bill?

Mr. MacGregor: I am sorry that my hon. Friend was not listening. I should have thought that the basis was exactly the same as that for the grants scheme. If there are objections on the grounds of parliamentary accountability, they apply also to the grant scheme. I would have concluded that the vast majority of hon. Members would believe that it is to the benefit of students to have the ability to change the scheme, often to their benefit, by secondary legislation, rather than primary. I have already shown by example why that is so.

Mr. Wigley *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: I cannot give way for the moment. The hon. Gentleman will have plenty of time to make his point.

Clause 2 concerns expenditure. I take this opportunity to set out again the loan figures, together with our forecasts of expenditure and related matters. Our intention is that the maximum full-year loan facilities for 1990-91 will be: £460 for students attending institutions in London; £420 for students at institutions outside London; and £330 for students living at home, with some adjustment to the corresponding final-year figures.

Annex E of the White Paper shows the financial effects of the loans scheme, net of access funds and administrative costs. The table in that annex is based on a series of deliberately cautious assumptions, including a constant 10 per cent. default rate. If default were 2 per cent.—a more plausible figure—it would bring forward to 2000 the year in which savings outweigh outgoings.

Mr. Wigley: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Earlier in the debate the Secretary of State said that he would respond to the point about the needs of disabled students raised by the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing). The matter has been raised with the Minister in briefings on behalf of disabled people, and clearly he has not responded. Is there any redress for the House when the Secretary of State refuses to meet commitments that he gave earlier in the year?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I have no responsibility for what appears in a Minister's speech. We are at the start of the debate and doubtless during the debate there will be opportunities to raise matters relevant to the Bill.

Mr. MacGregor: In the interests of many hon. Members who wish to speak, I did not want to give way again. I have already referred to disabled students. We take that matter seriously. If points are made during the debate, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will certainly respond to them when summing up.

Administration costs will not be precisely known until contracts have been concluded, but will be in the range of £10 million to £20 million in the first three years.

The hon. Member for Blackburn attempted to make play of the fact that in the early stages the loans scheme would cost the taxpayer more. It is inherent in any loan system that outgoings exceed repayments for an initial period. That indicates graphically that we are increasing resources for students. The hon. Gentleman's criticism brings us to the heart of the matter, which is that we have recognised that some change in student support methods is required for the period of expansion ahead to avoid an increasingly heavy burden on taxpayers—most with lower incomes than graduates—and on parents. We have been clear and realistic about that.

What is the Labour party's alternative? Although the hon. Member for Blackburn complains about the higher cost, I assume that he would not wish to offer the student less in total than we are. However, he makes it clear that his party's alternative is a continued exclusive reliance on grant. On the assumption of the already published figures and the basis that the grant would not be less generous than the loans policy, but that both would replace social security benefits, that system would cost £145 million in 1990-91, assuming a 100 per cent. take-up of grant, which we would expect.

In total, the costs of the loans scheme and access funds would be £135 million. That is not a big difference in year one, but is slightly less expensive. However, if the Labour party proposes to continue social security benefits, the extra cost could rise to £65 million in year one. We should like to be clear about the Labour party's position on that.

During the decade, the amount will accumulate. The extra costs of paying grants instead of loans would continue year in, year out, whereas the loans proposal promises savings for both parents and taxpayers. The loan repayments will then start to come in on an accelerating scale.

Mr. Straw: No.

Mr. MacGregor: That is bogus. There are considerable changes in the 1990s, which I am spelling out to the hon. Member for Blackburn.

Mr. Straw *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: I shall not give way again.

This shows two things: first, the point at which loan outgoings are overtaken by repayments; secondly, the point at which the totality of repayments is greater than the totality of outgoings—*[Interruption.]* That is in balance. Obviously, the hon. Member for Blackburn does not understand, and I do not want to spend much more time explaining it to him. The point he misses is that he is being critical of the cost of the loans scheme in the 1990s, but his alternative throughout the 1990s would be more expensive. I am about to tell him by how much.

I have already said that, in the first year, it could amount to £65 million. During the decade it will accumulate because the extra costs of paying grants instead of loans will continue year in, year out, whereas the loans proposal promises savings for both parents and taxpayers. In the second half of the 1990s, the loan repayments will start to come in on an accelerating scale. Therefore, on White Paper assumptions only, the difference between the schemes would be £165 million in a single year by the year 2000 or £225 million, depending on the Labour party's position on social security benefits. That means that, before too long, we shall see a widening gap in the burden on taxpayers and parents produced by our proposals and that produced by the Labour party's proposals as I understand them.

However, even more significant, the White Paper assumptions on increased student numbers are already out

[Mr. MacGregor]

of date. This year's Autumn Statement expenditure plans are based on considerably higher numbers, so the extra cost of the Labour party's alternative would be a good deal higher.

What is the Labour party's alternative? Is it the proposal put forward in early-day motion 117 by some of the colleagues of the hon. Member for Blackburn,

> "aiming towards a living grant of two-thirds average wage levels"?

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will repudiate that now. He has been bobbing up and down, so perhaps he will bob up and repudiate that now.

Mr. Straw: I am glad that the Secretary of State has given me a chance to intervene in his speech. He refused to do so earlier when I gave the figures, not that we had produced, but that he had produced in answer to questions from the Opposition, to show that there would be no cumulative savings on loans until 2013.

The Labour party's position is made absolutely clear in the policy review. We shall continue the grant system and increase its real value as resources allow—*[Interruption.]* There is no dubiety about that.

How does the Secretary of State's assertion about the cost of the grant system being greater than the cost of the loan scheme fit with annexe E, which shows that in every year between now and 2002 the loans system will be a greater burden on the Exchequer than grants, even if they are uprated in line with prices? The Secretary of State made an important commitment at the start of this debate, when he said that he categorically committed the Government to paying the full cost of tuition fees for the increased number of students to which he is now pledged. That must mean a dramatic increase between now and the end of the century in public expenditure on higher education. Is he committed to that, and to what amount?

Mr. MacGregor: I have explained the point about cumulative savings. The hon. Gentleman is simply not prepared to accept that the Labour party's alternative during the 1990s will cost taxpayers and parents—or possibly just taxpayers—a good deal more for student maintenance alone. I noted—I assume that this is the point of the hon. Gentleman's answer—that he has already repudiated the proposal put forward by some of his colleagues in early-day motion 117. I hope that he will make his position clear. Alternatively if it is to finance the higher student numbers through a non means-tested grant at the same levels as the totals we are making available today or at higher levels, that will clearly be more expensive.

In any event, I hope that everyone will have noted the weasel words "as resources allow". No wonder those weasel words came into it, for the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) has already spiked the hon. Gentleman's guns by saying:

> "We are all agreed that we cannot spend what has not been earned."

We recall the experience of the last Labour Government when they failed to earn and thereby totally failed to meet their expenditure commitments. No wonder the hon. Gentleman uttered the weasel words "as resources allow".

Our position is more honest and is more likely fairly to finance higher education expansion. That is why the hon. Member for Blackburn has been careful not to commit himself to anything today—*[Interruption.]* He is behaving as though he is still a superannuated students leader—engaging in a massive con trick, giving the impression of spurious promises without substance, attacking us in the hope that nobody will notice his weasel words.

By contrast, we are making realistic proposals to underpin our objective of substantial expansion in higher education. By making available a loan facility to top up maintenance grants, the Government are providing a valuable extension of the resources of support available to students. The cost of supporting students' maintenance will be shared more equitably between taxpayers, students' families and the students themselves. Students, with a loan on generous terms, will have a greater personal stake in their own higher education.

I commend the Bill to the House.

5.11 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): The Bill contains one operative clause. Three and a half years of public debate and almost universal criticism of the proposed loans scheme are compressed into just three lines. Forty-eight pages of the loans White Paper and 68 papers of two successive consultants' reports are reduced to 27 words. Those 27 words give the Secretary of State power by ministerial diktat to establish whatever loans scheme he chooses and to deny to Parliament and the people who elected us any serious opportunity properly to scrutinise the detailed effect and operation of the scheme, for there is no detail in the Bill.

We have before us three lines and 27 words by which this wretched Government tell the rest of the world that they have no interest in reasoned argument and the views of others. The Bill is a grave abuse of parliamentary democracy. It is an enabling Bill. It confirms the march of an "elective dictatorship," as the former Lord Chancellor, Lord Hailsham, described the Government earlier this year.

The Bill gives more power to the Executive, with less parliamentary check on their discretion, than legislation such as emergency powers and defence of the realm measures designed for wartime emergencies, and it is so arbitrary in scope that it would today be thrown out by the Parliaments of East Germany, Poland, the Soviet Union and Hungary—*[Interruption.]* Indeed, the drafting might even bring a blush to the face of a member of the Russian politburo. Yet the Bill produces no shame in the Secretary of State. When it comes to contempt for parliamentary democracy and abuse of power, he and the Government know no shame.

It is fitting that the Second Reading of the Bill should take place on the day of the contested election for the Conservative leadership, for nothing symbolises better than this measure the arrogance and incompetence of the Government and the fact that, with honourable exceptions, the parliamentary Conservative party is packed full of cowards, sycophants and wimps who know what is right but vote for what is wrong. The Bill will receive its Second Reading by the same large majority which has driven through ill-considered, half-baked legislation such as water privatisation, social security legislation and the poll tax. Recently, in a newspaper, the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) issued this warning to his colleagues:

> "We are potentially into another poll tax scenario in which MPs"—

Conservative Members—

> "welcome the principle of loans without waking up until it is too late for its practical repercussions."

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Robert Jackson): In reliving his past as president of the National Union of Students, perhaps the hon. Gentleman will explain why, if this sort of enabling approach is so inappropriate, the Labour Government, when they had the opportunity for many years, did not repeal section 1 of the Education Act 1962, which provides for making grants in exactly the same way as our proposal for making loans.

Mr. Straw: There is a profound difference between the 1962 Act and this legislation. First, section 1 of that Act imposes a clear and justiciable duty on local authorities to pay grants. This measure imposes no duty on the Secretary of State to do anything; it gives him the widest possible arbitrary discretion to establish a loans scheme without any possibility of its detail being properly scrutinised by this House. Secondly, the 1962 Act was far longer. Thirdly, it was an all-party measure. Fourthly, it was based on more than 20 years' experience of local authorities and the Department running a grants scheme, whereas this measure is based on no such experience.

As I was saying, the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West warned his colleagues that they were

> "potentially into another poll tax scenario".

But this Bill is worse than the poll tax measure, for even that dreadful Bill contained much more detail and constrained the powers of Government to a greater extent. On the BBC, Radio 4 "Today" programme on 27 November, the Secretary of State was asked why no detail was contained in the Bill. He declared that that was "a normal procedure." The interviewer then asked:

> ". . . is it so short because you don't actually know what you want to do?"

When the Secretary of State replied, "Not at all," he was asked:

> "So what do you want to do?"

The right hon. Gentleman answered:

> "We will come forward with details of the scheme and we have illustrated one poss . . . one approach in the White Paper . . . we can do so partly during the debates but we can do so properly when the regulations come forward."

Can we take it from that that the scheme in the White Paper is just a possibility, as the right hon. Gentleman suggested on radio? Is it just an illustration and not necessarily the scheme that will be brought into effect? If so, what scheme will be brought into effect?

Mr. MacGregor: It will be possible for any Secretary of State to come forward with proposals to change the level of loan and to change the eligibility in the light of reviews to deal with the sort of situation that I illustrated in relation to grants when answering my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier). I should have thought that the House would regard that as a sensible step to take.

Mr. Straw: Far from being sensible, the right hon. Gentleman is saying that it will be possible for any Secretary of State, by negative resolution or by regulations, to impose a completely different loans scheme from that suggested in the loans White Paper and to do so without any proper scrutiny by Parliament.

In that BBC interview, the Secretary of State suggested that Parliament could "debate and approve" the detail of the regulations made under the Bill. Who was the right hon. Gentleman trying to deceive? Later tonight the House will have one and a half hours in which to debate a crucial order on teachers' pay and negotiating rights. That instrument will be unamendable, but at least under the terms of the teachers' pay legislation the Minister must, by law, lay the order before Parliament before it can come into effect. In this Bill, the power to make regulations is subject only to the negative procedure, by which Parliament has no automatic right to debate or approve the regulations before they come into effect and no right to amend them.

Mr. MacGregor: There is considerable detail in the Bill about the kind of scheme that we propose to have; schedules 1 and 2 contain considerable detail. As for giving details when one wants flexibility year by year, we are following the process applied to grants. Is the hon. Gentleman saying that we approach the grants system year by year in the wrong way and that that is a great abuse?

Mr. Straw: I have already dealt with the fact that there is no parallel between the loans legislation and the grants legislation. What is more, everyone knew how the grant system was to be administered. That was the purpose of imposing a duty on local authorities. Under this scheme there is no detail about the administration of the loans, and no detail will ever by written into law about the administrative arrangements with the banks.

The scale of the Government's arrogance and contempt for the views of others can only be measured against the ever-growing mountain of opposition to this loan scheme. When the Government started on this road they promised

> "wide consultation before any scheme was implemented"

—the exact words of the Government's response to the Education Select Committee as long ago as 1979-80. The former Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), said much the same when he announced the student loans review in June 1986. Is it any wonder that people become so cynical about this Government when what has characterised this consultation has been the Government ignoring everyone they have consulted? No institution of any standing and no individual of any standing now supports the measure. Even the Government's best friends have deserted them —*[Interruption.]* This proposal was not in the manifesto. The manifesto contained a promise to bring in legislation to supplement the student grant system—[HON. MEMBERS: "That is what we are doing."] By their comments, Conservative Members show their ignorance of the effect of the scheme, for this loan scheme does not supplement the grant scheme—it replaces it. That is clear from the White Paper and the Bill.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Will the hon. Gentleman accept that university grants will continue under the White Paper proposals?

Mr. Straw: The Secretary of State has admitted—under duress—that the idea of the loans White Paper is that the real value of the student grant should be cut by half. That is not a supplement—it is the replacement of half the grant.

Students and parents oppose this scheme. So, too, do vice-chancellors, who say in a scathing note that the form of the Bill means that there will not be a proper opportunity for Parliament to debate the scheme. An overwhelming majority of Conservative Members who have ever bothered to think about the scheme also oppose

[Mr. Straw]

it. In the debate on 20 October, opposition to the scheme came not only from the predictable Conservative critics of the Government's higher education policies, such as the hon. Members for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James) and for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson), but from the hon. Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson), who voiced unease about the simultaneous loss of benefits to students and the impact on lower-paid careers. It also came from the hon. Member for Hendon, North (Mr. Gorst), who questioned the practicality of the scheme, from the hon. and learned Member for Feltham and Heston (Mr. Ground), and from the hon. Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson), who correctly described the Government's arguments about access as bogus—and said:

"far from helping poorer people to gain access to higher education, the scheme will amount to an indiscriminate subsidy to the middle classes who need it least."—[*Official Report*, 20 October 1989; Vol. 158, c. 422.]

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): As the hon. Gentleman has mentioned me so often, I should remind him that his right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition shared many platforms with me when he was Labour education spokesman. He used to attack the middle-class, highly subsidised, elitist higher education system in this country and was prepared to consider a loan scheme so that people from better backgrounds would be able to contribute to prevent poorer families from paying through taxation for the benefit of better-off families.

Mr. Straw: That is complete fantasy and fabrication.

Mr. Caborn: I represent a poor constituency in which about 18 per cent. of the young people are unemployed. The removal of social security benefits, rent rebates and income support will have a devastating effect. Contrary to what the Minister has said, it has been calculated—not by the student unions, but by professionals in the DSS—that students aged under 25 currently in receipt of rent rebates and income support will be £1,240 per year worse off. I remind the Minister that since rents were deregulated they have risen by 25 per cent. and students now pay on average £30 per week. Students aged over 25 will be some £1,400 or more worse off. This will have a profound effect on people from inner cities who want access to higher education but who will be denied it by what I have described, quite apart from the loan scheme.

Mr. Straw: My hon. Friend is exactly right. If we take account of the fact that the real value of the grant has been cut by 23 per cent. in the past 10 years and that it will be cut again under the Government's policies, and that housing benefit will be cut, there is no question but that many students from lower-income families will be plunged into severe hardship.

Outside the House, the opposition of many Conservatives to this scheme is well known—for example, that of the Tory Reform Group, which counts among its numbers the Leader of the House, the Secretary of State for Wales, the Secretary of State for Health, the Foreign Secretary, and perhaps even the Secretary of State for Education and Science who, in a previous incarnation, was political secretary to the former Conservative Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath).

Today, however, there is opposition to the Bill from inside the very temple of Thatcherism—from the high priests themselves, such as Professor Alan Peacock, who is now executive director of the David Hume Institute. He wrote to *The Times* after the last debate that it was almost generous to describe the scheme as a dog's breakfast. Opposition has also come from Stuart Sexton of the education section of the Institute of Economic Affairs—a former adviser to the previous Secretary of State, Lord Joseph. He demanded in *The Daily Telegraph* that the scheme be scrapped, saying that

"if ever a subject got the Government in a tangle it is the student loan scheme".

The result

"is a bureaucratic nightmare and one which produces no immediate savings for the public purse"—

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest) *rose*——

Mr. Straw: I shall give way for the last time.

Mr. Norris: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, although he has listed a great many articulate interest groups who have expressed a view on the Bill, one group who are singularly under-represented in this argument are elderly income taxpayers? What has he to say to them about their tax contributions financing middle-class families and their children to enjoy an even higher standard of living in the future?

Mr. Straw: Parliamentary answers from the Under-Secretary of State and the debate on 20 October clearly established that the loan scheme between now and 2013, 24 years away, will cost more than the grant system that it replaces. If the hon. Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) does not understand that, he should read annex E to the White Paper.

Given the extent of the opposition, why are the Government pursuing this madcap scheme? The speech by the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) on his resignation as Chancellor was one of the strongest and most sustained pieces of controlled invective that I have ever heard delivered by a Member of this House against his own side. But the accolade for the very strongest goes to the noble Lord Beloff, a Conservative with a distinguished record of fighting the implementation of Conservative higher education policy, including the establishment of the private university of Buckingham. Speaking in the other place in the debate on the Loyal Address on 23 November he said:

"I am convinced that the loan scheme which has been evolved . . . is so absurdly inefficient and damaging to the students, their universities and colleges and the community at large that one is tempted to wonder how any government department could have come up with so outrageous a set of propositions.

I remember that when it was first talked about in this House . . . I warned the Government that if they were trying to act through a consortium of banks, they would find the banks very reluctant to co-operate. That has been borne out by experience. After all, a fishmonger sells fish; that is his business. A banker lends money; that is his business. One does not have to bribe a fishmonger to sell fish, but apparently the Government have to bribe the banks to lend money. Could we get further into absurdity?

One may ask: who is the author of so absurd a scheme? Some people say that it was thought up by a young man strong on ideology but weak on arithmetic and totally removed from the experience of ordinary students and ordinary families. Some people say, 'No, it was the work of the Under-Secretary of State for Education, Mr. Robert

Jackson'. Some people say that those two explanations are not contradictory."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 23 November 1989; Vol. 513, c. 186-7.]

Mr. Jackson: It is flattering to have a former professor of government at Oxford attribute so much interest to a mere Under-Secretary of State. The important point to note is that the banks have signed a contract to administer the scheme.

Mr. Straw: The important point to note about what the banks have signed is that, whatever they have signed, it is not a contract. Paragraph 10 of the "Memorandum of Understanding" says:

"it does not create legal relations."

I offer the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State some free legal advice. One of the principal elements of a contract is that it creates legal relations.

The first charge against the Government is of arrogance and the second is of incompetence. A senior Conservative —not from the Left of his party—said to me in the Lobby that the loan scheme was so fundamentally flawed that he could only assume that it was put together by someone who wanted to discredit the idea of loans for all time. The scheme fails on every test that the Government themselves have set. The Government claim that the scheme will simultaneously reduce the burden of student support on the taxpayer, increase the resources available to students and improve access to higher education by freeing a flow of taxpayers' money for the future expansion of higher education. Each of those claims is utterly bogus, as the Secretary of State must know.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Is my hon. Friend aware that on 20 October I presented a petition from 600 medical students at the London hospital and Newham General hospital pointing out the potential damage to medical education in London, where costs will be high and where the students will not have the opportunity of working in their last three holidays, as the Secretary of State did? The scheme will especially affect women doctors and medical education in our capital city. The petition also asks for an inquiry into the damage that the scheme will cause. Is my hon. Friend aware that I have now had a card from the Table Office telling me that the Department of Education and Science is not carrying out its usual courtesy of observation on that petiton? Is that not wholly untypical of the Secretary of State, but wholly typical of the present uncaring and ignorant Administration?

Mr. Straw: I am not surprised that the Department of Education and Science is not responding to the petition because it has no answer to the fact that the loan scheme will cause immense damage to medical students and their careers. It is a further illustration of the contempt in which the Government hold this House and those who protest against the loan scheme.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Straw: No, I have already given way to many hon. Members, including Conservative Members.

Each claim that has been made by the Secretary of State is utterly bogus. The facts are that under the scheme the burden of student support on the taxpayer will increase. The income of students, especially those from the poorest families, will be cut and access to higher education will be restricted. There will be and can be no freeing of any flow of funds for expansion.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Straw: No, I have given way a great deal.

As we have established in parliamentary answers, there will be an increased cost to the taxpayer between now and at least 2015, more than a quarter of a century away.

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Straw: I will give way for the last time.

Mr. Pawsey: Is the hon. Gentleman aware of a parliamentary answer to me on 1 December? It says:

"the estimated net cost of the scheme is some £13 million in 2000; in 2005 there is estimated to be a net saving of some £37 million rising to some £49 million in the year 2010"—[*Official Report*, 1 December 1989; Vol. 162, c. *440*.]

Mr. Straw: I am always aware of the questions that the hon. Gentleman tables because they always alert the Opposition to the fact that they are a plant.

Mr. Pawsey: It was not a plant.

Mr. Straw: The hon. Gentleman says that it was not a plant on this occasion. If he had bothered to read out the rest of the answer, we should have heard that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary referred the House to the answers that he had given to my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith). Those answers clearly established, with detailed tables, that cumulative savings will not arise until 2013. Well over £1·5 billion will be wasted in that period.

An early sign of that waste was given in the announcement by the Secretary of State that £492 million was to be spent on loans over the next three years. While the burden on the taxpayer will increase, most students will not benefit. The only students to benefit will be those who least need the help. Forty per cent. of all students are on a full grant. One quarter of those receive a full grant because they are older and independent of their parents and three quarters because their parents' income is so low that even this Government do not expect the parents to contribute to their childrens' upkeep at university or college. That 40 per cent. will be hit immediately by the loan scheme. Their cost of living increase is cancelled and their housing benefit entitlement is cancelled altogether. All that they receive instead is a loan which, in cash terms, cannot even meet what they have lost and which they will then have to repay. What is true without question for that 40 per cent. of students is almost certainly true of a further 40 per cent. of students who receive some grant and some parental contribution.

The Government have made much in their social security policy of the case for targeting of benefits, which has been their excuse for abandoning their pledged uprating of universal benefits such as child benefit. For student loans, they have turned the principle of targeting on its head. The rich student from the rich family is targeted for help from the state while the student from a middle or lower-income family will have that help taken away. Under the scheme, there will be no means test for the loan. The rich student can take out a loan at a subsidised rate of interest, invest it in a bank or a building

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society and at the end of the loan period clear £250 or £300 in interest, while still being able to repay the principal. What kind of public purpose is served by such beneficence to the already rich while students from poor and modest backgrounds lose out?

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Straw: It is that discrimination against those from low-income and modest backgrounds which gives the lie —for lie it is—to the preposterous claim that loans will improve access, especially for those from working-class and ethnic minority homes. Loans will increase the price of a higher education, and a higher price will mean a reduction in the demand which otherwise would exist.

From 1962 until the early 1980s, the grant system led to a threefold expansion in the proportion of children from working-class homes who benefited from higher education. Loans will most surely cut down the opportunity that so many of us from such homes have enjoyed in the past.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Straw: That fact emerged with crystal clarity from a survey published yesterday by the National Union of Students. Particular groups will be hit by the scheme, such as all those at Scottish universities, medical students and those taking nursing degrees. Entry into key but lower-paid professions will be hit. Teaching is an example.

A recent study by the Institute of Manpower Studies makes it clear that the proportion of graduates entering teaching has already slumped from 8 per cent. in 1980 to 4 per cent. in 1988. More graduates now train for the law than for teaching. The proportion entering teaching will slump still further if the loan scheme goes through because the income level below which a graduate can defer his loan is set so low that it will catch new teachers. Those with careers with low initial earnings but with high pay prospects will be able to defer loan repayments, but those who go into careers in which the starting salary may be broadly acceptable but which have poor career prospects will not. That will lead to an absurd situation in which young barristers will be able to escape repayment, but young teachers will not. [HON. MEMBERS: "Quite right."] Conservative Members say that that is quite right. It is no wonder that we now face the most terrifying shortage of teachers that we have seen for decades. The Government are not only keeping down the pay of teachers and causing their morale to collapse, but they will impose loan repayments on young teachers when they seek to eke out a meagre living from their salaries.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Straw: I have already said that I shall not give way.

In the debate on 20 October, as today, the Secretary of State sought to link loans with the Government's plans to expand higher education. The House may recall that it was once Government policy—or at least the policy of the former Secretary of State—to double the numbers in higher education over a 25-year period. On 20 October when I asked the Secretary of State how that was to be paid for, he said that I should wait to hear the answer of his hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State. However, when I asked his hon. Friend in the debate, he said that he had "nothing to add" to the answer given by the Secretary of State. One month later we obtained the answer. The Secretary of State told *The Guardian* in an interview on 24 November that the commitment to double numbers has been dropped. The article said:

> "he denied that Mr. Baker's commitment had ever been agreed Government policy and insisted that no Government could ever plan beyond three years in financial terms".

I have read the Secretary of State's rebuttal, which appeared in *The Guardian* on 27 November. He said that the report was totally misleading. He never once said that it was wrong or that quotations attributed to him were wrong. He said:

> "I reaffirm the points set out by Kenneth Baker in his speech earlier this year . . . when he foresaw something like a doubling of numbers in higher education over the next 25 years".

The Secretary of State did not say then or today—if one listens with great care to his words as we did—that he is committed in the same way as the previous Secretary of State to a doubling of numbers. That was not the previous Secretary of State's expectations or foresight—it was his policy. So far the Secretary of State—despite his earlier words—has ducked that one.

Mr. MacGregor: That is not true.

Mr. Straw: If that is not true, I will be happy to give way to the Secretary of State. Before I do, perhaps the Secretary of State will answer the question that he refused to answer on 20 October or today. The Secretary of State gave an important categorical commitment that the total tuition costs in higher education of an expansion—whether a doubling or less—would be met from the public purse.

We all know that the costs of tuition far outweigh the cost to the public purse of maintenance. Therefore, the Secretary of State's statement means that, under Conservative policy, the burden of public expenditure on higher education expansion will increase significantly. That is in complete variance with his other statements, in which he says that the share of public spending borne by higher education cannot increase. If I am wrong, I should be delighted if the Secretary of State would intervene and tell me where I am wrong.

Mr. MacGregor: I have made it clear in previous speeches that there cannot be a huge increase in the proportion of GNP spent on higher education in any country. That is accepted throughout the Western world. The importance that we attach to higher education expansion is shown by the priority that we gave to it in the Autumn Statement and the public expenditure plans—it is in the public expenditure plans that the reality of expenditure is shown—and by the extra £750 million that we intend to provide over the next three years.

Mr. Straw: The House will note that the Secretary of State did not use that opportunity to deny the comments attributed to him in *The Guardian* or to put on record a commitment to a doubling of the numbers in higher education over a 25-year period. The Secretary of State also failed to square his personal commitment given to the House that the public purse should meet the cost of tuition completely with his weasel words that there could be no significant increase in the share of public spending borne by higher education.

The Secretary of State was once Chief Secretary to the Treasury, where he used to make high-flown speeches about hard work, prudent planning, careful management and how to achieve value for money. It is a great pity that he has not applied some of those principles to the Bill. The hundreds of millions of pounds to be spent on loans does not go into the pockets of students in need but into a vast black hole of defaults, deferrals and administrative costs. It is time that Conservative Members woke up to the fact that there are not only the administrative costs of the loan scheme but the double administrative cost of running a grant scheme, albeit at a diminished rate, alongside the cost of the loan scheme. By 1995, more students will be defaulting or deferring their loans than will be paying them back. An army of debt collectors will be created. Earlier the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State said that loans will be made available to European nationals, so the army of debt collectors will be chasing around Europe seeking out graduates who have defaulted on their loans. The House has still not been told the full cost of the scheme because the Secretary of State does not know those costs and cannot say what price the banks will finally extract from him.

If the Government's competence has been sorely tested in the conception of the scheme, it has been completely exposed in its execution. For more than a century the public service has had extensive experience in the administration schemes of benefits, grants and loans to members of the public. All that experience has been cast aside by the Government because of the Prime Minister's pathological obsession with the possibility that the public service might be better able to administer anything than the private sector. Instead of the public service administering the scheme, the banks have been asked to run it, and what a pantomime the negotiations with the banks have become.

Originally the negotiations were between the Government and the Committee of London and Scottish Clearing Banks. Then three of the committee's members decided to boycott the negotiations. Those three were Lloyds, the Bank of Scotland and the Clydesdale bank. The Government then had to establish their own front organisation for those banks willing—at that stage—to participate in the scheme. Even the remaining banks have shown themselves to be profoundly unhappy about the scheme. In the original Price Waterhouse report the banks said that they wanted an additional payment over and above that needed to cover costs and profit for the remaining risk that they were taking on. The banks said that the remaining risk was

"not a financial risk but a risk that their reputation could be impaired by their involvement".

We are told that the participating banks agreed to the so-called "memorandum of understanding" published on 16 November only after panic and arm-twisting by the Secretary of State. On close examination of the document, the banks have agreed nothing. All costs are to be met by the taxpayer and not by the banks. The banks that have signed the document are not bound to participate in the scheme, but can withdraw at any moment. Participants are protected against all liability—and, to ensure double protection, clause 10 of the agreement announces that

"it does not create legal relations".

Since the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State described a contract that has been signed with the Government, perhaps now or when he replies he will give a categorical undertaking that no private or secret sweeteners have been offered to the banks for them to participate—hon. Members may laugh, but that is what happened over Rover—and that all material documents have been laid before the House. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State is also laughing. He seems to dismiss that.

When I wrote to the chairmen of the participating banks to inform them that the Labour party would end the scheme, the chairman of the National Westminster bank, Lord Alexander of Weedon, wrote to me to say that his bank was in

"no sense promoting or supporting"

the introduction of the student loans legislation.

That statement is welcome but if the National Westminster bank is not promoting or supporting the legislation, it is inexplicable and inconsistent that it should have agreed to throw a lifeline to the Government to bail out the administration of the scheme.

The National Westminster bank has 42 per cent. of the student market. Students, parents and colleges are not fools. They detest this scheme. They have economic power and are already using that power to shift their accounts to other non-participating banks. I asked the chairman of the National Westminster bank and the other banks whether they believed that the best interests of their shareholders were served by participating in the scheme when they must see that they will suffer grave and tangible loss of market share and serious if incalculable damage to their reputation. Why should any bank these days want to be the lickspittle of a Government supported by barely one third of the electorate?

The Secretary of State again today repeatedly claimed that the British system of student support is one of the most generous in the Western world. That is untrue in many respects. What is true is that, although the British system may not be the most generous, it is the most efficient. Students spend less time obtaining a degree than in other countries and far fewer drop out. The cost of producing each graduate compares favourably with other countries. In that efficiency, the grants system has played a significant part.

Loans, by contrast, are unfair and inefficient. In the United States, for every three students who have a loan, one drops out. The default bill is now $1·6 billion and countries which in the past the Secretary of State prayed in aid, such as West Germany and Sweden, are returning to a grant system. The shift to loans began in 1982 in West Germany and has led to lengthening of courses, a high wastage rate and a collapse in the number of working-class students going to college. The same has happened in Sweden. Both countries have announced the reintroduction of a partial grant system.

The Bill is a fraud. It is a fraud on students, promising them more but giving them less. It is a fraud on parents, promising to reduce their children's dependency but actually making it greater. It is a fraud on the taxpayer, promising to cut the cost of student support but increasing it for each of the next 25 years. Through this Bill, Ministers are perpetrating a fraud on Parliament, pretending that the House can scrutinise a measure without details or reasons being produced. The measure is meretricious and disreputable. It will put a mortgage on knowledge and a

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debt charge on skills. It shows a contempt for Parliament and a disregard for the needs of higher education and of the economy. It is unworthy even of the present Secretary of State and we shall oppose it in the Lobby today.

5.50 pm

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): Over the years I have followed the evolution of the Opposition's attitude to student loans. It moved from a first phase of intellectual dishonesty to a second phase of political opportunism. Tonight it has entered a third phase, which is procedural disingenuousness.

No discussion of student loans should ignore the beginning of the era of debate on loans which was Lord Robbins' report in 1963. He produced a highly prescient report on the whole question of student expansion. He is treated by the Opposition and the academic world as a semi-divine entity because the report forshadowed the expansion of higher education. The Opposition and, I regret to add, the academic world failed to recall that, although Lord Robbins rejected loans, he said that as higher education continued to expand and more women entered—as they have done, particularly under this Government—the time would come when there would have to be an experiment with student loans. He gave three reasons, which I should have thought would appeal to the Opposition: first, social equity, secondly, disruptive justice, and, thirdly, the need to encourage a sense of financial discipline and self-reliance among students. It seems to me that his prognostication has come true.

The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) implied in his criticism of the Government's procedures that they are rushing into student loans, but it is more than a quarter of a century since the Robbins report was published. It seems perfectly reasonable to move ahead with this highly tentative and limited system of loans, but I shall come back to that point later.

I admit that the Opposition have moved on from the abject intellectual dishonesty of not recognising, even in their own terms of social equity, the importance of student loans in Lord Robbins' report. They have done so at a time when we are once again considering the mass expansion of higher education. They have moved on from their initial stance because they have lost, absolutely and decisively, the public debate which has been going on for several years.

Anyone who listened carefully to the hon. Member for Blackburn would have discovered that a critique of student loans in principle was almost entirely lacking from his speech. He gave no undertaking to scrap any system put in place by this Government.

Mr. Straw: I have given that undertaking. I did so on 20 October, and I have done so outside the House.

Mr. Walden: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has made that statement. It brings me to the second phase of the Opposition's attitude to student loans, political opportunism. The hon. Member for Blackburn says simultaneously that he will finance a mass expansion of higher education while not charging anyone fees and that he will not only maintain but increase the grants system. He says that all those net costs will fall on the Treasury at precisely the time when there will be a huge expansion in the elderly population.

We are back to the old Labour party. It is not a new party but the old party of political opportunism which dishes out unsustainable promises to both old and young with complete contempt for public opinion and intelligence. Everyone knows that what the hon. Gentleman promises is unsustainable. It has not been done and cannot be done in any other country, even in countries richer than Britain. I have in mind the United States of America, West Germany and France, each of which has a gross national product greater than ours. It is dishonest for the hon. Gentleman to attempt to assure the House and public opinion that a future Labour Government will give preferential treatment to our students when there will be a distortion in the population balance in a country with continuing economic problems. It is false, and it is political opportunism.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: In the event that a Labour Government were elected, a few students would have had loans in the intervening period. The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) did not tell us what would happen to those loans. Would a Labour Government repay the student or the bank, or encourage the student to renege on the loan?

Mr. Walden: My hon. Friend makes a useful complement to my speech.

To move on to a more fundamental point, in the past few years we have been in danger of misdirecting our attention to a matter that is essentially peripheral to the expansion of higher education. Even if the arrangements are implemented, students will pay for only between 6 and 7 per cent. of the true cost of their higher education. With an impending expansion of higher education, of course we should focus our attention on cost and who will pay, but above all we must consider quality. What is the point of putting more people through higher education if in 20 or 30 years the degrees awarded are not worth the paper on which they are written? Some countries have gone through that process. In considering how to prevent loss of quality we must ask ourselves how we can deploy the limited available cash in such a way that quality will not be compromised.

The only future for this country, which is a middle-ranking power facing the resurgence of an economic colossus in Europe in the shape of a united Germany, lies in a highly and extensively educated population with expanded higher education of quality. While we discuss tonight the exact way in which the 6 to 7 per cent. of the cost will be apportioned, what will happen to the prospects for quality? We have seen what has happened with GCSEs. There has been a miraculous increase of 50 per cent. in A grade passes in two years. We all know that that represents dangerous educational inflation. The A-level examination councils are now working to dilute A-levels to increase the number of people who will have the necessary qualifications on paper to go into higher education.

The danger is that, while we are fiddling around on the periphery with this piddling sum—that is exactly what it is —which is to be repaid by people who will have benefited from higher education to earn relatively high salaries, we shall see a slow erosion in the quality of higher education which has been by far the best aspect of British education.

I am in favour of the Government's proposal on student loans, not because it will bring in much money in the short term, but because, if it is administered carefully —I have no delusions about the intricacy and complications of that, having handled it a little myself—it will limit the outgoings at a time when we are trying to expand higher education.

I believe that we should increase spending on education. If a Government have spare money to spend on education, they should invest it in ways which will guarantee the continuing quality of higher education. By that I mean that we should start with nursery schools. We should have 100 per cent. high quality nursery provision if we are to keep up with the future Japanese of Europe—the Germans. Teachers should receive higher pay in return for much higher performance. All that involves large sums of money. Although the hon. Member for Blackburn could say this without any intellectual difficulty, I cannot honestly bring myself to argue for greater public expenditure on nursery schools and greater expenditure in return for quality in secondary education and simultaneously suggest that I shall give students exactly what they want in higher education. That is a dishonest position, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will reconsider it.

If an American were in the Strangers' Gallery tonight listening to the Opposition and he knew the position of the National Union of Students in this, he would go away saying to himself, "What gives with the Brits? Are the privileged young who will not be unemployed but will do well and will start on a salary of over £10,000 a year so selfish that they do not want to repay a mere 6 or 7 per cent. of the cost of their education? What kind of young population does Britain have?"

I do not believe that the Labour party or the NUS represents the true views of young people. If we explain to them the demography that we shall face, the fact that we shall have an aging population and that they will be far better off than the average, we shall appeal to their generosity. If we explain to them that we are asking them to pay only a mere 6 or 7 per cent. in return for which they will get a life chance 100 times greater than anyone else, they will understand the issue. It is a sad day when the Opposition pitch their appeal to the young of this country at such a low level.

6.2 pm

Mr. Gordon Oakes (Halton): I oppose this ill-conceived Bill on the grounds of principle, practicability and procedure. As the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) said in his point of order, it is an abuse of the House to present an innovation in four clauses and two schedules and rely entirely on regulations.

Before you came to the Chair, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Mr. Speaker advised us to make short speeches because many hon. Members on both sides wished to speak. For that reason, I shall not take any interventions. It is not meant as a discourtesy. My experience is that interventions can add up to 50 per cent. to the time of a speech, and once one starts giving way, one must continue, otherwise hon. Members think that they have been singled out in some way.

In our debate on 20 October, the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science said that past Labour Governments had

"taken a considerable interest in the idea of student loans."—[*Official Report*, 20 October 1989; Vol. 158, c. 438.]

That is true. In 1976, I was appointed Minister of State at the Department of Education and Science with special responsibility for higher education. Hon. Members who were Members of Parliament at the time will remember that we were going through an extremely difficult time. All spheres of policy and all Departments were looking at money carefully. Student loans was one of the first questions to arrive on my desk. It had been around for years, but I was a new Minister in a new climate, so we had to consider the matter afresh.

I was morally opposed to the idea of students having to pay for their education and maintenance, but I had to swallow that and examine the issue on its merits. Several difficulties arose. Whatever the scheme and no matter how one looked at it or tried to avoid it, poorer students would be hardest hit. That was the inevitable result. Then there was the problem of the Scottish universities which have four-year rather than three-year courses of study. It would create a considerable anomaly if we had a scheme in one country and not in the other. There was the problem of medical students and others whose degree courses inevitably take five or six years. The Swedish solution was considered. Social Democratic Sweden had a loans system, but even in 1976 the Swedish Parliament and Government were having doubts about the administration of that system.

All those objections to the scheme have not gone away. They are precisely the objections that remain today. The scheme will hit the poorest students most, and there is the problem of longer courses at some universities and of longer courses according to the subject being studied.

I saw an excellent article in *The Economist* of 15 July which concluded that the Swedish scheme

"costs more than just giving the students the money."

The Swedish and West German Governments are beginning to realise that, yet we are considering this discredited scheme.

I said that I opposed the Bill for three reasons, and I shall deal first with my opposition in principle. The hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) said that my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) had not dealt with the principle. I firmly believe that education is an investment in the future of the country. It is not expenditure. The United Kingdom has coal and some oil, which will eventually run out, but precious few other raw materials. The one asset that we have and on which we have survived for decades is the skill, ability and education of our people. That is the root of the matter. Any Government of any complexion who ignore that do so at their own peril.

Fifteen per cent. of our population receive some form of higher education. That is half the number of our competitors France and Germany, and one quarter of the United States figure. We live in a highly competitive world and face the prospect of a united Germany, as the hon. Member for Buckingham pointed out, yet that is the percentage of the population receiving higher education.

According to the Government in a written answer printed in *Hansard* on 29 June at column *539*, 5 per cent. of socio-economic groups 3, 4 and 5—not the poorest, but the poorer sections of the community—are in receipt of

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some form of higher education. They represent 60 per cent. of that age group. What a waste of talent. If education means anything and if Britain is to survive, let alone progress, we need to use the skills of all young people—girls and boys, black and white, from poor homes or rich homes. We cannot do that if we educate 5 per cent. of the 60 per cent. who make up a certain socio-economic group.

Student loans will make the situation worse. As my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn said, there is a sharp difference between a rich young student, who can put the money in a building society, pocket the interest and pay the loan back, and a poor student who will have the burden round his neck if he gets a degree or finishes a course and goes into employment.

The scheme could not come at a worse time. The Government are perfectly well aware that, demographically, there will be a shortage of young people during the next few decades. If we add to the burdens of young people by reducing access to universities, that will have a disastrous effect. We should encourage more people to take training or degree courses, but the scheme will encourage fewer people to do so.

On principle, it is a bad scheme. It is the duty of a nation to educate its young people, and pay for the maintenance of those young people while they receive education. That is my firm belief.

I understand that 120 organisations responded to the Minister about the loans White Paper, and 95 per cent. of those organisations said that they were opposed to the scheme. One Tory county council wholeheartedly supported it. Who wants the scheme, apart from a few people in the Government? I am convinced that many Conservative Members do not want it.

Who has opposed the scheme? The National Union of Students violently and bitterly opposes it. *[Laughter.]* Some hon. Gentlemen laugh. They treat the NUS as an outpost of the Albanian Communist party. That is the standing, in Conservative Members' eyes, of the body that represents organised students in Britain. If hon. Members think that the NUS does not speak in accordance with the wishes of its members, let them look at their postbags and the letters that they receive from students. They are not all prepared, mass-produced letters, although we all get that kind. They are carefully thought out, hand-written letters from the students concerned and some are from students whose parents are Conservative voters. Students are opposed to the scheme.

The universities, polytechnics and institutions of learning are all opposed to the scheme, and I believe that the majority of parents are opposed to it. Parents are not taken in by being told that they may have to pay less money, because they want to secure the best education for their children. Many parents are prepared to pay for that education, if they can afford it. They know that the scheme will not save them money.

What about the lending institutions? They want no part of the scheme. My hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn mentioned that Lloyds bank, the Bank of Scotland and the Clydesdale bank have pulled out. I have yet to hear of any bank or building society that enthusiastically espouses the scheme, and yet they are in the business of lending money.

Dr. Hampson: The problem with that argument is that the Clydesdale bank and the Co-operative bank are offering loans. The only question is about the type of scheme. When the Government are subsidising the interest rates—up to £5,000 for borrowing for vocational courses—the banks are happy to participate.

Mr. Oakes: Yes, but they do not want to administer the crazy scheme on behalf of the Government, and the Government admit that. If one considers the financial effects of the Bill, which was ordered to be printed as late as 22 November, the explanatory and financial memorandum states:

> "The administration costs of the scheme will be in the order of £10 to £20 million and will be settled when contractual negotiations are concluded."

No firm contractual negotiations have yet been concluded. Discussions are going on, but the banks do not want to know. The reason is that they are in the business of attracting customers, and so are the building societies. They do not want young people, particularly highly educated young people, to think of them as an ogre or as the institution to which they owe money before they have begun to earn. They do not want that image, and so they do not want to participate in the scheme.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn said, the cost of the scheme will be horrendous. Considerable concessions were given to the banks. I understand that the banks have been offered a special rate of loan and that student loans will be exempt from the banks' balance sheets. Banks will be guaranteed higher than standard interest rates, and I believe that the Government are promising to indemnify the banks against a change of Government policy or a change of Government. Even with those inducements, the banks still do not want to know.

What about the procedure of the Bill? It is absolutely disgraceful that we should approach the issue in a four-clause, two-schedule Bill. The Secretary of State said that the Bill was drawn up as a parallel to the Education Act 1962. That was a very different thing. A duty was then placed on the Secretary of State for local authorities to administer a scheme that was already in existence. That Act was not a leap in the dark, but the student loans scheme is.

Clause 1 introduces the power to make orders and regulations subject to the negative resolution procedure. As my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn said, such resolutions need not be debated by the House. Many prayers are tabled, but are not debated.

Clause 2 goes to extraordinary lengths about Northern Ireland. I see that the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) is in his place, and I have no doubt that he will want to speak on the subject. Under the Northern Ireland Act 1974, the House assumed responsibility for Northern Ireland, and one of the fears was that orders could be swept under the carpet and dealt with by the House without any debate. It was therefore provided that most orders made under the Act had to be debated under the affirmative resolution procedure, and had to come before the whole House. Why do the Government want to sweep that away for education grants in clause 2, so that a whole province can be hauled into this scheme without any debate in the House?

Schedule 2 provides that the Secretary of State may make regulations about the amount of a loan, the rate of interest and repayment, and regulations that impose a duty on the governing bodies of higher education institutions to issue certificates of eligibility. All those matters can be decided by regulations made by the Secretary of State without any debate in the House. No Government and no Secretary of State should have such powers, and I would say the same if my party was in government. No Secretary of State should have unbridled and unlimited powers, and the House should not grant them, because the Secretary of State should be responsible to the House.

This Bill is a bad Bill for a number of reasons. It is bad for students and very bad for young people. It is bad for higher education generally. It is bad for the financial institutions, which do not really want to know it. It is bad for the democratic process in the House, as matters will not be debated but will be decided by Order in Council. Most of all, it is bad for Britain's prosperity, which is what we should all consider.

The Minister said that the scheme will reduce student costs by 6 or 7 per cent. If, for that, we reduce intake and accessibility to higher education, we shall have done a bad thing tonight for our country's prosperity.

6.20 pm

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): I am grateful to be called so early in this interesting and important debate, the subject of which I have followed for the past three years while I have been Parliamentary Private Secretary to my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker). During his stewardship of the Department of Education and Science, he was heavily involved with this issue. I enjoyed that time in the Department, working with civil servants and others there. It was an interesting time.

We are dealing with a matter that is rather more difficult than it ought to be because we are dealing with a change of culture. As my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) said at the conclusion of his remarkable and excellent speech, there is a difference of attitude between Britain and the United States. If we had been born and bred in one of the many countries where a loans system exists, we would not be having this debate; we would deal with loans as a matter of course. Whenever we consider a change of culture, or a change from the norm, we have to go through this enormous rigmarole of believing that everything that went before is correct and that any change must be for the worse. In this case, that is simply not true.

What irks Opposition Members so much is that the debate takes place against a background of higher education receiving enormous support from the Government. There are 200,000 more students in higher education than 10 years ago. There are more part-time and more mature students and there is extremely generous maintenance support. Labour cannot come to terms with that. As a result, Opposition Members persist in suggesting that, by proposing student loans, the Government have abdicated from their support for higher education. We know that that is not true. Higher education is a partnership between the Government, who will continue to fund tuition and the capital cost of buildings, and students. I do not believe that that partnership has been remotely equal—students should make a greater contribution.

It is important to keep a sense of proportion. It is just such a sense of proportion which puts Opposition Members in difficulty when they say what they might do to ensure that the number of students in higher education increases—something which we are determined to do. The grants system was perfectly adequate for a small higher education scheme, but it is inadequate for a larger and growing one. Robbins suggested that that would be the case.

Nick Barr of the London School of Economics has calculated how much it might cost to abolish the parental contribution, to return the grant to a serious level and to increase by at least 50 per cent. the number of grants available to expand higher education. He suggests that it would be about £2·25 billion. I do not believe that any Government could make that sort of commitment to higher education maintenance—we should remember that that has nothing to do with bricks and mortar and tuition. It is not realistic to make such a commitment to students. Labour has been dishonest, suggesting that it can make such a commitment.

If we want to expand higher education but know that we cannot do it through the existing grants system because it is inadequate for the purpose, the loans system is a useful way in which to supplement student maintenance while the student is in higher education. I believe that the scheme is useful and appropriate on three grounds. First, there is a moral argument in favour of loans. Secondly, they are not a disincentive. Thirdly, I believe that they are flexible.

I shall deal first with the moral argument. We have heard many statements from Opposition Members of how immoral it is to demand from the student some backing for his or her higher education. What could be more immoral than a student having to depend on the state in the form of social security benefits or on parents? What could be more moral than for the individual student to say, "I have some commitment to my future and I am prepared to make an investment in it"? That seems entirely moral and appropriate.

Some of my lower-paid constituents are perfectly happy to make a commitment to higher education, although nobody from their families may have seen a university. They know that they and the rest of the country benefit generally from higher education, and they are happy to contribute to the education of doctors, teachers, scientists and others who receive higher education. If, however, they are asked for a greater commitment for the maintenance of students while at university, I think that they are entitled to ask, "What are they doing for themselves? Where is their commitment to their future?" We are presenting the perfect moral riposte. The student who no longer wants to have thrown at him the argument that he is a drain on the taxpayer—I do not believe that students are a drain on the taxpayer—could thus demonstrate his commitment to his future.

I shall deal, secondly, with whether loans are a deterrent. It has been suggested that the Government should predict, as have surveys done by the National Union of Students, what a deterrent a loans system might be. That is not the right approach. We should consider the experience of other countries and ask whether their loans systems have deterred people from going into higher education. We all travel to Europe and the United States. Do we see there a desperate shortage of people going through higher education because of a loans system? Of course not. They are used to it. They are perfectly happy with it. Moreover, the system suits students from low-income families. A task force that surveyed student assistance under the Canadian student loans programme in 1980 concluded:

> "aid programmes were important and necessary elements in supporting students from lower income families".

[Mr. Alistair Burt]

Loans were as effective as grants at encouraging participation by low-income students, but loans cost less and so enabled federal and provincial Governments to help more students without increasing the cost to the taxpayer.

If there is one thing we suffer from in Britain, it is lack of access for students from poorer socio-economic classes. The grant system has not dealt with that. I do not believe that access is governed by cost. I shall not go all the way with the argument that the loans system is a necessary adjunct to greater access, because I believe that access is controlled by different things, but there is no evidence anywhere in the world to suggest that the introduction of a loans system deters people from participating in higher education.

We should note that West Germany has three times as many students in higher education from poorer socio-economic groups than Britain. The average loan there is about £2,000 a year. The system works for them; it is no deterrent. I urge those who are worried by the deterrent argument to look not at predictions or the answers to surveys which suggest replies, but at the experience of countries all over the world. There such questions are answered.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Burt: Would hon. Members be so quick to step into my grave?

Thirdly, we know that Britain's higher education system needs expanding, and we want a flexible economic system in order to make that possible. The flexibility that the loan system gives in providing an extra channel of resources for the individual student will make an important contribution, particularly to those students who are dependent on means-tested grants from their parents but whose parents do not contribute fully. About 40 per cent. of parents do not make up the proper level of grant and their chidren are deprived of that element of money which they would otherwise receive. The loan will not be means tested so that for those who find it hard to make the parental contribution the loan system will provide a flexible way out. It will provide extra money, non-means tested, for the benefit of their youngsters.

I have three points of concern, which I have already mentioned to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. The first is in relation to disabled students. As my right hon. Friend knows, I have a particular concern for the arguments raised by the Royal National Institute for the Deaf which has lobbied on behalf of those whom it represents and other disabled students. It is clear that deaf students have lower salary prospects than hearing graduates. International comparisons for disabled student support show that many countries provide more generous support for such students than Britain has up to now. The Bill, through access funds, will give Britain an opportunity to top up the support that we currently provide for disabled students. I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will consider that matter carefully during the passage of the Bill. We do not have many disabled students in higher education and we want to encourage more. They have particular problems and their anxieties might be set at rest if we were to take the appropriate steps in the Bill.

Secondly, we should look carefully at housing costs and the abolition of benefits which are a worry, particularly in some regions. It will do the Government no harm to examine that carefully.

Lastly, we need to make it clear that, contrary to the allegations made by Opposition Members, the scheme has nothing to do with the raising of loans to pay for tuition fees. It is all to do with maintenance. There is a balance in higher education between the Government and individual students. We all benefit from higher education and, as taxpayers and as a Government, we contribute to its bricks and mortar, to the teaching and to the resources available. But here is a cast-iron opportunity for the individual student to show his or her commitment to his or her future. The youngsters of Britain will respond to that challenge. They will see the loan system as an assistance, not a deterrent, and, in a few years' time, like many other parts of the world, we will wonder what this debate and this fuss have been all about.

6.32 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): This evening there are two bits of bad news. One is the Bill and the other is the result of the leadership election in the Tory party.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The result of the leadership election of the Conservative party is that the Prime Minister has only 314 votes——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. Whatever interest that might create outside the Chamber, we are now dealing with the Second Reading of an important Bill.

Mr. Hughes: I was going to summarise the result as Finchley 314, Clwyd, North-West 33. There were 24 abstentions, so that means 57 dissatisfied Tories. Are they here now, is what we would like to know.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I assume that the hon. Gentleman will now speak on the Bill.

Mr. Hughes: I was going on to say that I guess that that means that, sadly, policies such as those in the Bill will go on unchanged. Therefore, that means that the Opposition will continue having to expose the weaknesses of the argument and the proposed legislation. I want to take head on the arguments as to why this is a wrong Bill.

Hon. Members have dealt with the constitutional impropriety of the Bill. The inadequacy of the Bill has not only been mentioned in this House. When my noble Friend Lord Addington spoke in the debate on the Loyal Address in the other place, he said that when he picked up the Bill from the Vote Office he thought that the middle must have fallen out of it, it was so thin.

For the reasons that have been given, no parallel can be drawn with the Education Act 1962, which introduced grants. This is a thin Bill simply because the Government have not yet been able to make arrangements for its proper implementation. No doubt it would have had much more substance had they been able to do so. However, rather than not go ahead with their commitment and find themselves in difficulty, they have introduced this shadow Bill—that is effectively what it is—and we shall no doubt spend all our time in Committee having to debate things that might be or might have been.

As a result, the Government may find themselves in some difficulty in the other place, where I gather that even Conservative Members, and not just the noble Lord Beloff, are significantly unhappy about the fact that they will have the substance of the Bill only in secondary legislation. I must warn the Government that, contrary to convention, there may well be votes on this Bill's secondary legislation in the other place if it is earlier deprived of the substantive material which should be in the Bill.

We are being asked to change from a grant system to something which is not entirely a loan system but which in due course will become half a loan system—half grant, half loans. As has been pointed out, no other country has gone from an entirely grant system to a loan system.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: No other country has one.

Mr. Hughes: That is right. Therefore, all the arguments about the effect of such a change on access elsewhere are invalid. No other country has in the past thought it sufficiently important to invest adequately in students to provide a full grant system rather than a partial grant system. It is no good the hon. Lady shaking her head despondently.

When the Select Committee on Education, Science and Art considered the matter only a couple of years ago—it had a Tory majority and it was chaired by a Conservative Member—it recommended the continuation of a grant system. It considered whether there should be a loan system and it concluded, without having all the inhibitions of being in government but representing parties across the Floor of the House, that the grant system should be retained because it was the single best way of ensuring maximum access.

I accept that we have not been very good at that. It is poor that only 8 per cent. of the lower socio-economic groups have gone into higher education, but that does not mean that we should take a step, for which there is no obvious precedent, that points towards a conclusion that will not increase access for people who have the least money to spend. There is no evidence to support the argument that to change from a system whereby people are funded either, if they are poor, entirely without any parental contribution, or, if their parents have larger incomes, partially by parental income, to one whereby they have to decide before they go into higher education whether they wish to take out a loan, will act as an incentive to continuing in education as opposed to going out to work to earn money.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will the hon. Gentleman admit that the greatest destruction of access to those from blue-collar families was the destruction of the grammar schools? If youngsters can be persuaded to stay on in education after the age of 16, there is a good chance that they will go to university, and in the grammar schools they did. Grammar schools in my constituency have a good access rate for the children of blue-collar workers, including some who are now in the Cabinet.

Mr. Hughes: First, most grammar schools were destroyed under a Tory Government. Secondly, that is not a provable case. Thirdly, as the Secretary of State was at pains to point out, access has increased in recent years, as it should have done, but we are still falling substantially behind all comparable countries; in some cases so far behind that only 15 per cent. of our students go on to further and higher education compared with more than 50 per cent. elsewhere.

There is a big difference between addressing that question by saying that people have to pay for a public service before they can benefit and the way that we pay for future increased social security expenditure through people contributing to occupational pensions. The latter is on the basis that, as one earns, so contribution is made. The former is on the basis that one takes on the liability speculatively in the belief that one will be able to make up later that cost incurred at the beginning. They are entirely different arguments.

No Minister has disagreed when we have said that those countries that have looked at their present mixed grant-loan system—Sweden, the Netherlands and Germany—are moving away from balancing it in favour of loans and towards balancing it in favour of grants, not least because they find that the former is inadequate for giving access to the groups that most need it and because debt repayments are growing rather than being reduced.

Mr. Jackson: The hon. Gentleman has heard the answer on this several times, but he keeps making the same point, which suggests that he is not prepared to listen. We are moving from a wholly grants system to a 50:50 grants-loans system. The Swedes are moving from a pretty well wholly loans system to a rather less than 50:50 grants-loans system. The Germans are moving to a grant-loans mix along the same lines, with the same sort of balance, as in the system that we are proposing. The crucial difference is that, while our grants and loans will be available to virtually 100 per cent. of full-time students, in Germany they are available to only 30 per cent.

Mr. Hughes: I have made the point that there is no exact parallel because we start from a different point. It is therefore also invalid for Ministers to say, as the Secretary of State did today, that we do so much better by our students because, per year, they get so much more support. We know the answer to that too. It is because, in many other places, the length of the course is significantly longer. Therefore, the amount that we contribute is good value for money. There should be more contributions, not fewer, and more from the public purse.

It is no good the Government trying to hide their embarrassment about saying that they are committed to education and the expansion of further and higher education, when at the same time, in public expenditure plans, not only does the Secretary of State start back-tracking on the commitment apparently made in January by his predecessor but we are clearly not funding higher and further education in any way that is likely to produce the increase in student numbers that the country desperately needs.

Mr. Straw: Is not the point about the international comparisons that, whatever the mix of loans and grants with which one starts, wherever there has been a shift to greater reliance on loans, access has been cut? That is why Sweden and West Germany are moving back the other way.

Mr. Hughes: That is the point that I made when we debated the White Paper, and it has been made elsewhere. That is why the Minister and his colleagues are under

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attack, not just from the Opposition and students who have an immediate interest, but from academics and even from Conservative Members.

The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) has already referred to the noble Lord Beloff, who has no little credibility as an academic and is a Conservative whom the Government have always previously prayed in aid as somebody to whom serious attention should be given. He said that the student loan plan is

"absurdly inefficient and damaging to the students, their universities and colleges and the community at large".—[*Official Report, House of Lords,* 23 November 1989; Vol. 513, c. 186.]

That is partly because of its risk to access for the whole community.

Mr. Jackson: I am sorry to intervene again, but it is necessary to correct what has been reported incorrectly. In Germany, for example, the proportion of students from working-class backgrounds in higher education has risen from 16 to 18 per cent. since the introduction of the loans scheme.

Mr. Straw: That is not true.

Mr. Hughes: The change in other countries has been assessed and analysed, and all those countries that are reviewing their schemes are moving to increase the amount of grant and decrease the relevant proportion of loans. I am happy to sit down with the Under-Secretary and go through the figures, but the trend in all the other countries is in the opposite direction to the trend in Britain. We have the worst record on numbers, and we should be doing everything to increase those numbers.

We have no detail before us. The Bill effectively comprises one part of one clause and two small parts in the schedule. There was far more detail in the White Paper and in the consultants' reports, which we expected would have been transferred into proposed legislation. There is no mention of access funds, of the administrative body that is to be set up for which the senior executive post has already been advertised, of the way in which the money for the loans will be provided, or of what the intended initial sum would be—£420 has been mentioned—or of the way in which that will be reassessed.

Furthermore, there is no mention of any arrangement with the banks because, as I hope that the Minister now accepts, no final arrangement has been made with the banks. Some of the banks have agreed to help draw up a proposal, depending on the passage of the Bill and on further details being worked out, but clearly there is no contract and nothing firm. The banks are obviously extremely unhappy because they stand to lose substantial numbers of customers. I hope that students and others will consider carefully which banks are subscribing and which are not subscribing to the scheme. If the Government believe in customer power, perhaps they will respond to the fact that customers of the present and future customers will use their power to tell the banks not just that they are against the scheme and will not support it, but that they will have nothing to do with the banks which commit themselves to the scheme.

Our opposition is not just that because we have no details and because all that we are being told is that we are changing from grants to loans. We know too that students will be disentitled from housing benefit, unemployment benefit and income support. Those are substantial reductions from the entitlements that people had begun to believe were part of the general panoply of the welfare state. I heard the hon. Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) say that he was worried about that. Many people are worried because the combined costs of deregulation of rents and the poll tax that students will have to pay next year, albeit at a reduced rate, will be more than the entire grant.

Furthermore, in some parts of the country, because of high living costs, the amount of money left in students' pockets will be reduced from about £30 a week to about £6 a week within the year. My noble Friend Lord Ritchie has given the figures on this in the other place. That could be a real loss per student of over £1,000 a year.

It is wrong and unfair to students to say that attitudes will change if their grants are replaced by loans. Many students find it difficult to survive. Many make substantial sacrifices to go to and stay on at further and higher education establishments. Many do other jobs to bring in money, and the vast majority are entirely financially responsible. At the moment, they have to go into debt to subsidise themselves. The difference that the Government are introducing is that they will have to go into official debt, authorised by the Government and probably at a high level.

There will also be no great saving. We know that, for at least 13 years, there will be no saving to the public purse. There may be no saving for another decade after that. It is ludicrous to plan against an eventuality of increased access in the long term with a short-term provision that means that it will cost more to introduce a scheme about which there can be no certainty. This is a speculative venture.

I only wish that we were debating today a measure arrived at in an entirely different way. The reform of student finance could have been tackled completely differently. Consensus could have been sought, as it was in 1962. Instead of bullying the banks and undervaluing the students, there could have been debate with the people who know about these things to try to arrive at an agreed solution. There could have been, as the hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) suggested, an experiment. We could have looked at certain systems, without introducing them wholesale with no ability to calculate their consequences.

We could have worked out a way to reduce dependency on parents. I believe that there should be a reduction in the parental contribution, because many parents do not pay it and students of such parents have great difficulty. There could have been a way to ensure adequate public funding, and I and my colleagues are not ashamed to say that we believe that there should be more public funding, for higher and further education. It is no good the Government saying that they cannot solve the problem simply because they are not willing to put more taxpayers' money into the kitty.

There is no guarantee that access will not be damaged. No answer has been given to the concerns expressed about deaf students and students suffering from many other disabilities, who will necessarily incur hundreds, if not thousands, of pounds' worth of extra costs in completing their courses. No answer has been given to the concerns expressed on behalf of mature students, many of whom give up well-paid jobs to return to education. Many of them already have difficulties, especially those who have families. Above all, no answer has been given to the concerns about the poorest students of all, who are already finding life extremely difficult and who will find it substantially more difficult in future.

What about longer courses? In England, no answers have been given to the concern expressed about dentists, medical students, architects and vets. In Scotland one starts from the premise that courses are longer, but hardly anything has been said about Scottish students, either.

Mrs. Ray Michie (Argyll and Bute): My hon. Friend is aware of the Bill's serious implications for the unique Scottish education system and the broad four-year degree courses that we have north of the border. Did my hon. Friend note that, during the long speech of the Secretary of State, the right hon. Gentleman never once mentioned Scotland? [HON. MEMBERS: "Yes, he did."] He referred only to the four-year degree course. I think that my hon. Friend will agree that that is disgraceful, coming from a supposed Scot—or ex-Scot. I hope that the Minister responsible for education in Scotland will tell us that the Government propose to take Scottish universities out of the ambit of the London-based Universities Funding Council immediately.

Mr. Hughes: My hon. Friend is right. The Secretary of State mentioned Scotland only once, when he said that he had been a beneficiary of the Scottish system. It is a bit rich for him now to make proposals that will do more harm to Scottish education—the system from which he benefited —even than to education elsewhere in Britain.

Conservative Members find the arguments against the scheme unpalatable but their logic is fundamentally flawed. They say, "We cannot afford to pay more grant, because more people will be entering higher education and that will cost the Exchequer more." If the argument is that entering higher and further education increases one's ability to earn well, there must surely come a time when more than 50 per cent. of young people enter further education and, presumably, eventually they will all be earning more. They will then be able to pay their way and make their contribution. The logic of the taxpayer funding the student—the person who earns most paying most—is eminently applicable if the Government argue the numbers of students will be expanded.

The increased resources which the Bill will provide are primarily the increased resources that the students will have to find. The Government's attempt to prevent an increase in dependency will result only in increased dependency on credit. The only access that will be increased will be the use of little plastic cards. It will be a sad day for education in Britain if this shadow of a Bill is passed. My only hope is that, given that the Government have found it so difficult to get anyone to support it so far, it will disappear completely before it completes its stages here and in another place.

6.52 pm

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): Before I come to my remarks on the Bill, I hope that the House will allow me to say one sentence on another matter. May I, on behalf of my hon. Friends, congratulate my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on the massive and overwhelming vote of confidence that she has received as leader of the Conservative party——

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I called the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) to take part in the debate, and I hope that he will now do so.

Mr. Stewart: The purple passages in the speech of the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), who opened for the Opposition, had some entertainment value, but what was most interesting about his speech was what he did not say about the Labour party's policy. We have heard from him that he is in favour of grants, but when asked, "At what level?", he says that he is in favour of grants at the level that resources allow. The ringing cry will go round the campuses of Britain: "Trust us lads. We'll see what we can do." Perhaps the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) would like me to give way to him so that he can tell the House where Opposition Members stand on early-day motion 117 in the names of the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall) and others. Does that reflect Opposition Front Bench policy? I note that the hon. Gentleman is silent.

The Opposition have failed to understand the basic reasoning behind a loans and grants system. As the right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) said earlier, higher education is an investment. Because it is an investment that benefits society, there should be a grant element. But because it is an investment that also benefits individuals, a loan element is also justified.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) talked about the constitutional argument. Somewhat unusually, Opposition Members have criticised the Bill for being too short; generally Bills are criticised for being too long. As a former Scottish Office education Minister, I had the duty of administering the grant system which in Scotland is run not by local authorities but by the Scottish Office. In the light of that practical experience, I can tell my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary that I would be appalled at the prospect of primary legislation being introduced to cover every change in the grant or loan system. Of course, changes in detail arise from time to time, and it is appropriate to implement them by regulations.

We have heard the charge that loans would be a disincentive to access by lower income groups. As the very good briefing note available to all hon. Members from the Library explains, experience in Canada, Sweden and America shows that working-class students are willing to borrow to finance tuition or—as in this case—living expenses. The Canadian study is particularly interesting. It points out that those from lower socio-economic groups are more willing to take on loans than those from higher socio-economic groups. That is precisely what one would expect, because the returns from higher education are likely to be more marked for those entering it from low income groups than for those with a higher income background.

Family resources affect the likelihood of qualified students entering higher education, but the effect is on the parental contribution. That is the potential determinant. Under the Bill, the parental contribution will fall in real terms. Under a top-up scheme, the inability to borrow can no longer be a constraint and willingness to borrow is wholly unrelated to present family income. It is not a charge against a student's present income but will be related to his or her perception of future income—the difference between what he or she expects to earn as a

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graduate and as a non-graduate respectively. That is why access will be widened. The real constraint imposed by the parental contribution will be lessened and guaranteed loans will be repayable out of future income, not out of present income.

In a lengthy intervention, the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) mentioned the Scottish four-year degree. I should point out that there are also three-year Scottish degrees. Like my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, I am a beneficiary of the Scottish system. Indeed, I gained the same degree in the same course from the same university, although not at quite the same time.

Let us consider the financial position in 1990. A graduate on a four-year Scottish degree course would incur £600 more in debt than a student on a three-year degree course. People who claim that that extra debt will be a disincentive are saying that the student incurring that debt for the fourth year sees the year as less valuable than the cost of the loan. We are talking about 6 or 7 per cent. of the total cost of the education. If repayment of that percentage is enough to discourage students from taking a four-year degree course, why should the taxpayer pay the extra 93 per cent.?

Mr. John Marshall: I thank my fellow beneficiary of the four-year Scottish degree system for giving way. Does he agree that the Scottish four-year degree course at the University of St. Andrews has always been heavily subscribed by students from south of the border, despite the fact that there are financial disincentives in the short term in their applying for those courses?

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I do not believe that there will be any disincentive with regard to the four-year loan system. Those who argue that there will be a disincentive argue that students place a very low value on the fourth year. If that is their argument, why should the taxpayer pay the rest of the money?

I am aware of the constraints on time. In conclusion, I believe that the present system is manifestly unsatisfactory. There is an overriding need for the right balance in the payments made by the taxpayer, the students and their parents. In the long term there is an overriding need for a system that is stable and acceptable to society as a whole. I believe that this Bill achieves that.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. There is a constraint on time. Speeches should be limited to 10 minutes between now and 9 pm.

7.2 pm

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): The only good thing that can be said about the Bill is that it has probably saved a forest or two by its brevity. Apart from that, it is an affront to our democratic procedures. It is a legislative outrage that so little detail can be presented to the House before the Bill enters Committee. The Bill is an educational irrelevance as well as an administrative and very costly nightmare.

Let us consider the Government's claims for the Bill. They claim that it will spread the costs among the parent, the student and the taxpayer. They really mean that the Government are desperate to cut their commitment to the maintenance of students in higher education. It is no good Conservative Members shaking their heads; that is exactly what the Bill will do.

Many students receive a full grant and social security benefits because their housing and other costs are so high and the grant is so small. Despite receiving the full £420 loan available for students outside London, they will still be much worse off under the new scheme when the system is changed to a 50 per cent. grant and a 50 per cent. loan. When the Government talk about spreading costs, they are simply using Orwellian "newspeak." The Government want to cut the costs involved in the maintenance of students in higher education.

I want now to consider the cost forecasts. The figures presented in the White Paper are based on the assumption that there will be no increase in student numbers. They are based on the fact that the Government believe that only 80 per cent. of students will take up loans. The figures assume that in the first year inflation will be 5 per cent., in the second year 3·5 per cent. and 3 per cent. thereafter.

In the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts the Minister admitted that he thought that there would be a 100 per cent. take-up of loans and that invalidates the table in the White Paper. As far as we can understand, there is a commitment to a continuation of the increase in student numbers in higher education. The White Paper takes no account of that. Furthermore, we must consider the Government's inflation statistics which seem to come from the Mad Hatter's tea party in "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland."

Over the past 20 years inflation has been less than 3·5 per cent. only twice. In the Tory years it has averaged 8·7 per cent. and it was just a little higher than that under a Labour Government. The rate of inflation is roughly the same under both Labour and Conservative Governments. However, over a 20-year period, the rate of inflation is more than double the estimates used for calculating the figures in the White Paper. If I had longer than five minutes to speak, I would read out the figures to show that the record of Labour and Conservative Governments on inflation since 1967 are comparable, although the Labour rate was a little higher.

When the Secretary of State said that the rate of interest on the loans would be nil, he meant that the loans would be revalued every year based on the rate of inflation. If that is not a kind of interest payment, I do not know what is. In two years under the Conservative Government the rate of inflation was higher than the then bank interest rate. I wonder what the real figures might have been if the Government had bothered to consider inflation rates over the past 20 years and then calculated the cost of the scheme. I am sure that if they had done that the picture would have been very different.

The Government also claimed that the plan is to increase resources available for students. The Secretary of State said that the average amount taken by students in social security benefits is £210 and that the £420 maximum loan would therefore give a student more resources. However, the Secretary of State knows that that average figure is disingenuous. It does not give the House a completely true picture. When the Minister replies, perhaps he will tell us how many students over the past year claimed benefits in excess of the £420 which a student would receive in the first year or above the £310 that it is planned a student should receive in his final year of study. I believe that we will discover that a considerable number of students will be affected.

Currently, of all students in receipt of mandatory awards where parental incomes are taken into account, 30 per cent. of students receive a full grant. In Wales about 35 per cent. of students receive a full grant. In five Welsh counties the uptake of full grant is even higher. In Gwent and Gwynedd it is almost 45 per cent. and in Dyfed, Mid Glamorgan and Powys it is almost 40 per cent. Students in Wales will be particularly hard hit by a system which provides half a loan and half a grant. Those students will find that, in effect, their incomes will be capped.

The Government have introduced a new concept in the provision of state services. That is, some people who use the service will be expected to make a substantial contribution to its cost. Conservative Members have asked, "Why should someone who has not used the higher education system make a contribution to the maintenance of students who are involved in it?" They are enunciating a principle which, of course, paves the way for the introduction of a full loan scheme at a later date. They will not be prepared to give a cast-iron commitment that, at some future date, they will not deign to go beyond the 50:50 split and introduce further loans.

The Government claim that the Bill will increase access. Nothing could be further from the truth. I was the eldest of seven children. I had a full grant, but I still had to work at Christmas time and in the summer. I took a stake in my own future by forgoing the opportunity to take a job at the age of 15. My parents had already made sacrifices for me, and they continued to make sacrifices for my brothers and sisters who went to university. It is rubbish to talk about this scheme giving students a stake in their own future. Many people have taken a stake in their own future by being prepared to forgo the opportunity to earn money from the age of 15 and, instead, take up higher education. Furthermore, I am quite sure that my taxation contributions in the past 20 years or so have more than made up for the cost of my education.

Education is not a burden. The Secretary of State constantly used the word "burden". Education is an investment in our future, and I sincerely hope that the scheme will be rejected.

7.12 pm

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): The explanatory and financial memorandum to the Bill states:

> "The Bill, which gives effect to proposals outlined in the White Paper, 'Top-Up Loans for Students'".

I mention that because, in a reply to a parliamentary question, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science stated:

> "On the assumptions made in the White Paper, 'Top-Up Loans for Students' . . . the estimated net cost of the scheme is some £13 million in 2000; in 2005 there is estimated to be a net saving of some £37 million rising to £49 million in 2010."—[*Official Report*, 1 December 1989; Vol. 162, c. *440*.]

In other words, the answer to my question is on the same level playing field as the White Paper, so like is being compared with like.

Hon. Members with reasonably long memories on education will recall that when the Education Reform Act 1988 was introduced Opposition Members criticised its length. They said that it was too much, too complex and covered too many issues. This Bill is criticised for precisely the opposite reasons. Opposition Members say that the Education (Student Loans) Bill is too brief. Clearly, they are more interested in opposition for its own sake than in opposition for any real, cogent or constructive reason. This Bill is short and concise. It sets out the framework for intended legislation, with detail to be found in regulations. Its raison d'être is the need to attract more students to advanced education and, at the same time, to generate more funds.

I support student loans because they represent new money. The proposed £420 is additional to the existing grant. That point was made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State when he opened the debate. No hon. Member can doubt that there must be a limit to the number of students whom taxpayers can afford to support on the present grants only basis. I do not believe that the taxpayer should be soaked for every single student penny. The loan, which is interest-free and not repayable until the student is earning 85 per cent. of the national average wage —about £9,500 on current standards—will form an important addition to student finance. In addition, women who start families will not be required to repay the loan until they actually start to earn. There will be no such thing as a negative dowry.

My hon. Friends and I have been touched by the great concern expressed both within and outside the House about the likely level of default and about bankers' profits. We have heard figures from the United States which would curdle the blood of any true blue British banker. As all hon. Members should know, the principal reason for the high incidence of default in the United States is that there is no general provision for graduates to defer payment when their income is low. That contrasts sharply and unfavourably with what the Government are proposing. If we need to seek an indication of student default we can look to Scandinavia, which is much closer to home and where the level of default is between 1 per cent. and 2 per cent.

It has been argued that a high measure of taxpayer support is necessary to guarantee admission to advanced education, but since 1979 the real value of the student grant has fallen by at least 10 per cent. The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) said that it had fallen by 23 per cent. Despite that real reduction, there are almost 200,000 more students in higher education, and the percentage of 18 and 19-year-olds entering higher education has increased from less than 13 per cent. to more than 14 per cent. There is thus no reason to argue that a reduction in grant equals a reduction in student numbers. That is demonstrably untrue.

However, I share some students' apprehensions. I have met a number of delegations and, in general, they are apprehensive about the loss of social security benefit. Incidentally, Beveridge, the great initiator, never foresaw a situation in which students would be the beneficiaries of social security payments. If it is argued that with adequate funding for their support they would not need social security benefit, I return to my general principle that the proposed loan will be part of their support.

With regard to access funds and the part that they have to play, the problem is not their number but their size. The access funds totalling £15 million are inadequate. I again urge my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State to reconsider the amount of funding. The sum should be substantially increased. Access funds will be required to assist young people, especially those from disadvantaged sections of

[Mr. James Pawsey]

our community, who wish to enter advanced education. If they are to be assisted to any marked extent—and that must be one of our principal aims—access funds must be increased.

Most graduates can expect to receive substantially more remuneration than non-graduates. As students benefit most from higher education, why should the tax paid by those who leave school and start work at 16 materially assist those attending university? Can it really be fair or just that the non-graduate should be called upon to subsidise the graduate? Economic analysis shows that graduates receive a personal return of about 25 per cent. on their investment in higher education. Society's return by contrast is only between 5 and 8 per cent.

The hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) says that loans will discourage young people from blue-collar homes from entering advanced education——

Mr. Win Griffiths: It will.

Mr. Pawsey: That point is made as though the present system worked to their benefit, but currently, although they account for 60 per cent. of the population, they only manage 21 per cent. of university admissions.

Mr. Win Griffiths *rose*——

Mr. Pawsey: No, I cannot give way. They account for only 21 per cent. of university admissions or 24 per cent. of admissions to polytechnics, so the present grants system does not seem to be an outstanding success for working-class youngsters.

A further reason why I support top-up loans is that about 4 per cent. of parents do not make the full parental contribution and students have to make good the shortfall in various ways. Many, for example, borrow and, if they do, they borrow at commercial rates of interest, which compare unfavourably with the zero rate of interest proposed in the legislation.

I am absolutely convinced that a mixed system of grants and loans is fairer. It at once represents better value for the taxpayer and improved access to higher education. I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to support the Bill.

7.21 pm

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): In the age in which we live, under this Government, we receive lectures on the Health Service from a Cabinet whose members never use it. We receive lectures on the education service from a Cabinet whose members never use the public service. Practically all the Cabinet come from wealthy homes and went to prep or private schools and to Oxbridge, and although they lecture us about what we should do for our children, they have always depended on mummy and daddy. That is a fact of life for this Cabinet, although I am not saying that it applies to every Conservative Member.

The scheme is really a cut. It is a cut made in a foundering economy. Indeed, the Government are having to make such cuts—they have no choice. The economy has foundered so badly that one Chancellor of the Exchequer has resigned and his place has now been taken by another. Furthermore, an election has now taken place that nobody ever thought would take place. I have not yet heard the result—*[Interruption.]* Well, in other words, there is a crisis in the Government and——

Mr. John Marshall *rose*——

Mr. Flannery: No, I shall not give way because I have only 10 minutes in which to make my speech.

This is not one but two debates, although they are essentially the same. They are both about how to cut the education service. One is about keeping down the wages of teachers and school conditions and the other is about how to cut students' money. That cut is not so much a plot as a necessity. The Government have to make that cut—they have no choice. Having seen the whirlwind coming, Ministers continually visit America to study schools there. The Americanisation not merely of our economy but of our health and education services is now well under way.

However, the Government who are now making these cuts had access to a boon that no other Government in Europe have had. One of my hon. Friends has costed the money that the Government have received from North sea oil at at least £80 billion. We did not have the benefit of that. From selling the family silver, the Government have received at least £30 billion—even after the massive advertising on a grand scale, hitherto unknown, involving public and taxpayers' money.

Those are the people who are lecturing us about what we should be doing, yet the Government know full well that they are looting the common exchequer. Although more millionaires than ever are emerging and they are growing richer than ever, just outside the House people are sleeping in cardboard boxes. When Opposition Members try to set that right, the Government drag up all kinds of arguments to try to prove that we are somehow in the wrong; but we are not in the wrong. We know that the students will now take a kicking and a beating from the Government and that many of them will no longer enter areas that they have previously been able to enter.

As I said a month ago, I am one of only a few hon. Members who had experience of higher education before the grant system. Only a handful of ordinary boys and girls could get to university on the few scholarships available. The others could not go. Many of them took up teaching so that they could get a loan from their local education authority for two years. When I came back from the war, it took me four years to pay back my loan. Despite all the boasting from Conservative Members, some former students in America are in penury as a result of trying to pay back their loans and pay off their mortgages, yet that is what the Government are driving us towards. The Government have driven our economy to such desperation that their own party is now in deep crisis and they are trying to shift that crisis on to us.

However, there are some who realise the present serious condition of education. The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals has briefed the Opposition on this, stating that it believes that such a scheme should ensure that students have enough to live on while they study and that it does not deter increasing numbers from applying for higher education.

Although it has been said that more people enter advanced education in America and West Germany, that has nothing to do with grants; it is because those countries have much stronger economies than we have. Indeed, even the Italians and the French now have more powerful economies than we have. That means that they can afford advanced education without the grants that we would give. Nevertheless, ours was the most advanced system when we helped more students to take up higher education, but our economy has foundered since then and has driven the Government into a loans system.

The hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) knows of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals because he is a former don. The Committee said that such a plan should be simple, that it should provide adequate means and that it should not deter students from poorer families. It concluded that the White Paper failed to satisfy any of those criteria.

The loans scheme, which Conservative Members have praised so much, will cut, stabilise or freeze grants, yet it will take more money from the taxpayer—and from the students themselves. It will also remove the housing and other benefits that students so urgently need, so it is socially unjust.

The loans scheme could deter students from entering higher education. Of course, it will not deter the rich students. It will not deter the sons or daughters of the present Cabinet. Like the cuts in the Health Service, the scheme will not affect them because, like the Prime Minister, they can still go private. Members of the Cabinet can do all that, but they still lecture us about how we should deal with our education system—the one that we built. I remind Conservative Members that Robert Peel built the National gallery for the poor—for those who could not afford pictures of their own. However, the Government's hard-heartedness and their lack of care for ordinary people mean that this and similar schemes will be heaped on working people.

It is likely that the scheme will stop students becoming doctors, teachers and graduate nurses. Conservative Members have no intention of facing reality, but they should study the briefing from the Royal College of Nursing, which deplores the fact that the number of graduate nurses will decrease. I note that several of my hon. Friends nod their heads in agreement, but Conservative Members are not interested in briefs that give them facts. They are interested only in briefs that uphold the necessity to cut the Health Service, and attack the ambulance service and the education system. They are interested in briefs that help their people. Eventually, Conservative Members will leave the scene because they will be kicked out, but they will do so with pockets full of loot from the common exchequer. They have not used that loot on education, on building hospitals and so on.

The scheme is vicious. It is anti-education and anti the poorer student. It is deplored by nearly every group in this country except those who sit on the Conservative Benches. The scheme should be kicked out, because it is against the interests of ordinary people. Conservative Members may smile, but they are well-heeled, and they know it. They do not like hearing the truth; instead, they give a nice smile. When the Labour party gets the chance, however, the scheme will be thrown out.

7.30 pm

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): The Opposition have sought to confuse the issue and to make it much more complicated than it is. Both parties are agreed that they want to double the number of students in higher education in the next 20 years. The simple problem is who will pay for that increase and how that cost will be shared among taxpayers, parents and students.

The issue is relatively simple. Will we double the £500 million a year currently spent by the Government on student support? Will we increase parental contributions, or should some of the burden be put back on to students? I believe that the right solution is to put some of the burden back on to students. The other alternatives would never allow us, or any other Government, to double the number of students in higher education.

The loan proposals will enable the number of students to increase. It will also greatly help those who rely on parental contributions, as we know that those contributions are often not made. More money will be made available for all students. The proposals will especially help students from the poorest families, as the amount of total grant and loan will be increased by 20 per cent. They may be poor students, but they will not be poor graduates and the time when they need help is when they are students.

The debt repayments will not represent a significant portion of a graduate's income. When the scheme is in operation the maximum debt that a student will be able to incur is about £3,900. To repay that over five years requires a payment of £15 per week. Over 10 years, the cost would be £7·50. We know that the average graduate earns about 30 per cent. more than the national average income. After tax, a graduate's income represents an additional £3,000 per year in his pocket compared with the earnings of a non-graduate. We are talking about 25 per cent. of that additional £3,000 being needed over five years to repay the loan, or 12·5 per cent. of that income being needed for 10 years. I do not believe that that is an unreasonable burden, nor is it likely to discourage people from participating in higher education.

At a time when real incomes are rising extremely fast, it is right to start to shift some of the burden from public expenditure to private, and at the same time to allow the Government to reduce taxes. Student loans are an example of where that can be done to great benefit.

The Opposition have criticised the scheme as they believe that it will inhibit access and that it will be costly to administer. If I felt that their criticism about access was justified, I should be against the scheme. That scheme, however, will make more money available to students from the poorer families and it will help those who are discouraged from higher education because their parents do not make up the total contribution. In future it will be unnecessary for them to demand so much from their parents.

We do not need lectures from the Labour party about access. Between 1975 and 1979 the number of full-time students at universities and polytechnics rose by 1 per cent. Between 1979 and 1987 the number rose by 20 per cent. Whatever mistakes we have made, they are obviously nothing like those made by the Labour party. I do not believe that the scheme will have any effect on access, and I believe that participation in higher education will go on growing, as it has in the past decade.

Germany and Japan are often held out as examples of more successful economies than ours because their education and training are better. During the period of their great success, those countries operated 100 per cent. means-tested loans and offered no grants. A higher percentage of our adult population have degrees than is

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the case in West Germany. It is extremely difficult to construct an argument to prove that the scheme will hinder access to higher education.

I suppose that the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) had to find some basis on which to oppose the scheme—after all, that is his job—and, as is common in the Labour party, he followed his prejudices, wrapped himself up in social concern and trailed a lot of red herrings through his argument in an attempt to confuse it. The same goes for the other leg of the Opposition argument, relating to cost.

The hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) has written articles and asked many questions trying to prove that the cost of the scheme is much greater than estimated. I am not sure whether he is trying to say that we are spending too much on the scheme. He has said that we should do more for students, but at the same time he appears to be arguing that we are doing too much. I should have thought that he would welcome our efforts.

The Labour party would be likely to spend more and achieve less. In its policy review, it says that it wants to retain grants and to review the parental contribution. Subsequently it has said that it wants to abolish the loans scheme. At the same time, however, the Labour party has said that it wants to double the number of students in higher education. The only way it could do that would be through far more public expenditure than we propose.

The Opposition argue that the Government scheme will result in an increase of £660 million in public expenditure by 2001. By 2012, however, the net additional cost to public expenditure will be zero and, thereafter, the scheme will result in a negative cost—a reduction in public expenditure—of £200 million per year. If the Labour party simply turned the loans to grants and did not ask for repayment, the deficit by 2001 would be £1,525 million. By 2012, instead of the accumulative deficit being zero, the cost to the Exchequer would be £4·1 billion. Thereafter, the costs would increase by £200 million per year. In other words, the Labour party would incur an additional £400 million per year on public expenditure. If, on top of that, the Opposition sought to make some reduction in the parental contribution, the cost would be even greater. The parental contribution totals about £300 million per year. If the Opposition reduced that by one third, a further £100 million would have to be found from public expenditure. If the number of students doubled, that cost would increase to £200 million per year. That means that the Labour party would be spending about £600 million per year more than we propose to spend.

If I were Secretary of State for Education and Science and the Chancellor told me that I had £600 million per year to spend on higher education and on encouraging more people to take up such education, I cannot imagine that I—or, indeed a Labour Secretary of State—would spend it in the way proposed by the Labour party. It is all fiction, as we know that the shadow Chancellor has said:

> "We are all agreed that we cannot spend what has not been earned. If that means postponing some of our social ambitions—we may have to do this."

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State also quoted that remark. It is a fair bet that the £600 million additional expenditure proposed by the Labour party would be one of the early postponements. The Labour party would be unable to increase public expenditure, but it would not agree to loans, so there would be no way of increasing the number of students. Once again, the Labour party wills the end but not the means.

We are faced with a simple problem—the problem of who is to pay. I believe that shifting a small part of the financial burden on to students will mean that the number of students will increase and that more support can be given to individual students and we can reduce the burden on taxpayers and on parents. I do not believe that the scheme will affect access and it will certainly reduce long-running costs. It is a truly Benthamite solution and everyone—students, parents and taxpayers—will benefit.

7.38 pm

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): I wish to speak against the Bill. I do not agree with the hon. Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples) that it is a simple issue. We recognise that money spent on all levels of education represents an investment in the future of our nation which will benefit it. We are prepared to spend money on that important service.

The Government keep challenging us on the question of payment. We have said that we are prepared to increase taxation for those most able to pay and those earning the most who have benefited the most under the present Government. We are prepared to put up taxation from 40p in the pound to 50p in the pound. This is one service——

Mr. Jackson: Will the hon. Gentleman tell the House how much money these tax changes will generate and compare that with the £600 million estimated by my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples)?

Mr. Pike: I should not have given way because I do not have time to go into detail about that—*[Laughter.]* Conservative Members laugh, but I shall deal with that aspect when we have a proper debate without time restrictions. I cannot do so now, particularly as the Secretary of State talked for nearly an hour when he opened the debate. We are debating one of the nation's most important principles: educational opportunity. One reason why my hon. Friends and I are in the Labour party is that we believe that there are some things in life to which all people should have a right regardless of their ability to pay and background. One such is education and another is health care. Fate has determined that this week the Government are trying by various measures to remove people's rights to both these essentials.

We are anxious to increase the opportunities for people to be educated. Only 5 per cent. of the 18-year-olds in the socio-economic groups 3, 4 and 5 entered higher education in 1987-88, despite the fact that they represent more than 60 per cent. of that age group. That should be a matter of concern for Conservative Members. Why are only 5 per cent. of young people in that group able to take advantage of educational opportunities?

Mr. Tim Janman (Thurrock) *rose*——

Mr. Pike: I shall not give way because the 10-minute rule is in operation.

We must take into account the fact that people within those groups have ability and should receive educational opportunities, which is what we are arguing for. The former Secretary of State for Education and Science said:

> "I confidently expect that the numbers in higher education, in polytechnics and universities will increase because of our proposals."—[*Official Report*, 9 November 1988; Vol. 140, c. 320.]

The Secretary of State's speech this afternoon has not convinced me for one moment that that will be true. I believe that the exact reverse will be the case and fewer people will be able to receive university education if these proposals are forced through. Many people have referred to the opportunities for university education in France, Germany and the United States. It would benefit this nation if we followed their example.

This is a squalid, enabling Bill in a long series of such Bills. It is time for Conservative Back Benchers to be as concerned as Opposition Members that Members' rights are continually eroded by the powers given to the Secretary of State without those proposals being debated in the House. We are moving in the wrong direction, as is reflected by the Bill.

Schedule 2(1)(c) provides that the Secretary of State can

> "make provision for the deferment or cancellation of a borrower's liability in respect of a loan."

While the loan is deferred, it continues to attract interest —although the Government claim that it is not interest. However, to increase the amount owed by the inflation rate is at least the equivalent of an inflation-linked interest rate. Whatever the Government call it, they cannot get over that fact. In many cases the repayments will be deferred for many years which will create tremendous administrative problems. I accept that the Government have said that repayments can be deferred if the borrower is not earning 85 per cent. of the national average earnings.

This is one proposal—if time permitted I could give several other such illustrations—about which we do not have the nitty-gritty or the facts to debate properly because this is an enabling Bill. That is deplorable and Conservative Back Benchers should be concerned about the Government's increasing tendency to remove hon. Members' rights to debate issues before decisions are implemented.

On 20 October I asked the Secretary of State whether he accepted—Conservative Members have accepted this today—that people who have had a university education earn on average 30 per cent. above the national average and, therefore, the higher taxes that they pay would cover the cost of maintaining them while they were at university. That seems a perfectly reasonable and sensible proposal. With the exception of the poll tax, which does not take into account someone's ability to pay, most taxes are fair, and income tax is certainly fair because it is based on ability to pay.

This afternoon the Government have skirted round the loss of benefits that students will suffer. It is clear that many students will lose more in benefits than they will receive in loans, which is regrettable.

Whenever the Government consider education, they fail to recognise the challenges facing the nation. They fail to recognise that education is an essential investment in this nation's future and the need to ensure that everybody in this country, regardless of background, should have an equal chance to receive education. The Government's dogma, their attitude that come what may they must cut public expenditure and the Prime Minister's—and therefore the Cabinet's—obsession that public expenditure should govern everything the Government do mean that they judge issues only by the amount of Government expenditure. They fail to ensure that we tackle these problems positively.

This is a bad Bill which does nothing to ensure or enhance people's educational opportunities. When students graduate from university and are faced with the expenditure of setting up their own homes, the Government's proposals will burden them with debt repayments. The Bill is bad for the nation's education and should be rejected.

7.50 pm

Mr. David Davis (Boothferry): Much of the case put by Labour Members so far hinges on two arguments: that the introduction of loans will reduce participation overall in higher education, or will reduce the participation of those in the less well advantaged groups. Either outcome would constitute a poor result for our policy, if either were true. In fact, there is no distinguishable correlation between the existence of grants or loans and the take-up of higher education.

That may seem odd, because one might expect that a subsidy plus the advantage of a 40 or 50 per cent. increase in income would lead to a great take-up of higher education, but experience of take-up in West Germany and Sweden, which have predominantly loan-based systems, is no worse than experience in this country. That should be explained clearly when we say that loans will not curtail higher education for our youngsters but will have the opposite effect.

In making my case, I will develop a point put first by my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) and then by my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey). For this purpose I shall cite three cases—a youngster from a very low income family, a youngster from a very high income family, and one from a family in between. I shall examine those cases from the point of view of parental contribution to see what effect that contribution has on the decision whether to go to university or college.

We have heard that 35 or even 40 per cent. of students do not receive a full parental contribution.

Mr. Jackson: It is 40 per cent.

Mr. Davis: With the very low income family, no parental contribution applies, so I can set that case to one side. At the other extreme, the high income family typically will have a lot of discretionary income and, if it is a managerial or professional family, will have some experience of higher education and therefore an understanding of its value. Indeed, such a family will probably already have been paying school fees, perhaps of £6,000 or more a year. For that family, a payment of £2,000 plus would not represent a great deal.

The difficult case occurs with what I have heard described as the class three person, perhaps a relatively well paid skilled manual worker. The family income for such a worker is now significantly more than £300 a week. That family will have to find over £1,000 to send its offspring to school, a large sum for such a family.

We must remember that the head of that household himself probably left school at 15 or 16 and went on to do an apprenticeship for a pittance for several years. He has no experience of the value of higher education and could

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reasonably reach the conclusion that it was not a good investment, for he or she will see all of the costs but none of the benefits.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the examples he is giving could be of people who are in professions which are badly paid? They may be social workers, school teachers and others who earlier in their lives were graduates and who have the same understanding of higher education as those in higher income groups.

Mr. Davis: The hon. Gentleman is making my case. I was about to deal with the very cases to which he referred, and I will do so later. Meanwhile, I am making a clear case affecting a large number in the population in the income categories of which I have been speaking.

Let us not forget that the decision on this issue is not made by the beneficiary—the person who will receive a 40 per cent. gain in income. The decision is pushed on to the parents rather than on to the youngster. The Bill moves that decision, at least in part, back to the beneficiary, the youngster, and that is a key issue in the debate.

Opposition Members have suggested that what is proposed will become a millstone for that beneficiary later in his or her life. That argument ignores the practicality of the timetable of the imposition of the scheme. It goes through the whole of the 1990s, and we have heard in other debates that throughout the 1990s there will be a demographic shortage of young workers. In other words, there will be more than enough demand for every available graduate leaving university.

Companies searching for new graduates will pay off the loans. In other words, companies will bid against each other to pay them off. Rather than a millstone, it will enable youngsters to see where they can get the best return on their education. Instead of being a millstone, it will be an economic lodestone.

7.55 pm

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): The proposed student loans scheme, together with freezing parental contributions and grant in cash terms from 1990-91, will cause unnecessary hardship for students in Northern Ireland and in other areas of high unemployment and deprivation.

To deny most full-time students in further and higher education income support, unemployment benefit and housing benefit is a further attack on the least well off in society. Disabled students will not be well served by the proposals.

I can only assume that those radical advisers who were responsible for promoting these new measures for financially supporting students have limited knowledge of the struggle to make ends meet experienced by students from less-well-off backgrounds. "Access funds" to provide discretionary support in individual cases of financial need for students losing entitlement to benefit will not be an acceptable alternative. Harold Wilson, when Prime Minister, was given a clear message from Northern Ireland after his "spongers" remark. We in Northern Ireland are not spongers, and the Government should not attempt to make our students beggars and borrowers.

It is generous of Government not to abolish parental contributions and to provide parents with the option of paying more, thereby requiring the student to borrow less. That may be acceptable in the affluent south and south-east of England, but many parents in Northern Ireland—where there is a higher cost of living, lower than average national income and higher unemployment—cannot afford to pay more.

Every young person in Northern Ireland and throughout Great Britain, irrespective of class, creed or sex, whose academic achievements qualify him or her for further or higher education should automatically qualify for sufficient grant to enable qualifications to be obtained which will ultimately lead to gainful employment. A highly educated and skilled population will help us to bring economic prosperity to Northern Ireland. Education is the soundest investment we can make.

I do not believe in encouraging anyone to borrow or to get into debt, and least of all in burdening with loan debt students who have enough stresses and strains to cope with already. Loan sharks are causing a lot of trouble in my constituency. I should hate to think that students would ever get into their clutches. That is why we should pay students grants and let them pay their way.

It must be a matter of concern, especially to those who have read the huge document, "The Higher Education Demands Survey: Final Report" commissioned by the Department of Education and Science, when the reseachers Cormack, Miller, Osborne and Currie, looking at the proposed change from a grants to a loan-grant system, said that one third of students had reported that they would reconsider their decision to enter higher education in the event of a loans scheme replacing student grants.

The final paragraph in the chapter dealing with student loans said:

> "Overall, therefore, it must be concluded that the introduction of a loans policy as a replacement to the existing grant system could radically alter both the size and social characteristics of participation in higher education by Northern Ireland students."

The survey did not take into account the precise loan system being promoted by the Government; it came to general conclusions, however, that back up the fact that there is a real risk that students from poorer backgrounds and Roman Catholics would be more likely to reconsider entry into higher education.

If the loans scheme is introduced to Northern Ireland, it will more adversely affect the prospects of students from working-class backgrounds of getting into further and higher education than it will affect those of students in Great Britain. At present in Northern Ireland, entrants into higher education reflect a good balance of Protestants, Roman Catholics and females. To deny opportunities to Roman Catholic students from poorer families will lay the Government open to allegations of discrimination against Catholics and provide the very evidence that is needed to confirm them. I firmly believe that no student should be denied the opportunity to realise his or her full potential in our education system, but I have nothing in common with the small Republican group of graduates who offensively dishonour the state that has provided them with a full and free education.

The proposed system of student loans will not encourage greater participation by students in further and higher education in Northern Ireland. The Government must further examine international evidence which shows that loans schemes and a desire to avoid debt are diminishing the proportion of poorer students entering higher education. There can be no comparison between the ability of wealthy West German parents to support their students and that of parents on low incomes in Northern Ireland to do so.

Dissuading less well-off students anywhere in the United Kingdom from entering higher education may well sentence their offspring in succeeding generations to missing the obvious advantages of higher education. Acknowledging the fact that demand for higher education outstrips its provision in the Irish Republic, can the Secretary of State give us an assurance that the high level of entry qualifications demand in Northern Ireland and the increasing demand from students from the Irish Republic are not already disadvantaging many able Northern Ireland students and preventing them from obtaining places in higher education?

Ulster Unionists want legislation in this House to be applied to the United Kingdom as a whole, but we cannot welcome this Bill, which will be applied later to Northern Ireland through the Order in Council procedure. All hon. Members should be concerned that we are being asked to approve a blank cheque to cover any sums required by the Secretary of State for making payments under the Act. I fear that the estimated low costs of introducing the scheme may prove higher than those of the present grant and maintenance system in the long term.

Finally, I ask the Secretary of State to review the additional burden placed on parents in Northern Ireland, who are already paying much higher rates for their homes than are paid in some parts of Great Britain for similar properties and whose children are required to pay the poll tax when studying in Great Britain. That injustice should be removed by exempting Northern Ireland students from the poll tax while they are studying in Great Britain.

I urge the House to reject this scheme. The Government are gambling with the educational prospects of many potential higher education students. We cannot risk losing opportunities of higher education.

8.4 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Because of the time limit, I shall sum up my arguments against the Bill in eight points.

First, I reject and oppose the Bill because it cushions the rich and discriminates against the poor. Secondly, it will discourage students from going in for courses that do not offer a high-salary profession on graduation—art and the social sciences will suffer. Great gifts in these fields could be lost to the nation. An unbalanced student body is bound to lead to an unbalanced society.

Thirdly, the scheme will harm female and disabled students who, on graduation, do not generally enter high-salary jobs but who will be lumbered with a heavy debt.

Fourthly, Northern Ireland graduates will suffer even more than the GB counterparts, for graduates of Northern Ireland are underpaid compared with those in the rest of the country and, for them, the paying back will be much harder.

Fifthly, the scheme discriminates against potential students from working-class backgrounds, whether Protestant or Roman Catholic. I support what my colleague the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) said—Sinn Fein has indeed lobbied on this matter. I dissociate myself entirely from that lobby, but decent, ordinary, working-class Protestant and Roman Catholics will be discriminated against by the scheme and the prospect of debt will put many of them off the idea of a university education altogether.

Sixthly, money will not ultimately be saved. Taxes will eventually have to be increased to pay for the interest not charged and to make up for the many defaulters under the scheme. The scheme does not make good business sense.

Seventhly, the scheme strikes at the whole structure of further education. In the long run, we cannot afford not to invest money in the education of our families. A fully funded grant system that takes proper account of students' well-being when studying and of the ability of their parents to meet their educational requirements is what we should be planning; we should not be discussing a system of debts.

Even if everything else in the Bill were in order I would still oppose it, because at its heart there lies a time bomb, specially sent by the Government, to remove another vestige of democracy from Northern Ireland. The explanatory memorandum says that the Bill is not to apply to Northern Ireland, yet in clause 2 the Government remove from the representatives of Northern Ireland the few rights that they have left.

Those rights are that an affirmative resolution be brought before both Houses when changes are made, but this Bill sacrifices that procedure and introduces the negative resolution, which means that the Order in Council will take effect immediately. It can be prayed against, but when does the House have time to hear those prayers? Many of us have signed such prayers but they have been neither heard nor heeded. I want to know why the Government have put that time bomb right in the heart of the Bill.

So we are not discussing the Bill; we are discussing a decree to hand over tremendous power to the Secretary of State. But for us in Northern Ireland the Bill goes further than that. We in Northern Ireland have only one opportunity to discuss matters. We had a debate last night and how long did it last? It lasted for one and a half hours.

I was handed today a massive Order in Council on education, which was like a book. I was told that next week I should have three hours to discuss it. The order changes the whole education system in Northern Ireland lock, stock and barrel, yet our representatives are told that they will be permitted to discuss it for only three hours. We cannot, of course, amend the order or do anything about it.

I warn hon. Members from Great Britain that they are starting on the same road in this Bill. The medicine that they have served to Northern Ireland and that they have voted for Northern Ireland will be put down their own throats. They will realise that this Government will take from them the vestige of their democratic right to discuss matters properly in the form of a proper Bill. All hon. Members should be concerned about that. They are voting for a decree to hand over immense power to the Secretary of State. That is a carefully laid time bomb with a kick-strap on it which would do honour to the IRA. When we kick the strap, we shall blow up any vestige of democracy.

Mr. Jackson: No.

Rev. Ian Paisley: The hon. Gentleman may be annoyed by my remark, but it is a fact. If he were a Back-Bench

[Rev. Ian Paisley]

Member, he would be the first to cry out against the Bill. It is because he has now moved from the Back Benches to the Front Bench that he feels that he should not cry out against it.

Mr. Jackson: All of us would object to being compared with the IRA.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I said that the Bill was like an IRA bomb and that when one kicks the strap, it will explode.

Why is such a power put into the Bill and the order? Why can we not properly discuss and amend the provisions? The Under-Secretary of State knows that I am not suggesting that he is in any way like the IRA. He need not make a big fuss about my comment, because I was using a metaphor. If he does not understand that, he had better come to Northern Ireland to find out how the Ulster people speak. I thought that he had some knowledge of how the Ulster people speak and how they do business.

When the House votes for the Bill, it will vote away its powers and its authority. The House is giving a blank cheque to the Secretary of State to carry on and it will have no say in what his final plans will be or how they will be executed.

8.12 pm

Mr. Gerry Steinberg (City of Durham): I fully support the sentiments of the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley). The Bill is a disgrace because it contains no details about what is to happen and the scheme will be introduced by regulation with little debate in Parliament. The Government's excuse for the introduction of top-up loans is that it will give students a grasp of economic reality. That is true, although it will be a grim reality. The value of the present grant has fallen so sharply in the past few years that the students' grasp of economic reality is unquestionable. To compensate students for their losses and to sharpen their awareness of money management, they will now have to pay for their education by borrowing the money, presumably on the pretext that the more hardship one suffers, the greater the lesson one will learn.

Durham university, which is in my constituency, has well over 4,000 students. The Government's loan plan could mean student debts of £7 million to £10 million at universities such as Durham. Many substantial companies are facing bankruptcy trying to repay investment borrowing of less than £10 million, yet the Government want to put students in the same boat. A debt of that size has serious implications for students, for the university and for the city. Some students will have difficulty with their rent and the pressure is likely to result in poor academic achievement and greater stress.

Despite the huge wave of opposition to the loans scheme, the proposals are for grants and parental contributions to be frozen at their current levels. Students will be debarred from claiming housing benefit, income support and unemployment benefit, and from next year they will have to pay a proportion of the poll tax, which will also affect many of them adversely. Some students will lose social security benefits to a greater value than the amount of the proposed loan, so they will be allowed the dubious entitlement of being able to take out an even bigger loan.

There is a misconception that all graduates are irresponsible, lazy, beer-drinking layabouts who are set to move into cosy, well-paid jobs. There may be a few like that, but others after three or four years of study will enter jobs with a salary no higher than if they had not gone to university. The motive for going to university should not be money, but the pursuit of knowledge in an area of expertise. Students should choose a subject for which they have a particular ability and in an area to which they can eventually contribute their skills.

Will students be expected in future to scan the prospectus for courses that will land them in lucrative jobs for which they have no aptitude? If a potential arts student were persuaded by lucrative rewards to choose a science degree, grave problems would result if and when he realised that the course was not for him. Will aesthetic subjects be pursued only by the rich? The result will be either fewer graduates or graduates of poor quality. Who would want to train to be a teacher with the prospect of a large loan, due to the length of the course, and then a relatively low income with which to repay it? A teacher would almost certainly be in debt anyway if he or she wished to buy a house or start a family. Yet that is the profession which is in desperate need of 18-year-olds who want to train for it.

The Government have claimed that the scheme will simplify the system. I remember the same fine words being spoken last year when they claimed that the social security reforms would simplify the system. If that is the case, we can all watch out for a system that is hugely complex, impenetrable and unintelligible. If higher education is to be an attractive prospect for students, there must be full provision for student financial support. Financial status should ~~not~~ be a factor when deciding whether to enter higher or further education, as the pursuit of educational goals is in the interests both of the individual and of society.

The scheme is geared towards creating a student population which is wealthy, white and male. Social groups which are already under-represented in higher education will be discouraged from seeking places and students seeking to follow courses in the arts, social sciences or non-vocational subjects will think twice. The Government say that they intend to expand access to higher education. I am delighted to hear that, but I should be interested to know how that can be achieved if students do not receive adequate financial support. The widening of access would involve attracting groups not traditionally represented at university, such as working-class students and mature students. I cannot imagine that many from those groups will be tempted into higher education when it involves living with a debt burden for several years afterwards.

The Government will be in a quandary. On the one hand, they want to admit more students despite the demographic trend of a fall in the number of 18-year-olds. On the other hand, they do not want to fund those students through higher education and they want them to exist on increasingly less money. Students deserve a far better deal than that.

During the present Government's term of office, the parental contribution, which represented 30 per cent. of mandatory awards in 1979, has risen to 86 per cent. and the grant has declined by more than 21 per cent. in real terms since 1979. The spectre of loans must be removed and the grant must be restored to its 1979 level before the

Government's fine words about access can be taken seriously. As the present grant is barely adequate, freezing it and encouraging students to take out huge loans and to proceed through their academic life with that burden is hardly an attraction.

Mr. Janman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Steinberg: No. The hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Janman) has just come in. He should sit down.

Loans will increase dependency on parental support, especially over the summer holiday, which is unfortunate for the 40 per cent. of students whose parents do not provide the full amount. A wider variety of students must come forward from more varied backgrounds with varying experiences and ages.

The banks have poured scorn on the scheme and are not falling over themselves to participate in it. They are no doubt aware of the student opposition to the scheme and understandably they will want to avoid a possible boycott.

It is a fallacy that the scheme will save taxpayers' money. The setting up of the procedures necessary to administer the scheme will be costly and complicated. The Government are playing down just how costly and complicated the scheme will be. If, as the Government intend, there is a 100 per cent. take-up, the system will not begin to pay for itself until well into the 21st century. It will take even longer if administration costs reach £150 million per year as is estimated by some. By that time it will have taken so long for the system to be remotely worth while that it will be nothing more than a liability.

Who is the system designed for? It is certainly not designed for the student. It is another Tory money-grabbing exercise. As total student awards are now costing the taxpayer £850 million, freezing them is a desirable prospect for the Treasury—not forgetting the £65 million that it will be saving in stopping eligibility for social security benefits. Increasing grants to a decent standard would encourage more students to consider going into higher education and so cost the Government more money. Although the Government are tight-lipped about the future of the loan system, a decline of the grant in real terms will lead to its gradual disappearance.

If we wish the universities to be places of restricted access and a privilege for the few, this system is the right way to go about it. Fewer young people receive higher education in the United Kingdom than in South Korea. The scheme is a form of hire purchase which treats education like the latest sports car—fine for those who can afford it, but the majority will have to do without.

8.22 pm

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest): Like many colleagues on both sides of the House, I went through university on virtually the maximum grant. I know that that experience is not uncommon. However, what distinguishes my case and, I suspect, that of most hon. Members is that my parents, who had little money available, made up the parental contribution required. It was not a large amount but they did make it up. One of the great pleasures that I have in Epping Forest is to represent the mother of the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw).

Mr. Straw: She did not vote for the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Norris: There is more room in heaven for a sinner who repents.

Mr. Straw: Would the hon. Gentleman care to place on record his congratulations to my mother, as she has just been chosen for a safe Labour ward in the Epping Forest district?

Mr. Norris: I would indeed. I had intended to send her a copy of this *Hansard*, as she is a frequent correspondent. I am sure that she too paid her full parental contribution.

It is important to note that 41 per cent. of the parents assessed for a contribution do not make the full contribution. As my hon. Friend the Member for Boothferry (Mr. Davis) pointed out, those entitled to the full grant do not involve themselves in this arena.

Ironically—I am sure that hon. Members on both sides will accept this—it is by no means the case that that 41 per cent. are the poorest. It is sad and all too common that many of the students finding themselves without the means to survive, from their parents and grant combined, are amongst the wealthiest. As hon. Members have said, that is because their parents do not believe that education is of any particular value and do not know why they should contribute to their child's education at that level. Therefore, they leave the child to fend for itself.

There was talk earlier of the new arrangements being regressive. It was said that the system of loans was regressive because it impacted most on the poor. However, all the evidence shows that the opposite is true. The evidence shows that what would be regressive—if it were practicable—would be to abolish all parental contributions. That would cost about £2,250 million in a full year. No doubt it would happen "when resources allow", or whatever mealy-mouthed phrase we now have to learn in respect of Labour education policy. More importantly, it would mean that the wealthy would be treated the same as the less well-off. That would be regressive. The advantage of the loans scheme is that it allows the student to overcome regression because, regardless of parental income, the facility will be there. Whether the student is supplementing a full parental contribution or—sadly—using the loan to make up an absent parental contribution, at least a facility would be provided. Such a facility has been denied by successive Governments, especially Labour Governments, since the grants scheme was introduced.

I am concerned about the way in which the scheme will ensure that we take students out of the social security system. I see in his place—he has been here throughout the debate—my successor, the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) to whom, as ever, I wish well. He will know—as I do—that in Oxford the Department of Social Security office and the local authority found it difficult to provide a service to the genuinely needy—those in the community who needed instant access to the social security system because they had a pressing need for funds—because at times the office was legitimately besieged—I make no complaint about that—by students in higher education. Whatever definition we adopt for social security, it cannot be used to supplement higher education. It is bizarre to have that element in our funding of further and higher education.

I welcome the new arrangements, which will mean that officials in the Department of Social Security and in housing benefit offices will be able to concentrate on those who need their help. It will be for students to take

[Mr. Norris]

advantage of a combination of grant and loan to fund their eduction. Surely that is one of the major advances in the Bill.

I endorse the concept of the Bill, even if it will take some years to turn the balance. It seeks to redress the balance between the student, the parent and the taxpayer. Opposition Members do not seem to have an answer for the elderly, low-income taxpayer who is funding middle-class children and helping them to become even better off as they enjoy the substantial benefits of higher education.

It is all very well for Opposition Members to point out that in the first, second and third years the scheme will be more expensive. We accept that—it is obvious. The Secretary of State is in an odd position if he is now to be criticised for spending more on the new system. I am the first to accept that the system means that in due course we will turn the corner to a point at which students will be accepting not a hugely greater but at least to some degree a greater reponsibility for the financing of their own education.

I welcome that, if only because what distinguishes my earning capacity and that of my brother from that of my father and mother who grew up in Liverpool after the war is that I had the advantage of attending university and, as a result, moved on to a different plain of earnings. They did not begrudge what it cost them to provide me with that finance. By any standards, any student who is given the great advantage of a university education should be prepared to take more responsibility for financing it than the present arrangements allow. I commend that element of the new scheme.

My last point is about the terms of repayment. I welcome the fact that the Bill is short. I commend one or two important observations on repayment terms to my hon. Friends on the Front Bench. There is an argument for being careful about the relationship between repayments and starting salary. It is important that we do not discriminate against, for example, jobs in research and in less high-profile areas of adult life where salaries are perhaps not high. We want to ensure a steady stream of competent graduates into what are acknowledged to be the less well-remunerated professions. It will be perfectly within the powers of the Secretary of State to ensure that the reasonable attitude that he has said he is prepared to adopt on repayment is extended to ensure that repayments are not burdensome in jobs with low starting salaries.

Another important element which the Secretary of State should consider is inflation. I enter this caveat on the definition of nil interest rates in real terms. That is fine as long as there is a Conservative Government who believe in combating inflation even at the expense of raising interest rates. In that case, interest rates are likely to be higher than inflation. However, the Labour party's attitude would allow inflation frequently to run ahead of the rate of interest. In those circumstances, everyone would lose and the provision would operate to the disadvantage of the students. The Bill has such merits that I welcome it and commend it to the House.

8.31 pm

Mr. Mike Watson (Glasgow, Central): I am grateful for this opportunity to contribute to the debate, as I represent a constituency where some 15,000 students live. Universal opposition to the top-up loans has been expressed to me by those students in several different forms. The last time that the matter was debated in the House, I presented a petition on behalf of some of the students. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) said that he had received a response to those petitions to the effect that no action was to be taken. I have received similar information, which will not be acceptable to my constituents who are students or the parents of students.

Universal opposition has been expressed to the Bill. As we have already heard, of the 120 or so organisations which responded to the White Paper, 95 per cent. registered opposition. One might ask why the Government bother to consult when, even if such levels of opposition are expressed, they still introduce the legislation in the form originally intended. Opposition is coming from many sources, some of which one would not normally expect to encounter. The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals and the Royal College of Nursing are among them.

We are already aware that the British Medical Association has been politicised by the Government to an extent that no one would have expected; now the Royal College of Nursing is apparently going the same way. I have received a communication from it asking me to oppose the Bill on Second Reading. It said:

> "the average nurse graduate usually starts on a salary of £8,025 pa . . . Yet nurses will have to repay the same loan as any other graduate, albeit with repayments strung out over a longer period".

That is cold comfort. It went on:

> "Applied to nursing, the RCN believes student loans threaten to undermine the future development of the profession, which will ultimately be to the detriment of both the NHS and patient care."

I also received communications from the principal of the Robert Gordons Institute of Technology and a director of Glasgow college, two of the Scottish polytechnics. Again, they outlined their opposition to the loans plan. They are not individuals or organisations who are normally sympathetic to the policies of the Labour party. Nor are the banks, but to say that they are luke warm would be too kind in describing their reactions to the proposals. After arm-twisting and several concessions, some of the banks are now willing to go along with the plan but, to their credit, two of the three major Scottish banks have said that they will have nothing to do with it.

It was noticeable that, of the eight Conservative Members who took part in the Adjournment debate on 20 October, only one was in favour of the proposal. It is also noticeable that of those Members, only one has spoken this evening. I take it that the others had other diplomatic engagements.

I have three main areas of anxiety. First, the proposals will reduce still further access to higher education. Secondly, everyone will be worse off as a result of the introduction of a loans scheme. Thirdly, Scottish students and colleges and universities will be hit disproportionately hard.

One of the problems of speaking late in the debate is that other speakers have already used up one's arguments. My right hon. Friend the Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) and my hon. Friend the Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) have said that take-up of higher education is 15 per cent., some 6 per cent. lower than that in South Korea. That is a damning statistic.

Particularly damaging for those thinking of going into higher education is the decision to deny students unemployment and housing benefit and income support. That will compound the problem. Conservative Members have said today that the loans scheme is about students being responsible and made to bear a burden. However, many students bear a considerable burden as a result of their studies. For students who cannot rely on their parents to subsidise them, there is already a student loans scheme. They have been bearing the burden through bank loans, bank overdrafts, parental loans or charity from other members of the family.

No one, from the Minister to Conservative Back Benchers, has explained how top-up loans will increase access to education. They have denied that there will be a detrimental effect, but they have said nothing positive. I and my hon. Friends remain to be convinced, because we have been given no evidence.

It is a truism to say that everyone will end up worse off. Students will experience greater hardships in two ways. First, as a result of having undertaken studies, they will be required to go cap in hand to their parents for a subsidy or to the banks for loans to make sure that they have enough to get by.

I have been given some figures by the National Union of Students. I was dismayed that, while the president of that union was in the Gallery, Conservative Members rubbished the organisation. It may not have the resources or facilities of the Ministers' back-up team, but it is a well-resourced and well-respected organisation. It has produced figures which show the extent to which students will be worse off as a result of loans. I refute the figures quoted by the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart). He said that the average loan will be £600. The figures from the NUS research show how the repayments will depend on the rate of interest that the students are asked to pay. The loan will be at least £400 a year and up to £1,400, outwith London depending on the rate that must be paid. The question of who will be worse off refers to parents. It is not true that, because the burden of parental contribution will be raised from parents, they will not have to make a contribution.

The vacation period is a crucial aspect of loans. If a student cannot find a job, how is he or she to pay his way during the vacation? Housing for students is at a premium, so if they cannot afford to pay for houses or flats over the summer, they cannot be guaranteed housing of a reasonable standard when they return. The only people to whom they can turn are parents. The vacation aspect has been completely disregarded by the Government.

Then there is the question of the Exchequer and its losses. It has been estimated that the scheme will cost the Exchequer £1·6 billion more than the cost of grants. That was the figure quoted to my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) in a parliamentary answer on 21 March this year.

The Government admit that, as repayments start to be made, we shall reach a point where the scheme will cost less than the present system. The date is estimated to be as late as 2026—in other words 35 years after student loans are first introduced.

Students who take out student loans in the first year will be grandparents, if not great-grandparents, by the time the scheme begins to break even. No Government have ever introduced a policy proposal based on financial and economic assumptions over a 35-year period. I ask hon. Members to imagine what they might have thought of 1989 back in 1954. Who could possibly have imagined the position that we face now? To make proposals based on what will happen so far in the future is economic, not to mention educational, lunacy.

At a time when higher education is seriously under-resourced, it is a disgrace that public money is to be wasted in this way. For the same sum, grants could have been increased, parental contributions reduced and more places funded in higher education over the next decade. The Government should seriously consider that, even at this late stage.

All too little has been said or thought about Scotland in preparing the legislation. Scottish students will face additional financial burdens. I am pleased that the hon. Member for Eastwood has returned, because I shall address some of my remarks to his earlier comments. He was not in the Chamber when I quoted the figure of £600, which he said would be the total cost of the scheme to students. That is not true. Simply to add a fourth year for Scottish students has a compounding effect which is likely to mean additional costs of 60 per cent.

We must consider not simply Scottish students or English and Welsh students at Scottish colleges and universities, but courses throughout the United Kingdom for doctors, architects, various art students and vets which are longer than three years. Additional years impose additional burdens. It is particularly galling that the Secretary of State for Scotlnd can say that he has considered the matter but does not believe that any special provision for Scotland is necessary. People who apply for courses at Scottish colleges and universities will weigh that up and see that they are punished for applying to them. That is an insult to Scotland and its unique system of education, which is done a grave disservice by this proposal.

People in Scotland are not bought off by the proposal that the loans headquarters should be based in Glasgow. Some 250 jobs, most of them debt collecting, are not welcome. We give as firm a no to that as to the remainder of this discredited, costly, unwarranted and unwanted Bill.

8.42 pm

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) said that a future Labour Government would increase the real value of grants as resources allow. What happy memory has that conjured up? In 1974 a Labour spokesman would have said that he would increase the real value of the hospital building programme as resources allow or that he would increase the real value of nurses' pay as resources allow. British students are far too intelligent to be fooled by a conditional promise. They can look at the record and see how badly the Labour Government behaved and how badly a future Labour Government would behave.

The White Paper has been warmly welcomed by parents who find the present system of parental contributions a major burden, the thousands of students who do not receive discretionary awards, many of my constituents in Hendon, South, the 40 per cent. of students who do not

[Mr. John Marshall]

receive their full parental contribution, and the 40 per cent. of students who have overdrafts at commercial interest rates and who in future will have to pay only a nil real interest rate.

The White Paper incorporates a simple element of social justice. Both society and students benefit from higher education. We are assured that, generally speaking, those who enjoy higher education subsequently enjoy incomes 30 per cent. above the average for society as a whole. Surely those who enjoy such massively higher incomes should contribute to the benefits of higher education.

The irony is that we have the most generous system of university support and the lowest percentage of people in higher education. It is no use Labour Members talking about South Korea and asking why it does better. Why do other countries do better? They have a different system of university support. Does that not suggest that our system is failing? It is surely madness for Labour Members to say that the system must not change but that its results are useless. Surely that underlines our case and undermines theirs.

It must be obvious that our proposals will eventually produce savings which can be used to provide more places in higher education. We must ask ourselves whether it is better for the privileged to go to university with the present grant system or for more places to be provided in higher education. I am sure that everyone will agree that there should be more places in higher education and will recognise that only the Government can provide them.

We have heard the most cant and hypocrisy from Labour Members talking about access from the lower socio-economic groups. No one has done more to harm the educational opportunities of those groups than the Labour party and Labour local education authorities. It is no accident that the children of inner London have little chance of going to university. The Inner London education authority has the worst education results of any education authority. It is no accident that it was the Labour party which led the campaign to abolish grammar schools. How many children from lower socio-economic groups left grammar schools able to go on to universities?

Mr. Straw: Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Mr. Marshall: No, I have a limited time to speak, unlike the hon. Gentleman who spoke for far too long, which is why I have a limited time.

How many children leave our state comprehensive schools qualified for university? To increase access to universities for the lower socio-economic groups we need to encourage more children to stay on at school longer and to improve their results. The two great reforms to encourage children to stay on at school have been Conservative reforms. It was my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister who raised the school leaving age to 16 and the Conservative Government who introduced GCSE, which is encouraging more children to stay on at school.

Mr. Rhodes James: A Conservative Government also introduced student grants instead of loans.

Mr. Marshall: That was a semi-sedentary intervention without the permission of the hon. Member speaking.

The Conservative party, through the Education Reform Act 1988, has done more than any other political party to improve the results in our schools. It is that combined policy of encouraging pupils to stay on at school and to improve their results which will ensure that more children from the lower socio-economic groups go on to university.

I listened with interest to what the hon. Member for Glasgow, Central (Mr. Watson) said about the Scottish higher education system, and I yield to no one in my admiration of it. My late father spent 30 years serving Scottish universities and I was connected with them for 12 years. The reason why Scottish education has always been deservedly popular is that it has an intrinsic worth and uniqueness not shared by the English system. It may be significant that a large number of students from south of the border have always been willing to go to St. Andrews university where they know that the politics are sound and the education even better. I do not believe that the introduction of our proposed loan system will discourage one student from attending St. Andrews or any other Scottish university. Indeed, it will encourage many more to do so.

Medical students know that the return that they will get at the end of the course from their salary will be so large that they can certainly afford to repay the relatively modest loan.

I hope that universities in Britain will become more flexible and more market-oriented as a result of the Bill.

Why do universities not introduce a four-term year? Is anyone seriously suggesting that the great universities of the United States suffer from lower esteem because they have four terms a year? Of course they do not, and there is no reason why British universities could not do the same. Is anyone seriously suggesting that graduates of Buckingham university suffer because they graduate more quickly than those of other universities?

Mr Straw: What did Lord Beloff say about the scheme?

Mr. Marshall: Because a man is right 99 per cent. of the time does not mean that he is right 100 per cent. of the time. Labour infallibility may be a good religion, but it is not good politics.

The students at Buckingham university do not suffer because they have a shortened academic year. I do not believe that some of our universities have considered the potential of shorter university courses, and a longer university year. If they did that, it would be to the benefit of universities and of their students.

8.51 pm

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionydd Nant Conwy): The hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) referred to the fact that politics at St. Andrews university were sound. We can vouch for that because the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) is a graduate of St. Andrews, and I see that he is sporting the St. Andrews university tie. However, I shall not enter the arguments about Scotland, although I agree with the hon. Gentleman about four terms a year. I have taught in adult education and at the University of Wales—sometimes I still do—and I support the principle of four terms for mature students and first entry students.

The debate is not about education policy, but it is a debate that we have been having for many years about reductions in state support from the taxpayer for a portion of the cost of supporting students—that is, the cost of their homes and lodgings rather than tuition.

The Government plan to introduce a loans scheme which will provide a 50:50 grant and loan scheme, although that is not provided for in the Bill, as my hon. Friend the Member for Caernarvon (Mr. Wigley) said on another occasion. What is not clear is how that scheme will interrelate with the changes taking place in income support, unemployment benefit and housing benefit schemes.

I should like the Minister to respond to a point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Caernarvon—the way in which the special access funds will be used and applied to disabled people, particularly those with communication difficulties who need communication support. I refer particularly to deaf people. Hon. Members have been lobbied by a number of groups who are concerned that the loan scheme, particularly in the future, will have to bear half the burden of the day-to-day cost of student support as opposed to tuition.

It is important that we consider the additional support costs required by disabled students. The Minister has not responded clearly enough to that, either during the debate on 20 October or today.

We have heard the familiar arguments today about how the scheme will affect educational take-up, but the debate is not about that. It is about the Government's attempt to reduce their public expenditure commitment to student support.

Many of the arguments that are being rehashed about access are unproven. The Government seem to be saying that the scheme is likely to increase access, because at present it is appallingly bad. That seems to be a baseless argument. The fact that we have an age participation rate, a women's participation rate, an ethnic minority participation rate and a class participation rate that are inadequate compared with——

Mr. Jackson: I have had many friendly discussions with the hon. Gentleman in the past. The argument about access is simply that the main determinant appears to be the scale of education. If one extends the scale, access will get better. The argument behind the student loans scheme is that it will provide more money to expand the system.

Dr. Thomas: The Minister has clarified the position, and I agree with him that the determinant of participation is the scale of the system. We are returning to the old arguments about universal benefits of the 1960s, when we talk about the need for general provision of social service and of education—of which the Robbins report was the higher education component—in order to ensure greater participation. However, it is not proven to me when I consider the system in other countries and hear the advice of leading academics and people who are concerned about how their schemes operate.

There was a good study of the American system in the *Financial Times* of 24 November 1989, just after the Bill was published, which quoted Mr. Roger Koester, the associate director of financial aid at Northwestern university, as saying:

> "Students are no longer making education decisions based solely on their academic talent, but on starting salaries. We are breeding a far more mercenary group of students."

No doubt that is what the Conservative party would like. It is significant that some experts in the United States say that that country and its great academic system have only a few years grace before they are forced to overhaul the way that students pay for higher education. We may find that United Kingdom students are having a new loans and grants scheme inflicted upon them, whereas the United States is having to move——

Dr. Hampson: The United States system, of which I have experience, and systems in other countries are having to be reviewed, because the sheer cost of the loans scheme is forcing them to cut back, as we saw in the Reagan years. They do not want a more costly scheme of full grants for all students.

Dr. Thomas: The whole point of a comparison with the United States system is to consider the level of deferred payments and of defaulting and whether the system is a burden on individual students. We will go down that road if we rely on the loans scheme for our support.

Concern about the total cost of the scheme, and recovery costs in particular, has been stressed. In the United States, total federal spending on the guaranteed student loan programme component of higher education is one third of £3 billion. That is being spent on substituting private sector bank loans to students and the rest is being eaten up by paying the default rates. That gives us a clear warning about a loans scheme. I see that the Minister is indicating dissent. I shall let him do that from a sedentary position, otherwise I shall not complete my speech in the time available.

We are also worried by the fact that the Government regard the scheme as a solution to the problem of access to higher education. We must devise a policy for higher education that makes it much more flexible in terms of access. I refer to flexibility of course structure, and flexibility as between the designations of further, higher and recurrent education, so that students are attracted at all stages of their careers. It is extremely unlikely that a loans system which imposes additional burdens on earners will attract people back to the education system, especially for retraining.

Graduates who return to higher education for further training and others who decide to go into higher education later in life will provide many of the skills needed in the economy in the next century. I know that the Minister cares deeply about this, but any deterrent to people participating in higher and continuing education will inhibit the flexible skilling that the economy needs.

For all those reasons, we shall oppose the Bill. We are especially worried that the existing hardship schemes that are operated voluntarily by student unions and universities are being used to the full. I have been lobbied by students who tell me that such funds are often swallowed up early in the term. Already students in the grant system are having to borrow or take overdrafts of £300 or £400 a year. That shows the pressure that is already on them. A loans scheme will only increase that pressure. The Government want that. They want a clear financial incentive in higher education. They want to turn it into a marketable commodity, as they have tried to do with the rest of the economy.

9 pm

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): I strongly support the Bill because it is right, and it is about time that we asked students to repay some of the investment that is made, often by much lower-paid taxpayers compared with students' potential earnings.

The Bill seems at last to be tackling the new realities at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st. In the next century, the successful economies will not be those which are natural resource or capital based; they will be the knowledge-based economies. Charles Handy, of the Institute of Personnel Management, has calculated that 30 years ago 30 per cent. of the population worked in knowledge-based industries, but that 70 per cent. will do so by the end of this century. Because we rely purely on a grant-based system and parental contributions, we have unnecessarily handicapped ourselves.

Mr. Straw: Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that people who work in factories do not apply any knowledge?

Mr. Coombs: I suggest—I am sure that Professor Handy does, too—that a significantly higher proportion of jobs in the 21st century will require higher education qualifications. We handicap our scope for economic growth by relying purely on grants and parental contributions.

Student loans are not exactly new. The Anderson committee of 1960 rejected them only because it estimated an increase in higher education to 175,000 students by the end of the century rather than the 400,000 that we now have. In 1963, Robbins said that once the habit of contemplating higher education is

> "more firmly established, the arguments of justice in distribution and the advantage of increased individual responsibility"—

through a system of loans—

> "may come to weigh more heavily and to lead to some experiment in that direction."

In 1985, Lord Glenamara and others in the Labour party —in a paper entitled "Student Financial Support"— effectively accepted the principle, but rejected loans in practice because they were concerned about repayment difficulties, especially for low-paid groups and people who had career breaks.

The upshot of all that was that nothing was done and Britain was left with a system of student maintenance which was expensive, gave relatively low access and was socially regressive. Britain spends more on higher education than any other European nation except the Netherlands. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has already given, at constant 1984 prices, the United Kingdom figures for average maintenance support compared with our industrial competitors. The United Kingdom spent £270 per student, West Germany £70 and Japan only £30. Moreover, grants in Britain are available to 80 per cent. of the student population, which is much higher than anywhere else in the industrialised world, far more than any other country with the exception of the Scandinavian countries. That amply demonstrates the generosity of our system.

Mr. Janman: My hon. Friend was right to quote Lord Robbins. Another aspect of the early 1960s was the Anderson committee which, in 1960, recommended the current system, envisaging about 175,000 grant awards per year whereas we are now running at more than 400,000 grant awards per year. The system was first started when people did not realise what the total cost to the taxpayer would be.

Mr. Coombs: That is precisely the point that I was making earlier. I concur with what my hon. Friend says.

The loan system being introduced will be universally available to 100 per cent. of the population. Comparing that with similar loan facilities available in other countries, we find that in Canada they cover only 30 per cent. of the population, in France they are used for emergencies only and cover less than 1 per cent. of the population, and in Japan they cover less than 12 per cent. of the population. Even in the United States, where they were pioneered, loan facilities apply to only 25 per cent. of the population.

Despite our generous system of student support, our participation rates are significantly lower than those of our industrial competitors at 14 per cent. compared with 28 per cent. in Germany and 44 per cent. in the United States, and a considerably higher rate is expected in other competitor countries, particularly in south-east Asia. That is the greatest challenge to the mythical proposition that loans will necessarily mean less access.

One does not need a great amount of cynicism to realise that the National Union of Students will not fall over itself to accept loans when it has previously been offered grants. But even its own survey, showing that at present only 7 per cent. would forgo a university education with a loan scheme, is belied by the fact that figures for student entry this year are some 2 per cent. up, despite the fact that the loan scheme will no doubt impact on their higher education in future years.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) made the valid point that, although the grant has shown a reduction in real value of some 25 per cent. since 1979, there have been 180,000 extra students. In the past two years, social security support has declined, as have parental contributions, but that has had no effect on student access—indeed, rather the opposite, as students have, rightly, increased their employment income, as they are expected to do in other countries in the vacations and at other times by more than 51 per cent. in the past two years alone.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) said, the moral argument is that it can only be right that the 15 per cent. of the population who have the opportunity of a university education, and who are subsidised by the 85 per cent. who have not—especially as a quarter of the income tax paid in Britain is paid by people with incomes below £10,400 per year—should make some contribution towards the university education that they receive. Ultimately, access to higher education in Britain will depend on the numbers suitably qualified in our schools, not on the type of student maintenance available.

The scheme shows no evidence of being a deterrent. It is socially more progressive and it will provide a higher level of income support and encourage independence if parental contributions are halved. Except perhaps in the early-day motion put forward by the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall), which amounts to spending an extra £3·5 billion of taxpayers' money each year, I have heard no credible alternative which addresses the problem of increasing participation in higher education in Britain over the next 20 years and does not involve a loan system. It is a practical alternative and one that will be accepted by the people and by future students. I strongly support the scheme and I congratulate the Government on bringing it forward.

9.10 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): I heard the hon. Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James) speak in the debate on the White Paper, so I exempt him from the criticisms that I shall now make of the Government and Tory Members. They do not have any serious interest in education. They are interested only in education as real estate. They judge education and educational advances by assessing the real estate of the mind and its development and the price that can be paid for it and the earnings that people can make after receiving a university education. They look at education like that rather than discussing what it is about and how we should be directing it.

Education should be about opening people's minds and giving them the wit and intelligence to turn their hands to anything and to tackle problems in life. Increasingly, the Government are interested only in closing people's minds, limiting and restricting their horizons and making them pick up specific attitudes and regurgitating them. That is contrary to the spirit of liberal education at all levels.

The contributions made by Tory Members made me worry about higher education institutions, because many said that they are products of British universities, but they put forward arguments that had no concern for the values that there should be in an education system, or for the notion that education is about understanding situations. It is not about getting facts and regurgitating them, but about analysing and discussing them. If one analyses situations and understands other people's arguments, it is easier to remember the facts and details.

The hon. Member for Swindon (Mr. Coombs) used many statistics. If one were a university undergraduate going into an exam, it would be difficult to use figures such as those. To do that, one would have to be like Leslie Welch, the memory man, but he did not necessarily understand what he was repeating. The hon. Gentleman had to follow his notes very closely to give us that information. If people investigate and analyse situations, they often find that the information they need is attached to that analysis. Sometimes, they do not understand where it has come from, but they have understood it, not because they have volumes of encyclopaedic information available to them but because they have argued the information out.

In education, we need a questioning attitude so that we investigate matters, which will give us an opening into what we are investigating. When we have solved that problem, it opens up far more questions than it answers. Such an attitude and approach would help us to handle the economic problems that the hon. Member for Swindon mentioned, because people would have their wits about them and could advance. The flowering of understanding should take place in higher education institutions in particular.

What is education for? It is to help individuals to develop so that they can lead full lives and realise their potential. In Britain, we place many stumbling blocks in the way of people's progress. We must not find yet another stumbling block in the form of a student loans system. We also want an intelligent society. We want people to discuss and argue, to participate in the democratic process and to make collective decisions. We would do well to remember in Britain the flowering of the democratic process that is taking place in eastern Europe.

There is another reason why education is especially important at the moment: we are undergoing a technological revolution. We can no longer depend on raw materials for our survival; to survive these days, we must begin living on our intelligence. If we fail to educate our people, we shall fail to earn a position in the world. Economic and social factors are both very much to the fore.

I shall not detain the House much longer, as I know that the hon. Member for Cambridge wishes to develop the argument further. Among those who will be hit by a student loans scheme are those adults who are prepared to sacrifice a tremendous amount in the present and perhaps some of their earning potential in the future by giving up good jobs, and who are prepared to take risks. No one ever seems to talk about students who fail. How are they to earn the money to pay back the loans?

No one is in a worse position than women—both those who return to education and those who enter it for the first time later in life. They bear a heavy burden, and when they have completed their education they may have to take time off work to have families and so on. The last thing they need is the additional burden of a loan, especially as they tend also to enter badly paid jobs such as speech therapy.

People from working-class backgrounds and members of the ethnic minorities will also suffer. They already feel that they have to open many doors to complete their education. If we place yet another closed door in their way, they will give up. We should be encouraging them to push open those doors, and that can be achieved only if the state provides the necessary resources.

9.17 pm

Mr Robert Rhodes James (Cambridge): My right hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith), who is not as well as one would wish, has asked me to convey this message to the House.

> "If I had been able to attend the House, I would certainly have been speaking against the proposals and possibly voting against them as well. I certainly would not have supported the Government's policy."

I have spoken so often on this subject, in the House, in my constituency and elsewhere, and my views are so widely known that I shall not need to trespass long on the patience of the House. I still find it baffling that, after two years of apparently deep consideration of the problems of student finance, the Government have come up with a widely disliked and extremely complicated scheme, which will be horrifically costly in the initial period and which, in my judgment, will act as a serious deterrent to many potential students. The scheme also runs counter to the Government's declared policy, which I warmly support, of dramatically increasing student numbers. Ministers say that there is no contradiction, but I beg to differ.

We all know that the extravagant hopes and expectations of the early 1960s, when the Conservative Government embarked on an enormous expansion of higher education and introduced student grants, turned into disappointments. We must look back on that period. Certain academics and former students should reflect on

[Mr Robert Rhodes James]

their roles at that time. However, I fear that that is history. The House and the former Labour Government should share the blame of which there is plenty to go round.

Some time ago, the Prime Minister invited me to take on responsibilities in these matters. I visited every university and polytechnic in the country. I reflect on the fact that I played some part in saving Coleraine from being closed. I learned certain things then. I discovered in certain famous institutions that there were bad debts and in certain not-so-famous institutions I discovered superb debts. I came across wonderful teachers and bad teachers. I was struck by the great diversity.

I strongly supported Sir Keith Joseph's proposals in 1981 because they were urgently and desperately needed. In private, vice-chancellors told me that they agreed with those proposals, but in public they would denounce the Government. Reforms were urgently needed. I discovered much that was bad and lamentable. However, I discovered a wonderful spirit among students. I attended many public meetings, but did not experience any outcries.

I recall that Durham university at the time was developing a cricket ball for the blind. It was successful; a superb example of applied technology for a social purpose. In that connection, I sometimes think of Mr. Dexter. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh, no."] I also recall a professor at Newcastle polytechnic who had the opportunity to go to Cambridge and Oxford, but he decided to stay in the north-east because he had a deep commitment to the area.

If I had been involved in the Government's new proposal, I would have introduced a real top-up loans scheme to be administered by the institutions themselves and not by the banks or some monster in Glasgow. I would not have proposed a plan in which the loans element would be at the expense of the grant. I dislike the Government's scheme in principle and in practice, and I will vote aainst it tonight.

9.22 pm

Mr. Andrew Smith (Oxford, East): A distinguishing feature of the Government's students loans proposal is that the more time Ministers have to consider it, the less information they are prepared to put before the House. Instead of learning more about the scheme, hon. Members learn less. We might have hoped that Ministers would have carried this "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" course to its logical conclusion and made the Bill disappear altogether so that only the grin of the former Secretary of State for Education and Science was left.

The present unfortunate Secretary of State for Education and Science, on taking up his office, could have taken the opportunity to dump all his predecessor's ill-judged, ideologically motivated measures and set education on a course that was better for the country and for the Conservative party. As it is, he has chosen to stick to the very worst proposals and dilute what was better. The sympathy that hon. Members might have felt for him is accordingly evaporating even more quickly than the information in the Bill.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) said, it is nothing short of a constitutional outrage that such an important change in higher education which affects the opportunities of so many people should be brought forward in this shameful fashion, denying the House the information upon which to make a reasoned judgment.

The key point at issue is that the Bill has been specifically designed to minimise the time and opportunity for public knowledge and debate of the central elements of the legislation to put the scheme into effect. Let us examine some of the important information that Parliament is still not being told about.

Hon. Members are not being told about the amount of the proposed loans, how they will vary for London, outside London or for home students, or how repayments are to be made. We are not given details of the access funds about which the hon. Members for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) and for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) expressed concern. We are not told about the withdrawal of social security benefits or any exemptions. We are not being told what the student loans company is, what it is to do, or how it is to work.

Hon. Members are not being given any breakdown of the administrative and start-up costs. As several hon. Members have pointed out, we are not being told anything to mitigate the damage that the Bill will do in Scotland. We are not being told anything about the damage to nursing as a graduate profession. That point was stressed by my hon. Friends the Members for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) and for Glasgow, Central (Mr. Watson). We are not being told of any measures to help people such as medical students who are on especially long courses and face even greater outstanding debts at the conclusion of their studies. The Secretary of State's advice that longer repayment periods are being seriously considered will be of scant comfort to people in that position.

We are not being told of any help for disabled students such as the deaf, on whose behalf the Royal National Institute for the Deaf wrote to hon. Members yesterday reminding us that deaf students do not receive social security payments and seeking an access fund and an overhaul of disabled students' allowances. How can Ministers ask hon. Members to approve the Bill without addressing those matters? We are not told much. Hon. Members are being asked to vote in ignorance for ignorance.

One of the main reasons why the Government are in such a mess with the proposal and why they have resorted to this shabby expedient of an enabling Bill is that they are vague and confused about the purpose that they are seeking to achieve in the legislation. We are told variously that it is to save money and that it will do students good. We are told by the Secretary of State that it will not impede access. But the Under-Secretary of State and the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth and others have said that it will extend access—perhaps a significant difference. It bears repeating that, even on the Government's own figures, there will be no cumulative savings for taxpayers to the year 2026 with the 100 per cent. take-up which the Under-Secretary of State has said that he hopes to achieve, and no cumulative savings until 2014, even with 80 per cent. take-up. Over the next two decades the Government are seriously proposing to spend £1·6 billion on giving students less. That money is being taken from the taxpaying pensioners to whom my hon. Friend referred.

It is a pleasure to take part in a debate with the hon. Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris). He gave an excellent exposition of why he fared somewhat better with the more affluent voters of Epping Forest than he did with those of most modest means in Oxford, East.

Hon. Members have heard claims and counter-claims about overseas experience. My right hon. Friend the Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) and others have argued that is makes no sense for the United Kingdom to opt for loans precisely when other countries, notably Sweden and West Germany, are moving from them by increasing the proportion of grant. That view has much to commend it. Other hon. Members such as the hon. Members for Bury, North and for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) have argued, as have Ministers, that loan schemes in various other countries co-exist with higher participation rates than in Britain.

There are two important points to make about that. First, if hon. Members consider the number of students graduating as opposed to entering higher education, they will note that Britain's relative performance is much better. Chart H of the Department's own White Paper shows that 27 per cent. of the relevant age group in the United Kingdom have graduate qualifications, compared with 25 per cent. in France, 21 per cent. in West Germany and 18 per cent. in the Netherlands—all countries that operate student loans schemes. That is testimony to the cost effectiveness of the grants system and to the relative efficiency of British higher education in thereby holding down the rates of drop-outs and retakes which poorer financial systems of support foster.

Secondly, it is a plain logical fallacy to suppose that, simply because higher participation may coexist with loans schemes elsewhere, the shift to a loans scheme here would in any way increase participation. The proposition that increasing the effective cost of something will, by some mystical means, increase demand or take-up is an affront to common sense and flies in the face of the evidence available.

Ministers will be aware of the survey that was published yesterday by the National Union of Students which showed that 16·2 per cent. of respondents stated that they would not go into higher education if the Government brought in the scheme. That proportion rose to 23·6 per cent. among students from low-income families.

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): When the hon. Gentleman says that students will not take up university places, does he not find it strange that during the past 12 months, when they have been clearly told that there will be a student loans scheme during their period of higher education, they have come forward in greater numbers?

Mr. Smith: Obviously they have confidence in the prospect of a Labour Government coming to power at the earliest opportunity and repealing the scheme. If the hon. Gentleman had been here for the debate, he would have heard the arguments on that.

Ministers will also be aware of the survey carried out by the British Medical Association Students Group, showing the serious effects of the scheme for those contemplating studying medicine.

As for the claim that the scheme will be good for students and, in the words of the Secretary of State, that it will

"reduce students' sense of dependency on the state, and will promote a proper sense of self-reliance and responsibility."—[*Official Report*, 20 October 1989; Vol. 158, c. 375.]

the Government cannot have it both ways. They cannot expect the House to accept simultaneously the contradictory assertions—on the one hand, that the scheme will hurt and that students will therefore think carefully about what they are getting and how they will pay the loan back, and, on the other hand, that the scheme will attract people who have previously not taken advantage of grants to take advantage of the loans. The scheme can hurt or it can help, but it cannot do both.

In practice, it will hurt, especially the proposal uniquely to penalise students by taking away their access to income support and housing benefit. There is no doubt that the scheme will most hurt those students from poorer backgrounds, those studying in London and, as the hon. Members for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) and for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) have said, students in Northern Ireland.

The Research Services Limited study, "Student Income and Expenditure Survey", which was commissioned by the Government, showed that 70 per cent. of students from C2, D and E backgrounds receive some money in benefit, as compared with 44 per cent. of those whose parents are in social class A. The sums involved are significant, with average students in receipt of housing benefit receiving on average £286, rising to £310 for working-class students and £499 for those studying in London. There is no doubt that the removal of such sums will cause hardship and that cannot but act as a disincentive for poorer students.

The Government clearly have no idea about how this loans Bill ties in with the previous Secretary of State's commitment to double participation in higher education over the next 25 years. As my hon. Friends the Members for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) and for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) have ably pointed out in their excellent speeches, there is a glaring inconsistency in the information being provided to the House. All the Government's projections of costs and savings relate to chart 5 in the White Paper, which shows participation of the relevant age group rising from just above 15 per cent. in 1990 to just above 18 per cent. in the year 2000. In the tables estimating the financial effects of the loans scheme it is said:

"The estimate is based on the hypothesis that the number of students eligible for loans grows in line with the projection shown in Chart 5 up to the end of the century, then remains constant thereafter."

Ministers talk about increasing access and about doubling the number of students in the next 25 years, but all the costings that we have been able to squeeze out of them—the £1·6 billion cumulative cost in the next 20 years—are based only on a marginal increase in participation between now and the end of the century. No clearer evidence could hardly be available to show that Ministers either have not done their sums on costs or that they do not understand the implication of what they are saying about access, or possibly both.

I challenged the Under-Secretary about that in a letter dated 19 July to which I have not yet received a reply. That silence speaks volumes for the weakness of the Government's argument on how they will pay for the expansion of access to which they say they are committed.

Faced with all that, to say nothing of annual default rates of more than 100,000 after 2010 and deferral rates of more than 700,000 in the same year and onwards, no wonder that the poor old banks do not know which way to turn or what to do for the best. I never thought that I

[Mr. Smith]

would get applause at student rallies for the banks. One need only say the Co-operative bank, Lloyds, Bank of Scotland or Clydesdale to have them cheering to the roof-tops.

The Under-Secretary should say how the scheme will be administered. In a written answer to me he said that students will be obliged to seek a loan at a branch of one of the participating banks. Will he clarify that a student needing to take out a loan will not need to hold an account at the bank providing it? Will he confirm that a Co-operative bank customer can go along to a participating bank, which, in return for the £12 fee paid by the Government, will do all the administrative work and pass the loan amount provided by the Government to that student's Co-operative bank account at no charge to the student or to his bank? The non-participating bank will incur no risks, no additional administrative costs, and will not face queues of students filling in loan claim forms who will then clog up the counters at the beginning of the academic year. It will also not suffer any damage to its reputation in the eyes of students. It appears that the costs, the risks and the administration will fall on the participating banks in return for which they will receive £12 per application and a pat on the back for acting as an administrative arm of the Government. Will he confirm that that is broadly the picture? Is he surprised that some banks would prefer not to take part?

Mr. Walden *rose*——

Mr. Smith: I shall not give way as I am running out of time.

The question that has come up time and again is why the Government have not listened to the volume of opposition expressed by all groups that have responded to the White Paper. If the Government will not listen to students, to colleges, informed commentators, the banks or to us, why will they not listen to their colleagues here and in the other place who have no confidence in the proposals?

The House is confronted with an apology of a Bill. Its very omissions speak volumes for the weakness of the case that Ministers have attempted to put to us. If they are really convinced of the strength of their loan proposals, why have they not had the decency, to say nothing of the constitutional propriety, to set out those proposals in full before us? It is not as though the Government have not had enough advice. So far they have spent no less than £451,223 on the consultants, Price Waterhouse. It looks as though that company and debt collectors will be the only ones to get any benefit from the Bill.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) that the Bill is squalid. Frankly it stinks as it reeks of Ministers' fear as to what the House and the other place would do if the full details were included in the Bill. It reeks of the sweat that Ministers are now in because they are trying to meet the Government's self-imposed deadline of having the scheme up and running by next autumn. The Bill shows contempt for the House and the best interests of higher education in this country. It will pave the way for entry to higher education to depend more on ability to pay and less on ability to benefit.

As we heard in the debate on 20 October, many Conservative Members are opposed to the likely practical implications of the Bill, its high administrative—and particularly public expenditure—costs. In addition, others such as the hon. Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James) rejected it for its effects on access and because it starts to dismantle the system of grants which we believe, and Conservative Members were once proud to believe, most effectively opens up opportunities for higher education.

This is a thoroughly bad Bill, as expensive in its costs as it is disastrous in its consequences. It will be bad for our country, higher education, students, and especially those people we wish to attract into higher education. It has been brought before the House in a thoroughly shabby way. It invites rejection from hon. Members on both sides of the House who should stand up for educational opportunity and reject it.

9.41 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Robert Jackson): It is always agreeable to follow the carefully prepared diatribes of the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) and I look forward to our further encounters in Committee when his advice is rejected as it will be today.

We have had an interesting debate which has been notable for the substantial contributions made by Conservative Members. With all respect to my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James), what has been said from this side of the House has been more representative of Conservative opinion than what was said in the previous debate.

Many issues have been raised in the debate and I shall make my way through them in turn. These include the nature of the Bill, international comparisons, access, student attitudes to loans, equity and social justice, the disabled, and housing and social security benefit. I shall try to address all those subjects in the short time that I have.

The structure of the Bill has been raised by many hon. Members, including the right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) and the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley). A great deal of play has been made of the way in which the Bill is drafted. We have been told that it is a constitutional outrage and the hon. Member for Antrim, North compared it with an IRA bomb, which was an analogy in poor taste. The structure of the Bill is identical with the structure of the Education Act 1962 providing for student grants which has not been subject to any complaint during the 20 or so years of its operation.

The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) gave no cogent explanation as to why it was inappropriate to follow the path laid down in the 1962 Act. Anybody who thinks for more than a minute about how to administer a grant or loan system will see that the legal arrangements that we envisage are the only sensible ones. We are taking power to provide money for loans and to table regulations for the administration of loans on the model of the grant provisions. We had a valuable testimony from my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) who has been responsible for running the grant regulations in Scotland, as I have in England and Wales.

My hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) made an important intervention in the speech of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State when he pointed out how it was possible to use the flexibility given by the regulation-making power to the advantage of his constituents. There have been many such cases. Let us hear no more of this totally bogus argument.

Dr. Hampson: When my hon. Friend is putting flesh on this thin skeleton of legislation, will he consider two developments? One is to try to get more of the banks' own money into higher education by co-operation between the Treasury and the Department of Employment in extending the career development loans system that we already have, which uses some Government subsidy to assist the banks in lowering interest rates so that we can help as wide a range of students as possible. The second is not to go to a full 50:50 loan and grant but to have a higher grant element, as the United States has in its basic educational grant, to help get more participation from families on low incomes.

Mr. Jackson: I hope that my hon. Friend will assist us in Committee to improve the Bill. It will be open to the House to amend the regulations and it will be possible for the House to take a view about whether it is desirable to have a 50:50 loans scheme or to change it in other ways.

Mr. Straw: How can this House amend regulations?

Mr. Jackson: The regulations come before the House for debate, as they have done for a long time in respect of grant legislation.

The issue of international comparisons was raised by, among others, my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) and the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs), and much play has been made of that. There are many different systems of student support. Indeed, if one imagines a sort of spectrum of generosity towards the student, the British system, as my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) pointed out, is almost certainly the most generous in the world. It provides for free tuition, free maintenance grants for nearly all students—certainly for all full-time students—and at a generous level. The result is that Britain is spending a higher proportion of GDP on student support than any other country and spending a higher proportion of its higher education expenditure on student support.

At the other end of the scale, Japan is probably the least generous. The Japanese charge for tuition, they have no grants, only loans, and those loans are available to only 10 per cent. of students. I echo the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) in saying that Japan has more students in higher education than we have, which suggests that there is no correlation between student support arrangements and participation.

Our proposals will create a loans system which will be among the most generous in the world. It will be available to all full-time students. The loans scheme in the Federal Republic of Germany, for example, is available to only 30 per cent. of students. Ours will be at a real zero rate of interest. That is to be compared with the positive interest rates which are commonplace in other loan schemes. We are moving towards a 50:50 ratio of loan to grant. Compare that with the movement in the Federal Republic and with the position in other countries in northern Europe.

We are making extensive provision for deferral if incomes fall below 85 per cent. of the national average income—about £10,000—a facility that is not available in United States loans system. In view of what has been said about mature students, it is important to remember that under our proposals loans will be available until age 50. Many countries cut off entitlement to a loan at age 30. Our proposals are for a generous loans scheme.

Mr. Salmond: The Minister will be aware that there is a higher participation rate in university education in Scotland than south of the border. Has he seen the calculations of NUS Scotland? Using the Government's figures, but substituting a 6 per cent. inflation rate, at the end of a four-year degree course the outstanding debt will be 60 per cent. greater than at the end of a three-year degree course. Will that not be a substantial disincentive to participate in the four-year Scottish course? Does the Minister accept those figures, and does he intend to do anything about that?

Mr. Jackson: The calculations of the NUS are not correct and I believe that the value of the fourth year to many will be such that they will be prepared to pay a reasonable sum for it.

There has been much discussion about access, and I shall not recite the names of all those hon. Members who referred to that important question. The issue of increasing participation in higher education by students from working-class backgrounds is too important to be left to the superficialities espoused by the Opposition.

Let us start with the facts. Britain has relatively poor working-class participation, despite 30 years of generous grants which have mainly benefited the children of the middle-class—I do not complain about that, but it is a fact. The hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike), having admitted this, asked why it should be but suggested no answer. The answer has not much to do with student support—it is that working-class children are less inclined to stay on at school after 16. My hon. Friends the Members for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) and for Hendon, South were right to say that the Labour party is in no position to lecture us on this point as it was largely responsible for dismantling the ladders of working-class opportunity.

Rather than emphasise that negative point, I wish to emphasise the positive point that if the most important determinant of access is the staying-on rate, we can look forward to an expansion in higher education because the staying-on rate has risen from 34 per cent. when the Labour party was last in office to 42 per cent. now, and the rate of increase is rising. We believe that the number of children staying on at 18 will increase, and the evidence is that there is no class differential in entry to higher education among those who have stayed on to 18.

Mr. Win Griffiths *rose*——

Mr. Jackson: There is no reason to suppose that a working class 18-year-old will be deterred from entering higher education by the introduction of a loan. If he is bright enough to enter higher education, he will be bright enough to see the benefits that will accrue to him not only in educational terms—the hon. Member for Derbyshire North-East (Mr. Barnes) was right about that—but in terms of future income. Such students will see that student loans will add to the resources available to support them while they are studying and they will recognise that it will be a risk-free investment, because they will not be obliged to repay after graduation if they cannot do so. As my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood observed, it is

[Mr. Jackson]

extraordinary to argue that any price higher than zero will deter someone from higher education. Either that grossly undervalues higher education, or it grossly underestimates the intelligence of younger people.

Mr. Pike *rose*——

Mr. Jackson: Student attitudes to loans were evoked by the hon. Member for Oxford, East. In common with other Conservative Members, I think it a bit of a joke for the National Union of Students to use taxpayers' money to ask students whether they would prefer a free gift to a repayable loan. The union did not need to invest taxpayers' money in that inquiry to derive the answers that it was seeking. The real question is what students are doing, not what students are saying in reply to politically motivated surveys.

As has been pointed out, this was the first year of recruitment of young people who knew that the Government planned to introduce student loans in their second year, and my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest actually understated the effects. This year the evidence available suggests there has been a 5 per cent. increase in recruitment to universities, a 13 per cent. increase in full-time students going to polytechnics and a 10 per cent. increase in the number of part-time students going to them. Those facts shed light on the false proposition that young people will not enter higher education if there are to be loans.

Mr. Andrew Smith *rose*——

Mr. Jackson: I do not have much time.

I want to say a word about the argument that the scheme is a subsidy to the rich, which was advanced by the hon. Members for Blackburn and for Antrim, North and, in the last debate, by my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson). No doubt my predecessors shared my experience of dealing every week with letters about young people whose parents refuse to fill in the forms to assess their income and hence their parental contribution. Surveys have shown that 41 per cent. of parents do not pay their full assessed parental contribution, so I must tell hon. Members who think that our loans will be a subsidy for the rich that I listened to their arguments with some bitterness, because I know that many will find that the loans enable them to take part in higher education when their parents refuse to support them.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) referred to social justice and equity. In our analysis in the White Paper, we explained how the return to the taxpayer in terms of an economic investment in higher education could be compared with the returns to the individual graduate. As my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) argued, there is no doubt that graduate earning power is greatly enhanced by the experience of higher education. At present, the graduate makes no financial contribution and the taxpayer has to pay for the whole of that education. As my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples) argued, one quarter of all taxpayers are on incomes below the national average and the difference between their incomes and those that graduates can expect is considerable. From the point of view of equity in public expenditure, student grants are a system of taking money from the less well off and giving it to the better off. I wonder about the equity and social justice of that position.

A number of speakers, especially my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North, referred to the disabled. I have had several meetings with representatives of groups for the disabled. I have listened carefully—and we shall continue to listen carefully—to what is said. I emphasise that the student loan will be additional for disabled students and that there will be no disentitlement to benefits. In addition, disabled graduates will be able to benefit from the ability to defer repayment if their income is below a certain level. We have made it clear that we are prepared to review the arrangements in relation to grant support and we shall monitor the effects of student loans on disabled students. If the legislation is passed, as the Government propose, we shall have the flexibility to respond to the results of that monitoring by amending the regulations. If we put such provisions in the primary legislation, as the Opposition wish us to do, we should probably not be able to respond for many years.

The Government have carried out two surveys which provide information about student use of supplementary benefit and housing benefit. From those surveys, we know that as many as 40 per cent. of all students do not claim any benefit. We also know that the average claim amounts to about £315 per year per student claimant, which means that a top-up loan of £420 would be not only a complete addition to the resources of the 40 per cent. who claim no benefit, but a substantial addition to the resources of most of the rest. There will also be the access funds for those who are out of pocket. I note what has been said on several occasions by my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) and we shall review the question of the access funds to take care of any genuine difficulties. I emphasise that we intend to continue to monitor and to survey the picture. If we have the means to do so—and if the Opposition will allow us to do so—we shall be able to take action through the regulation-making power in the Bill.

Several hon. Members have raised the question of the cost of not having loans. The Opposition have tried to make much of the simple, natural, logical fact that with loans there is a period when one pays out before money comes back. We have to compare the cost of our proposal with the cost of the Opposition's alternative, about which they have been coy. We were told that they would increase the grant "when resources allowed". Resources do allow, and the Government are making that provision now in the form of the student loan.

If the Opposition simply replaced our proposed loan with a grant—that is, a grant with a 100 per cent. take-up instead of a loan with an 80 per cent. take-up—and if they kept social security and housing benefit entitlements, their scheme would be more costly than our scheme from year one. Our scheme will yield savings compared with their proposals from year one. I noted that my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, West calculated that by the beginning of the next century it stacked up into a difference of hundreds of millions of pounds in the costs of the schemes.

The burden of repayment will not be all that heavy. For the average course, it will be about £400 per year, which compares with the cost of a ski-ing holiday—and about 1 million people from Britain went on ski-ing holidays last year. *[Interruption.]* My predecessor made a distinguished speech on these issues. When he visited Sweden—

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 301, Noes 220.

Division No. 8] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike

Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alastair Goodland and
Mr. Stephen Dorrell.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dover, Den
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kirkwood, Archy
Knox, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Reid, Dr John
Rhodes James, Robert
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Sir Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Cook and
Mr. Martyn Jones.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Education (Student Loans) Bill *[Money]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—
Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Education (Student Loans) Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(a) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any sums required by the Secretary of State for making payments under that Act;

(b) the payment of any sums received by him by virtue of that Act into the Consolidated Fund.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

10.15 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I thought that, by popular request, I would make a few comments on the money resolution, which is important for several reasons. It is not so much the amount of money involved—compared with what we discussed last night, it is relatively modest—as the fact that there are some peculiar arrangements regarding the Secretary of State's ability to administer it. That is why I want—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. We are debating the money resolution. I ask the House to listen.

Mr. Cryer: As ever, Mr. Speaker, I am most grateful to you.

We should take some interest in the expenditure that is authorised by the House, sometimes with so little scrutiny. The explanatory memorandum says that 10 to 20 per cent. of the annual outlay will go on administration. I imagine that most people will think that a relatively high proportion. As £109 million is involved in the first year —it will double by 1992-93—it is worth observing that the Secretary of State could spend the money on far more important and pressing things. For example, Bradford local authority has applied for £28 million in capital allocation this year, but the Government, who are of the same political conviction, have awarded it only £8 million.

Buttershaw first school has been partly housed in three temporary classrooms for so long that they are crumbling and have had to be taken out of use. The children have to be bussed for an eight-mile round trip day in, day out, and a school has been reopened to accommodate them. That demonstrates the pressing need for expenditure on educational provision in Bradford.

I should have thought that, rather than concentrate on money resolutions that facilitate a turnover of £109 million in the first year, we should satisfy such a basic requirement as we have in Bradford. I remind the Minister, if he knew it in the first place, that Buttershaw first school, like many schools in Bradford, has been waiting for years for permanent extensions. School rolls in Bradford are increasing, not diminishing.

We have 600 temporary classrooms in Bradford, many of which are reaching the end of their lives. It is time that money was allocated to provide permanent extensions so that our children can have decent facilities. I hope that the Minister notes that. That would represent a far better priority for this money.

One of the rather curious features of the Bill that has not been mentioned so far is that it gives the Secretary of State extraordinary powers, all linked to expenditure. The Bill is basically a thin framework delegating a wide range of powers to the Secretary of State. They include a Henry VIII clause which, as I am sure the House knows well, is a clause which enables the Minister to alter the primary legislation, the Education (Student Loans) Bill, without the necessity of coming before the House for further approval.

Schedule 1, which settles the Bill's ambit, the number of institutions available for students who qualify for loans, can be added to, subtracted from or changed under negative procedure regulations by the Secretary of State without any guarantee that the regulations will come before the House. If, as the Bill makes plain, they are by annulment, the regulations are subject to revocation by a prayer.

As the House knows, there is no guarantee that a prayer will be debated and, even if it is, the debate will last for no more than one and a half hours. If the prayer is down for hearing after 10 o'clock and there is a Division, the time taken by that Division is taken out of the debate. Therefore, only one hour and 10 minutes will be given to debating the regulations, and then only if the Government Whips agree, yet those regulations affect primary legislation. In effect, the Minister is being given the power to produce the equivalent of primary legislation without the House necessarily being involved. That is a wide power, to which attention should be drawn.

Schedule 2 sets out the financial parameters of where the £109 million will be spent in the first year, doubling by 1992, and so forth. When the Under-Secretary of State replied to the previous debate, he made no reference to the arrangement which may provide for the loans to be made and recovered. Arrangements have no statutory meaning. *[Interruption.]* As a Back-Bench Member says sotto voce, I missed some of that speech because I was chairing the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments which was taking extensive evidence from civil servants on yet another statutory instrument which in the Committee's view was defective and that will be reported.

Presumably, the arrangements are those provided for by regulation. I know of no statutory provision whereby Ministers simply have the right to arrange things. They must present what they do to the House for scrutiny. If they have the power simply to make arrangements, that does not occur.

Schedule 2, paragraph 3(4), says:

> "Regulations made under paragraph 1(1)(b) or (c) above may confer functions on any such person or body as is mentioned in sub-paragraph (1) above, including power to exercise a discretion in relation to any matter for which the regulations provide."

In its strict legalistic phraseology that means that the House is handing over to the Secretary of State power to sub-delegate regulation-making powers. I am sure that the House would not agree to that if there was a clear alternative.

That means that the Minister, through regulations, can confer functions—that is, hand over powers—on any body that is provided for in the first paragraph of this part of the schedule, which means those persons and bodies that will deal with the loans and repayments. It includes a power to exercise a discretion in relation to any matter for which the regulations provide. Therefore, the Minister is handing over a power to a body that can simply ignore the regulations that the Minister, if a prayer is tabled, will bring before the House for debate. This is an important matter and relates specifically to the money, so it is not unfair to raise it on the money resolution.

Paragraph 3(7) of schedule 2 says:

[Mr. Cryer]

"Any person or body having the function of recovering loans under the arrangements may, for appropriate consideration, assign the right of recovery to a third party."

That means that debts can be sold, and that means that the accountability of the Secretary of State to the House for the money resolution—that is, paying all receipts into the Consolidated Fund—is simply moved a stage further. He can say that no money is coming in and he cannot get any money back, because the person or body who had the function of recovering loans—the person or body mentioned in schedule 2—has assigned the right of recovery to a third party, and that party has been wound up in 14, 15 or 100 cases.

The detailed administrative provision for this legislation is through regulations. The accountability for delegated legislation is minimal, and the Minister is abusing it. The Government claimed that they would take government off our backs, but they are producing more delegated legislation each year than was produced by the whole of the 1974-79 Labour Government. The Tory Government claimed that that Administration produced a huge mass of legislation that bore down on manufacturing industry and the population in general. The Government are producing more instruments and it is an abuse of the House to provide for annual expenditure of £100 million to £200 million in such a way that the responsibility is one stage removed, through regulation and delegated powers granted by the legislation. Then, within that framework of legislation, the Government have provided for sub-delegation of legislation. That makes the accountability of the Minister to the House one stage further removed and even more diffuse.

We should look carefully at the money resolution. Having been prepared with a brief because I might speak, the Minister should explain these points. They are reasonably important and merit an answer. The money resolution debate is an important opportunity, brief though it is, to raise these issues and try to get something on the record.

10.28 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Robert Jackson): The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) has a habit of raising points such as these. He spoke first about the contrast between the estimated administrative cost of the order of £10 million to £20 million and the flow of funds in the early years of the scheme. He made a perfectly fair debating point, but if we are to set up a student loans operation, quite extensive machinery needs to be established before the volume of the business builds up. We shall need staff, a computer and buildings. The amount of money involved will build up eventually to thousands of millions of pounds. As we argued in the previous debate, big savings will be made from the start of the operation of the scheme. Unlike the alternative envisaged by the Opposition, the loans scheme will result in due course in substantial savings building up, in relation to which the administration costs will be rather small.

Let me say a word about the arrangements that are to be embodied in regulations to be brought before the House.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): The amounts recorded for loan outgoings in the financial and explanatory memorandum are quite different from those recorded on page 43 of the White Paper. I see no mention of the access funds, which are part of the scheme, in the financial and explanatory memorandum, nor is any account taken of the costs of deferral or default. Are those taken into account anywhere in the memorandum? The memorandum states that loan repayments will exceed the cost of the scheme "in due course". Can the Minister tell us exactly when he thinks that will happen?

Mr. Jackson: That depends entirely on the assumptions made in the projections. The hon. Gentleman knows that perfectly well; we have discussed it on many occasions. The hon. Gentleman asked about access funds. We do not propose to take powers for that purpose in the Bill, because we already have powers to constitute such funds, and we shall set them up under those existing powers. Their cost does not, therefore, arise in the explanatory and financial memorandum, but it is, of course, taken into account in the White Paper. The figures differ because the White Paper refers to the academic year and the financial and explanatory memorandum to the financial year.

Let me finish answering the hon. Member for Bradford, South. The arrangements will be embodied in regulations that will be brought before the House and will be constructed by analogy with the arrangements for the payment of student grants. We discussed all that in our previous debate. We also discussed the regulation-making powers—in that picturesque phrase, "the Henry VIII clause". We have discussed all these matters extensively. I have nothing to add to what was said, and I do not believe that the hon. Member for Bradford, South has added much to the argument.

We merely seek to establish in a flexible and responsive way the legal arrangements for paying student loans that are most sensible in terms of the administration of a loans scheme. That is what we propose, and that is what we hope to be able to achieve.

Question put and agreed to.

Teachers' Pay and Conditions

10.33 pm

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. John MacGregor): I beg to move,

That the draft Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act 1987 (Continuation) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 7th November, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.

Section 6 of the Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act 1987 provides that the Act shall expire on 31 March 1990 unless it is continued by force for a further year by an order laid before and approved by resolution of each House. The order now before the House provides for the Act to continue in force for a further year, until 31 March 1991. This is necessary to enable me in due course to give effect to the teachers' pay settlement for 1990-91, following the report of the interim advisory committee, due next January, and consultation on its recommendations. If the life of the Act is not extended in the way proposed, it will not be possible to deal with the 1990-91 pay settlement.

My predecessor had always hoped to be able to put new pay determination arrangements in place in time for the 1990-91 settlement, but we never expected that it would be easy to devise new pay determination arrangements which, to be worth while, would need to be permanent, stable and effective.

The deep differences of opinion between the six competing teacher unions, the employers and the Government, which were very evident during the events which culminated in the failure of Burnham, the passage of the Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act 1987 and the establishment of the interim advisory committee made that only too clear. The problem is not to obtain complete agreement on new pay determination arrangements—I suspect that that could never be achieved—but enough to ensure that they can operate successfully and are likely to endure. We need more time to achieve that, so it is necessary for the present arrangements to be in place for one more year. That is why the order has been laid before the House.

In 1987, the Government's immediate concerns were to bring pay and conditions together and to establish a proper career structure for teachers. That was achieved in the 1987 settlement, which gave teachers a 16·4 per cent. pay increase. Aspects of that settlement which were controversial at the time are widely welcomed now. Incentive allowances have proved their worth, and following the recommendations of the interim advisory committee, their introduction has been speeded up so that there are now some 170,000 available in schools. The effectiveness of the interim advisory committee itself has been widely praised, and rightly so, and I would like to pay tribute to the committee today for all the hard work that it has put in and which it is doing now.

In October 1987 the Government published a Green Paper discussing the question of new permanent teachers' pay machinery. We stated three key principles relevant to the establishment of new teachers' pay determination machinery which are in the interests of the education service and the nation as a whole.

The principles were that it should be designed to provide that settlements have due regard to the need to recruit, retain and motivate sufficient teachers of the right quality. Secondly, it must ensure that settlements support effective management of the schools and provide for proper career-long development and incentives for teachers. Finally, it should be designed to ensure that settlements have due regard to affordability and to the needs of the national economy.

The Green Paper discussed a number of different possible future pay determination arrangements and proposed the establishment of a teachers' negotiating group with the Government in a majority on the management side and with an ability for the management side to break deadlock by imposing its proposals subject to the approval of Parliament.

It became clear from the written responses to the Green Paper from the interested parties and from the views expressed during meetings with my predecessor in the autumn of 1988 that there continued to be widely differing views about the best way forward. In particular, there was no basis of agreement on such fundamental features as the role and powers of the Government, how to deal with a breakdown in negotiations and how to cover the interests of heads and deputies.

There was no prospect of meeting our original aspiration of having new permanent machinery in time for the 1990 settlement, and no advantage in trying to rush things to this end. The subject is too important and too much hangs on our getting things right for it to be sensible to do that.

It was against that background that my right hon. Friend the present Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster told the House in July that he was arranging a further series of meetings with the teacher unions and employers, at which he saw the discussions as ranging more widely than the proposal for a teachers' negotiating group set out in the October 1987 Green Paper.

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way at such an early stage. Will he confirm that the negotiations took place against a background in which it was clear that teachers' salaries increased under the Labour Government by an average of 6 per cent., while they have increased in real terms by 35 per cent. under the Conservative Government?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend is absolutely right about the relativities, but he has not got the figure absolutely right. Under the Conservatives, the figure is 30 per cent. However, the relativities are quite correct and his point is absolutely right.

I was referring to what my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster told the House in July. He recognised then that it would not be easy to find a solution which was acceptable to all parties, but he reaffirmed the importance of getting the new arrangements right. He recognised that this would take time and said that he was accordingly asking the interim advisory committee to sit for a further year to give that time. He also said that he would in due course ask the House to approve a consequential one-year extension of the Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act 1987. That is what we are considering today.

The remit which I have set the IAC is challenging. In addition to considering what the permanent pay increase for 1990-91 should be, I have asked it to make recommendations for the further expansion of incentive allowances to help local education authorities to tackle their particular teacher shortage problems; to look at the

[Mr. MacGregor]

situation in London, where there are particular problems in some inner-London boroughs; and to review the pay of heads and deputies.

In recognition of the task which I have set the committee, I have provided for the teachers' pay bill for 1990-91 to increase by the fair and substantial sum of £600 million—55 per cent. more than this year's remit and twice that of last year. I look forward to seeing the committee's report in January. I am sure that it will match the high standards set by its two previous reports.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Since the Act was passed, as the Secretary of State well knows, the International Labour Organisation has ruled that this method of settling teachers' pay is in breach of the convention to which we are a signatory. How on earth does the Secretary of State justify coming back to the House with not only an extension of what, in international law, has been ruled an unacceptable procedure but restrictions, even if they were more generous than they were before, on the amount available for settling the teachers' pay claim?

Mr. MacGregor: The ILO is well aware that we intend to establish a permanent new pay machinery, and it is content with that. [HON. MEMBERS: "When?"] I have just been talking about that, and I will talk about it again right now. *[Interruption.]* If Opposition Members will allow me, I will refer to the point right now.

The House will rightly be concerned whether the extension I am seeking today will enable me to bring forward legislation to establish new permanent machinery in the next Session. Obviously, I cannot commit the Government in advance of the next Queen's Speech—any Queen's Speech—but let me tell the House tonight that that is my aim. At the meetings held in July, my predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, outlined three new options for consideration: negotiations between employers and unions, with necessary safeguards for the Government's interests; a permanent IAC-type body, possibly linked to a no-strike agreement; and a movement towards greater local flexibility, which might lead to individual LEAs or schools opting out of national negotiations.

I have just completed a helpful and constructive round of meetings with the teacher unions and employees at which I have heard their views on each of these options.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): The Secretary of State has just spoken about provision for local authorities to opt out of national negotiations. Leaving aside other arguments, does he understand that that will lead to a significant increase in the teachers' pay bill? Is he willing to ensure that the Government will support that increase through the poll tax?

Mr. MacGregor: I must make it quite clear that we have been looking at all the options with all the organisations concerned. We have been receiving a wide variety of views in response. My position is quite clear: I need to consider the position, taking into account the responses that I am receiving, not only from those whom I have met formally but from others who are putting views forward.

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): My right hon. Friend has said that he is considering all the views from the organisations he has consulted. Does he agree that there is one particularly difficult body of people whom he cannot consult? I refer to teachers who are either not members of trade unions or would welcome the opportunity, if my right hon. Friend were only to signal it, to leave in droves the unions which they regard as useless but in which they remain only because they can otherwise have no influence on their pay and conditions?

Mr. MacGregor: I have had formal meetings and received representations from all six teacher unions. I am, or course, prepared to receive views from any quarter during the consultation period.

I do not under-estimate the difficulties, but I believe that there is a strong desire on all sides to make progress, and I intend to pursue this matter vigorously. In the meantime, we need this order to pay teachers an increase next year. I commend the order to the House and ask that it be approved.

10.44 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): We oppose the order. It breaks clear undertakings to restore negotiating machinery by March 1990 and is part of a policy approach that has collapsed teacher morale and constricted teachers' pay and is leading to a mounting teacher shortage crisis.

Although the history of the principal Act involved in the order is well known and need not be repeated, there have been the clearest undertakings that negotiating machinery would be restored by 1990. That point was made in January this year in response to a question from the hon. Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) when the previous Secretary of State said:

> "The Government hope to introduce new permanent machinery in time for the 1990 settlement".—*[Official Report,* 31 January 1989; Vol. 146, c. 159.]

On 27 July 1988, in response to a question from the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), the Minister of State said:

> "it is not possible to have negotiations in 1990 with a negotiating body unless such a body has been thought through and some conclusions have been reached by the end of 1989."—*[Official Report,* 27 July 1989; Vol. 138, c. 483.]

But the Government have already given that commitment. In other words, if there are to be negotiations on pay and conditions, there must be negotiating machinery.

In breach of those undertakings, however, we are being asked to continue with imposed settlements for another year. Those imposed settlements are in clear breach of the convention of the International Labour Organisation. Imposed settlements have already produced a wholly unsatisfactory situation for teachers and teachers' pay. The Government have not even allowed the interim advisory committee the freedom to arrive at its own recommendations, as is allowed to a review body, before the Government then make a decision on those recommendations. Instead, the interim advisory committee has been put in the straitjacket of a prior cash limit.

The IAC has protested about that, saying that that limit has forced it to recommend lower pay increases than it would have wished and than would otherwise have been the case. It has also meant that part of the increase last year—and, no doubt, part of the increase this year—will be borne entirely by local ratepayers and subsequently by poll tax payers without the benefit of any rate support grant.

The Secretary of State said that this year he set the interim advisory committee "a challenging task". He has not set it a challenging task—he has set it an impossible task. It is impossible to make compatible the requirement on the IAC to bring forward salary recommendations which can solve the mounting crisis of teacher shortages within the cash limits that the Secretary of State has imposed on the IAC in advance of its considerations.

The consequence of those imposed settlements has been a collapse in morale, which has led to a flight from the profession and a grave reduction in the attractiveness of teaching. It is time that the Secretary of State faced up to the scale of the crisis over which he is now presiding.

In the loans debate earlier, I mentioned that in the past eight years the proportion of graduates entering teaching had halved—from 8 per cent. in 1980 to 4 per cent. in 1988. More graduates are entering the law than are entering teaching. Of those who qualify as teachers, three in 10 do not enter the profession the following year, and of those who do, four out of 10 leave teaching within five years. There are as many people with teaching qualifications who are not teaching as there are with teaching qualifications who are teaching. There are teachers everywhere—except in schools. I am surprised that the Secretary of State does not understand just what a serious effect the collapse of morale has had.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Does my hon. Friend agree that apart from low pay and the denial of negotiating rights, one reason for the collapse of morale among many teachers in places such as Bradford is the determination of local education authorities and the Government to push ahead with doctrinaire education policies in the face of public opposition? Is he aware, for instance, that the Minister of State revealed today that even though Bradford education authority had given an undertaking that it would postpone the magnet schools programme, it has put in bids for nearly £3 million for the development of such magnet schools in Bradford and has had secret meetings with the Minister of State to further that programme? Does he agree that that sort of deceit and duplicity is doing much to damage morale among teachers and to alienate parents from these unpopular and doctrinaire policies?

Mr. Straw: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It is surprising that the Secretary of State does not understand what effect a collapse of morale has upon the recruitment and retention of teachers.

In June 1976, a newish Conservative Back Bencher complained to the then Secretary of State for Social Services about near-record wastage in a profession. He said that, because of the low state of morale in the profession, the poor terms and conditions and the poor salary prospects, there had been a flight of individuals from it. That Back Bencher is now Secretary of State for Education and Science. He was referring to the medical profession, but the case that he made then applies equally to the teaching profession now.

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): Medicine is an old and long established profession.

Mr. Straw: The point is exactly the same. In June 1976, the Secretary of State, then a Back Bencher, said that low morale and low pay had led to a flight of people fom the profession. Exactly those circumstances are now leading to a flight from the teaching profession and to problems of retaining teachers.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke) *rose*——

Mr. Straw: I shall not give way, as I am about to conclude.

In his first three and a half months in office, this Secretary of State managed to visit just one school outside his constituency but did not manage to speak to any of the pupils about the effects of Government policy upon their school. Only someone who has kept himself holed up in Elizabeth house could possibly introduce this order or come out with the complacent claptrap that he and the Minister of State peddle about there being no serious problem in terms of a teacher shortage or teachers' pay.

Educational standards depend critically on the number and quality of teachers in our schools. Those requirements and teacher motivation will be maintained and increased only if negotiations are restored and teachers are better rewarded. We therefore oppose the order.

10.52 pm

Mr. David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): I welcome what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said about the cash increase for next year's financial settlement for teachers' pay. In common with my right hon. Friend, I hope that this will be the last occasion on which we must debate such an order. I hope that we shall have some form of new negotiating body in place next year. I also welcome what he said in his remit to the interim advisory committee about its need to extend local flexibility for teachers' salaries in 1990-91.

I hope that the IAC will pay exceptional attention to the high housing costs and the high travel-to-work costs in certain parts of the country. I hope that it will also remember the extra costs of implementing the national curriculum and all the extra work involved.

There is a move towards a common recognition of educational qualifications within the European Community. People hope that that policy goal will be achieved by 1993. To attain that goal, the highest educational standards and the best teaching must be achieved throughout the EC. It also demands the full implementation of the national curriculum in Britain. I hope that the Government will consider whether there are some areas where the European social fund could be used to tide us over when we run into difficulties about the payment of teachers' costs and salaries.

Educational reform has gone ahead at a tremendous speed and my right hon. Friend has already said that the implementation of that reform should not go ahead at such breakneck speed. The introduction of the important reforms relating to the national curriculum should be introduced at a slower pace. For 1990-91, the IAC should pay particular attention to the rates of pay for supply teachers and remember that different aptitudes are needed for being a supply teacher in a secondary school as opposed to a primary school.

Another point which I welcome, and to which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has referred, is that he wants the education services and local authorities to consult widely with industry about how industry can help to alleviate teacher shortages. When we look at what industry already does in education, with the technical and

[Mr. David Madel]

vocational education initiative and city technology colleges, it seems that industry is almost subsidising teachers' salaries. When the interim advisory committee is asked next year to consider the modification of selective payments in relation to teacher shortages in some subjects, it should also consider whether industry can temporarily directly subsidise teachers' salaries in some parts of the country for a certain period.

The impact of greater local flexibility in pay scales has an effect on the looming community charge. Local education authorities must be compensated properly from central Government if they have to bring in a host of local additional pay scales to ensure not only that the national curriculum is met, but that shortages elsewhere are overcome.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has already given warnings about what inflation may do in the next financial year, and certainly in the next calendar year. Therefore, what the IAC recommends for 1990-91 could have an effect on the community charge and how it works out in relation to Government and the revenue support grant. Therefore, all I ask is that the Government do not contradict themselves. They must push ahead, quite rightly, with the national curriculum and solving teacher shortages, but they must not load the extra financial burden on areas which, through no fault of their own, have to grapple with teacher shortages.

With regard to the new negotiating machinery, I hope that we can reach a new teachers' incomes forum, call it what we will. However, three factors must be right before we can do so: first, the trade unions must work out a common position and speak with a single voice in any such forum; secondly, if we are to have a forum which has direct talks with employers, we must have a fallback position —a board of mediation which intervenes to overcome difficulties—rather than having teachers resorting to industrial action in the classroom. Built into the system there must be an automatic form of conciliation and mediation so that we do not slide into the classroom disruption that we experienced earlier this decade. Thirdly, if employers are to agree to this they must have a system which ensures that the settlements they make are met with the resources necessary to implement them.

I hope that my right hon. Friend will succeed in bringing forward new negotiating machinery, but if he fails we must accept that we cannot have a new negotiating system which takes local authorities into account. In that case we would have to pay teachers centrally, and grasp the financial nettle which that would entail.

10.58 pm

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): I am glad of the opportunity to speak in this debate because I, like many parents in Southwark, am concerned about the teacher shortage in the borough. I shall give some examples of how the teacher shortage is hitting schools in Southwark and say how the Government should respond to it.

Some children at primary schools in my borough turn up at school not knowing whether they will be sent home or who their teacher will be. They may be in the same classroom as usual but with a different teacher. It may be that their class and the children with whom they are used to working are divided into two and placed into other already overcrowded classrooms.

At one school in my constituency, children had been prepared by their parents during the summer holidays to begin school in September. But the school had to tell parents not to bring their children for the first day because there was no teacher for the reception class. Imagine the feelings of the parents and children, the children having talked to brothers and sisters about starting school and the parents having prepared them for the occasion. Because parents in that situation cannot tell their children when they are likely to start school, a great feeling of insecurity is created among parents and children. However secure and stable the home background, an insecure and unstable school situation creates a feeling of insecurity in the child.

A high percentage of probationers teach in my area, and there is a terrible dearth of experience. Heads and deputy heads cannot do the important work in school that they should be doing, because they are having to cover classes. Section 11 teachers are having to be in the classroom instead of doing the valuable work that they should be doing. Supply teachers are filling permanent vacancies instead of being available to cover for teachers on maternity and sick leave.

All that has a terrible effect on standards. Schools must hang on to their teachers and, when there are vacancies, there is no question of selecting from a mixed group of qualified teachers. Heads must take anybody who offers himself or herself for teaching. That, too, creates a feeling of insecurity among parents. The teacher may be perfectly adequate, but if it is known that there was no competition for the vacancy and no choice, morale is undermined. So, in addition to the problem of children being sent home, we have the insidious undermining effects of insufficient teachers and the result of that on the quality of education in primary schools.

The Government can do something to improve the situation. They are constantly talking about market forces. They cannot be paying teachers enough when we canot obtain sufficient teachers to teach in Southwark's primary schools. But it is also a question of the value that the Government place on teachers.

When attending the Labour party conference Brighton, I stayed with a friend who is a primary school teacher there. She was always awake at 6 o'clock in the morning preparing for the day's work and, however late I arrived home after conference fringe meetings, she was doing her papers and preparing for the following day's classes. Although she has two children, she assured me that the hard work and insufficient pay to meet her increased mortgage payments were not the only problem. Being committed to her work, she feels that the job is not given enough public recognition and value. The Government have an important role to play in that context.

Housing is another problem in that people cannot afford on a teacher's salary to buy or rent housing in Southwark. The Government must consider that problem if we are to resolve the teacher shortage.

In speaking of primary school teachers, we are referring to a largely female work force. If they are to return to teaching after maternity leave, they must be able to combine their working and family life, and that means more flexible hours, with the Government encouraging the provision of high quality child care for teachers, with after-school and school holiday provision. With female teachers being expected to work to a male employment pattern, we must not be surprised if they do not return to teaching at the end of their maternity leave. It is not only a question of leaving this to the local education authority. The Government should take a lead in financing the provision and in highlighting and fostering good practice.

A child's first term and years at school are vital. The teacher shortage is jeopardising that start for the children of Southwark. The Secretary of State has a clear duty, and he must act.

11.5 pm

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): I declare an interest as a long-time member of the Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association. Like the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), I am a parliamentary adviser to that association.

I congratulate the Secretary of State on his comments of recent months, in which he has fully acknowledged the commitment, dedication and professionalism of teachers in this country. Those qualities are widely recognised. There is certainly a problem of low morale in the teaching profession, but, like the president of the AMMA, I must say that too often teachers talk themselves down. That is a major problem, and it is not helped by some of the comments that have been made here this evening. I very much hope that problems of morale will start to be tackled by the teachers themselves.

I do not doubt that there is a strong case for better pay and conditions and for a better career structure for teachers. There are new and serious problems. There are teacher shortages, for instance, but as my right hon. Friend said, they represent about 1 per cent. of the work force. In many other professions, that would not be regarded as exceptional, and the problem is unevenly spread throughout teaching; it is uneven geographically and by specialty.

Attracting people back into the teaching profession will be a succsssful answer, I believe. As the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) said, there are as many graduate teachers outside as inside the profession. We should surely welcome them back with open arms. I advocate bringing into the classroom well qualified graduates who can be trained on the job.

I received an unsolicited letter from a constituent about this only this week. She says:

> "Having seen, on South To-Day last night, Jack Straw pontificating on the question of employing graduates in schools without training except in school, I felt constrained to write to BBC South to point out that graduates could be employed in state schools without any further training in teaching until the 1970's."

My constituent graduated in modern languages. In 1965 she decided to teach and answered an advertisement placed by the Labour-controlled ILEA for graduates to teach in primary schools:

> "I was then appointed as a qualified teacher, with no experience or training whatsoever, to a London Primary School. I learnt on the job with help from another untrained graduate! This was Labour Party policy when they were in office to overcome the shortage of teachers in London.
>
> After moving to Salisbury I was employed in Secondary Schools both by Wiltshire and Hampshire County Councils as a qualified teacher . . .
>
> It seems disgraceful that the BBC gives such prominence to Labour Party propaganda in suggesting that this is simply Conservative policy and therefore to be denigrated."

I must concur with that.

There is now in the teaching profession, particularly among its professional organisations, a welcome feeling of glasnost which I do not wish to upset. It must be recognised that there is a great deal of disquiet about the financial constraints—£600 million—on the interim advisory committee. They are widely resented, largely because they are misunderstood. I have tried as a former economics teacher to explain the nature of public spending rounds and the way in which we run the financial affairs of this country, but I must be rusty as I have not got very far. I invite my right hon. Friend to explain these constraints.

As my right hon. Friend said, we must move towards a permanent pay system. I hope that it will include a full and open role for Government. I do not want a return to the Burnham system, which led to breakdown. There is a spirit of realism in the teaching associations now, and the AMMA has written to me as follows:

> "We hope that proposals will now evolve . . . towards a system where the Government has a full and open role, where the evidence and reasoning of particular cash figures can be debated sensibly."

It adds:

> "We regret the continuation of the Act's provisions for another year, although we fully recognise that there is no better alternative yet available."

That is important, and that is why I shall support my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State this evening.

I have for a long time agreed with my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, South-West (Mr. Madel) that we must face the issue of teachers being paid centrally. A few years ago, with the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery), I visited Germany and became acquainted with the interesting system of mixed funding that prevails there. Teachers' salaries are paid centrally, but local communities have great autonomy over the extent to which they support their local schools. That is important, and with the advent of the community charge it will become more important. The system provides for parental support, and local taxation is accepted by the community, which recognises needs and wishes to meet them. That sort of flexibility would be allowed under the system which I have in mind.

We all want to see a well motivated, well paid, fully trained and effective teaching service. I believe that that is the aspiration, too, of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

11.11 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): We live in a strange world—one in which teachers are asking to be allowed to negotiate but being told in effect that the matter will be arbitrated for them, while ambulance workers are asking for arbitration and being told that they must resume negotiations.

I am happy to take up the remarks of the hon. Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) who, like the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) and me, is parliamentary adviser to one of the six leading teaching unions. One of the interesting pieces of background to the debate is that there is unanimity among the unions in opposing the idea of an imposed cash limit, which the Secretary of State has introduced. That idea effectively predetermines the outcome of the decisions of the interim advisory committee in January.

My right hon. and hon. Friends will vote against the order unless the Secretary of State or the Minister of State pulls something out of the fire. I think that the teaching

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profession would accept only two courses. One would be a commitment that the day when negotiating rights are reinstated will never again be postponed, especially in the light of the ILO ruling. Secondly, there would have to be a commitment that the Secretary of State would lift the announced £600 million limit. If the right hon. Gentleman fails to take that action, we shall oppose the implementation of the order for strong reasons of principle as well as of practice, and I hope that some Conservative Members will take the same course.

It was my right hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) who elicited a response from the Minister of State to the effect that it was the Government's intention that a negotiating procedure should be in place by now. It is not as though the planning for that has taken place only in recent months. The Secretary of State gave us a date, and the Green Paper was submitted for consultation two years and two months ago. Yet there is still no sign of a conclusion to the deliberations on the Government's proposals. Clear undertakings were given by the then Secretary of State and the Minister of State, but they have been breached.

We are in clear breach of our undertakings as signatories to the ILO convention. Article 4 makes it clear that the Government are obliged to offer voluntary negotiations between employers and employees with independence of negotiating bodies, and that that is the way to regulate the terms and conditions. When the Government argued against that in their submissions to the ILO they were told that submissions to the IAC did not constitute voluntary negotiations, so commitments made both in the House and internationally have been broken.

A further constraint on the £600 million limit is not acceptable. It represents approximately a 7·4 per cent. increase across the board. The Secretary of State will know that to restore the morale of the profession and to reverse the trend of people leaving, we shall need a greater increase in many areas. It is paradoxical that, although the limit is fixed, the teachers have been asked in recent weeks to give their views on what the pay settlement should be. That is like appointing a judge and telling him or her to reach a judgment before hearing the evidence.

It is noticeable that the differences between the unions have faded away. The Secretary of State will have seen the letter which has been sent to all schools by the salaries campaign 1990. It bears the signatures of the general secretaries of the six unions. They are in agreement and state that they are in "unanimous opposition" to a predetermined constraint. They say that they have made that point to the current and previous Secretaries of State and they ask, even at this late stage, for the constraint to be lifted.

That is the prelude to tonight's debate. The hon. Member for Peckham, (Ms. Harman) mentioned the experience of people in one of the areas of acute teacher shortage and crisis. I am her parliamentary neighbour. On a practical basis, as I told the Minister of State a few days ago when she was good enough to see me, there is neither sufficient action nor sufficiently urgent action. That shows a lack of commitment. Teachers do not believe that the Government are committed to them, to their profession or to education. Because they do not believe that, they are not staying. Heads and teachers who have been in the profession for 10 years or more are leaving because they do not feel sufficiently valued. Teachers are not applying to schools in high-stress areas, and some of the advertisements are going unanswered in areas which are in desperate need of teachers. That is taking place at the same time as reception and nursery classes are sent home and teachers are doubling up, covering for each other and coming under increasing stress.

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): Does my hon. Friend agree that the loss of status implied by the award is having a severe impact on morale when teachers are working harder than ever to bring into play local management schemes and the national curriculum? That is putting a great strain on them, and they are not being rewarded adequately.

Mr. Hughes: My hon. Friend is right. It is the same in rural areas of Wales as in urban areas of England. As a result of the Education Reform Act 1988, teachers have been charged by the Government with considerably greater responsibility. They are being asked to take on the consequences of recent legislation, but they are finding it difficult to sustain the additional level of commitment when there is no recognition of their right to negotiate or any prospect of adequate remuneration. I wish that the Secretary of State and Ministers were more aware of the profession's concern. People in the profession want to convince the Government of that but, sadly, the Government do not seem to have been convinced. For that reason, we shall vote against the order.

11.18 pm

Mr. Ken Hargreaves (Hyndburn): I listened with interest and reassurance to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. Hon. Members on both sides of the House will agree that the withdrawal of the right to negotiate one's wage or salary is a serious step. I supported that step for teachers' salaries in 1987 because at that time, once the majority of those involved in the teaching profession agreed that the Burnham arrangements were unworkable, there seemed to be no alternative. However, we are now two and a half years on. During that time it should have been possible to set up new negotiating machinery.

The Government may blame the unions for the failure to reach agreement, and the unions will undoubtedly blame the Government. I am not interested in allocating blame. My concern is for the teachers. Whoever is to blame, the Government had the overriding responsibility to ensure that the new body was set up in the time scale allowed in 1987. Their failure to do that and the resultant need to extend the order are difficult to accept, especially at present.

I could not in any way support the industrial action taken by some teachers in the mid-1980s, but since then teachers have coped admirably with the education reforms introduced. Change is never easy. For teachers, the changes in education have coincided with changes in society which have resulted in less respect for people in authority. Teachers come face to face with the results of that change every day.

The cumulative effect of all that, the trauma of the reforms, the changes in behaviour of pupils, the reductions in teachers' standing in the community and their inability to negotiate their pay are responsible for so many long-serving, dedicated, experienced, excellent teachers leaving the profession. That is extremely worrying. Applications for entry into teacher training may well have increased by 15 per cent. this year, but we must stop the loss of teachers with years of experience.

The Government can do little about changes in society, but they can show their support for teachers and show that they understand the problems, first, by constantly recognising publicly the excellent work that the vast majority of teachers do—I am pleased that the Secretary of State does that—and, secondly, by paying teachers at a level which compensates for the additional problems that they face and which improves their standing in the community.

That cannot be done while this order is in place. It is a matter of regret that the order must be renewed, and I hope that this is the first and last time that the Government will seek to renew it. I hope that the establishment of the new negotiating body will be dealt with as a matter of the utmost urgency, as the Secretary of State promised. Otherwise, there will be a further loss of morale and of experienced teachers.

11.22 pm

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): The Government's refusal to negotiate pay and conditions with the teachers' unions causes great resentment and makes our teachers feel that they are enslaved—in worse conditions than teachers anywhere in Europe.

In Tower Hamlets the position is critical. Hundreds of children cannot be placed in schools and hundreds more are in the hands of supply teachers—sometimes as many as 15 different teachers a year. That is child-minding, not teaching. When the matter was mentioned in the House the other day, the Prime Minister's reply was, in effect, "What a pity that they cannot come to my constituency where they would get the best education." What a solution. It would be nice if children could all be removed from the east end to a leafy suburb. However, a couple of days later I read in the *Hendon Times*, which covers the Prime Minister's constituency, that the London borough of Barnet was taking on licensed teachers—I nearly said unlicensed teachers, because that is what we used to call unqualified teachers—so the position cannot be so happy there either, although it is probably easier than in Tower Hamlets.

Teachers cannot come to Tower Hamlets because of the housing shortage, the high cost and difficulty of travel and because they cannot afford a place to live. The worse the shortage of staff, the more reluctant teachers are to come. In some areas teachers will not even apply for a post as head or deputy head because the task is impossible.

Recently the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teacherscarried out a survey which revealed the degree of stress on teachers. Sixty-six per cent. of serving teachers said that they would leave if they had the chance. There is a great increase in mental illness among teachers who are suffering from severe stress. Throughout the country there are people who have left teaching who have no intention of ever returning, whatever is offered. When the Government ask women who have left teaching to start a family to come back to teaching at the same time as the number of evening meetings is being increased, they are being ridiculous, as such meetings make it quite impossible for mothers to take on a teaching job when, increasingly, they have to stay behind at school when their children have come home.

All teachers worthy of their salt keep good records and know how important good recording is, but the Government's new measures have introduced an entirely unbalanced situation of recording, with yearly profiles and formative and summative reports. Teachers are having to keep their classes quiet while they sit in front of them ticking boxes. They cannot find time to teach or prepare work because of the amount of recording and ticking of boxes that is required. They do not have enough free time to do their recording. Their task is becoming impossible.

Teachers bitterly resent the Baker days. They bitterly resent the fact that, throughout the country, in other professions, people are getting longer holidays, but five days of their holidays have been stolen. That rankles very much.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: They have 12 weeks.

Ms. Gordon: They do not do nothing in those 12 weeks. They take children on trips, they prepare their work for the coming year, and they need a restorative period because teaching is a profession of great physical and mental stress. If the hon. Gentleman has never taught, he should come and try it for a day or two in one of our local schools—he will see why teachers need a restorative period.

Hon. Members: He used to be a teacher.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): I have been a teacher. Does the hon. Lady agree that Conservative Members appreciate teachers taking their children away for holidays and educational experiences, but that they need a holiday themselves when they come back?

Ms. Gordon: Yes, indeed, because they are working a 24-hour day on such holidays.

Another form of stress on teachers is the introduction of the national curriculum without sufficient teachers and without sufficient money. Teachers have marked the fact that the national curriculum is not being forced upon private schools. We have the worst working conditions in Europe. I hold my surgery in a sixth form centre. The women's toilet is partitioned off a room where there is a butler sink and a gas ring. It looks like something out of the 1930s, not the 1980s. That is where teachers are expected to prepare their lunch. The conditions in many schools are a crying disgrace.

We are scouring the world for teachers. We cannot get our own teachers to come back because of the appalling conditions. Yet when we get teachers from abroad, we treat them in a very uneven fashion. Teachers from New Zealand, for instance, sometimes have to spend years, waiting for their qualifications to be recognised. Teachers from Bangladesh with 14 years' experience who speak the mother tongue of the children in the schools are considered unqualified, but teachers from European countries, who often cannot understand the children, are considered qualified.

Teachers in our schools are watching the money that is being poured into the city technology colleges while their own schools are being starved of money. This order is just another nail in the coffin of state education. It will increase resentment and the seepage away from the teaching profession of well qualified, experienced, good teachers.

11.28 pm

Mr. Michael Carttiss (Great Yarmouth): I declare an interest in that some years ago I was a member of the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers, but I do not advise it. I believe that free advice is a waste of time and that paid advice is a waste of money. I speak simply as someone who has been in the classroom as a teacher. When I left teaching, I eventually became chairman of an education committee. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science and I met many times in Norfolk to discuss education before he reached the office which I know that he will adorn with great success and to the great benefit of the education service nationally.

I welcome the fact that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said that this is an interim order for one more year. My hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves) said that he hoped that this was the first and last time that such an order would come before the House. In fact, it is the third time that we have been asked to continue the life of the interim advisory committee.

I understand all the points that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made in advancing the case for our supporting the measure today and I will have no difficulty in doing so because I know my right hon. Friend to be a man of his word. He was cautious in saying that it would be his aim to have the new negotiating machinery in existence in time for the next round of pay awards. I am sure that he will do his best to meet that aim, but we have to tell him that he must meet it.

I have strongly supported the Government's employment legislation because it is important that in a free society everyone should have the right not to belong to a union. I also believe, however, subject to the obvious constraints of national security and the public interest which apply to some occupations, that people should equally have the right to belong to a union and that that union should be able to represent them. I regret that the teachers' unions are denied the opportunity to engage in negotiations on their pay. I do not blame the Government for that. Teachers must accept a large measure of responsibility. I cannot understand why the teachers' organisations have never been able to sink their differences and get together to approach the Government with a clear-cut idea of how they would like their salaries and conditions to be dealt with. They never come along.

The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) quoted my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State talking about a shortage of doctors in 1966, as though that had anything to do with us now. The power of the British Medical Association, lately abused in its idiotic approach to the National Health Service reforms, has nevertheless enabled that profession to achieve a great deal for its members, which teachers, too, should be able to obtain if they were united in their approach to their problems.

I would not go along with my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, South-West (Mr. Madel) in all that he said, but he made one of the most powerful speeches that we have heard on this subject. Everyone has spoken extraordinarily well, but my hon. Friend encapsulated succinctly many of the concerns that inform all of us who are keen to see a successful education service.

Teacher shortages go in cycles. I do not want to minimise the problems that the education service is experiencing today. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will know that on the schools sub-committee agenda for Norfolk county council tomorrow for the first time ever there is an item dealing with teacher shortages. We have never had difficulties recruiting teachers in Norfolk, but we are beginning to do so—and if we are beginning to have problems in Norfolk, whatever must it be like in other parts of the country?

It is no good my right hon. Friend pretending that the problem does not exist. It is no use pretending that, while money will not solve everything, we can expect a highly motivated teaching profession if we do not reward teachers accordingly.

Many teachers do not deserve as much as they get. I deeply regret that in the one reform with which the Government should have gone ahead rapidly—teacher appraisal—they have backed off because they are not prepared to fund the additional teachers who would be necessary to introduce the properly run teacher appraisal scheme that many teachers would like to see. If I am wrong on that and my hon. Friend the Minister of State can reassure me when she replies, I will take back what I have said. Nevertheless, I am still worried about the attitude on some of these issues.

The teacher shortage is cyclical. The year 1966 has been quoted, but I started teaching in 1959, as a student with no qualifications. We were so short of teachers that we were appointing people on the basis that they had A-levels and the offer of a place at college. We were also appointing teachers with just one year's mature training, straight out of the services. I trained with some of those people and they were first class, but let us not pretend that it is good for the teaching profession to solve shortages in that way.

The Government must get their act together on teacher negotiations. There must be a body to deal with conditions. Teachers must also stop bleating about low morale. There have always been teachers who do not like their jobs. I know that they are required to do more, but the more they tell us about their suffering and their breakdowns, and how difficult their job is, the more one wonders whether they are the right people to be in those jobs. If they are not the right people, the negotiating body must be the right mechanism to attract more of the right people into the profession.

11.36 pm

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): The hon. Member for Great Yarmouth (Mr. Carttiss) ended on a sad note. Nobody hearing that ungracious remark would ever think that he had taught.

The last negotiated pay settlement for teachers was in April 1986. In 1987, the then Secretary of State imposed the interim advisory council and settlements for 1988 and 1989. The year 1990 is now coming, and if this continues for a year after, it will mean that, for five years, the democratic machinery of trade unionism will have been abandoned by the Government. As my hon. Friends have said, the Government were denounced for violating the International Labour Organisation convention, which has existed for a long time. The ILO is a United Nations body, so the Government have contravened international law. No other nation has done this. it is disgraceful that that should have been imposed on the teachers when at the same time the Secretary of State was attacking the teaching profession and trying to split its ranks. Instead, they have been united because the Government have driven them into such a corner that they have decided to get together.

The Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act became law early in 1987, and the Government said that it was only a temporary measure. They needed such a draconian measure because they could not get what they wanted to impose on the teachers through free democratic negotiation, because the teachers were resisting them. Therefore, they imposed their diktat and destroyed the negotiating machinery, saying that it would be for only a year.

It is sad to see how easily Tory Members go along with violations of democracy when they are done by their Government, but denounce everybody else. I would never have thought to hear from the hon. Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) some of the things that he said today. He jollied us along with a heap of anti-democratic proposals under the guise that they came from the Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association. It is one of the bodies that have written to the Secretary of State demanding the right to a negotiating machinery. The letter says:

> "We are equally agreed that teachers should have genuine participation in the determination of teachers' pay and conditions whatever the nature of the machinery."

If I read the whole letter, it would strengthen what I said. Five other bodies, including the Professional Association of Teachers, signed that letter.

During the period of consultation on the Education Reform Bill, head teachers drew attention to the teacher shortages, and in his evidence to the Select Committee, the general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers pointed out that the shortage was becoming "a catastrophe". Conservative Members who have cited the figure of 1 per cent. grossly under-estimate the problem. It is as though they do not want to solve it and will not face reality.

Now that the Government have imposed this draconian measure, they are in such an economic mess that they cannot find their way out. They have decided once again to hold down teachers' pay and conditions and imperil the education of our children. Let me make it clear that it is not the education of their children——

Mr. Key: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Flannery: No, I do not have time to give way to the hon. Gentleman, although I would if he had spoken more briefly.

All the members of the Cabinet—with perhaps one exception—went to public and preparatory schools. Conservative Members criticise a Health Service that they do not use and an education service into which they do not send their children. *[Interruption.]* One of them may have done, but the reality is as I have explained.

The Government were condemned by the ILO in May 1988 for denying teachers their negotiating rights and breaking a convention to which they themselves were a signatory. We appeal to the Minister to fulfil his promise, although if the Government can remove negotiating rights for five years, there is no reason to have any faith whatever that they will restore them at the end of the fifth year. They are eminently capable of imposing the conditions once more. They have got themselves into an impasse by their actions, their leadership election and all the other nonsense that they are crying about, and they are ready once again to impose the conditions on teachers. It is the Government who are the cause of the low morale in the teaching profession and of the shortage of teachers, about which the Select Committee is trying—against the Tory party's wishes—to publish an important report. It is vital to show the real picture.

Mr. Beggs: Does the hon. Gentleman agree with me, as a long-standing teacher, that since the early 1970s, when teachers had their morale restored and were given a decent salary increase arising from the Houghton report, teachers' morale, the conditions in which they work and the rewards that the Government make available to them have continued to deteriorate, and that the responsibility now lies with the Government to put matters right?

Mr. Flannery: The hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) is absolutely right that things have gone downhill since 1974—[HON. MEMBERS: "1974?"] In 1974, the Houghton report gave teachers the lift to which the hon. Member for Antrim, East referred. Did not Conservative Members know that? But in the past 10 years, things have gone steeply downhill, to the plaudits of Conservative Members. It is up to the Government to set matters right. Otherwise, the education of our children will be as ruined as the British economy now is.

11.43 pm

Mr. David Evennett (Erith and Crayford): As a former teacher and also a member of the Select Committee on Education, Science and the Arts, I was appalled at the speech made by the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery). He finds it easy to criticise and condemn, but his speech lacked any constructive suggestion. Opposition Members generally have had nothing constructive to say about teachers' pay and conditions; their remarks have been appalling.

Conservative Members believe that teachers are a vital part of our education service and our nation and that they should be paid a decent salary for the important job that they have to do. The education of our children is vital, both for individual children and for the future of our country. Historically, Opposition Members seem to have forgotten how the Burnham committee worked. It was a total and complete failure. It did not work effectively, because the whole aspect of teachers' pay and conditions was not considered. It considered only the annual pay review. In the past few years, the interim advisory committee has been quite successful at formulating teachers' pay. However, it is interim and temporary. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said earlier, we are looking for a permanent structure to determine teachers' pay in the future.

We have heard many reasons why no permanent structure has been created to date. One of the most important of those reasons must be that the teachers' unions are not united in their approach. It has been very difficult to achieve agreement across the teachers' unions. We have heard that the teachers want more money, but there has been no general agreement about the machinery to formulate teachers' pay negotiations in future. The IAC has therefore been necessary.

As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, there are already shortages of teachers in key subjects and in certain regions. However, we must not overstate the

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problem. It is easy to talk about the problems and make them worse. There are limited problems but that does not mean that they are not serious, because they are.

As a Member of Parliament representing an area in greater London, I believe that the problems are greater in London than elsewhere. The London allowance is totally inadequate for teachers working and living in London today. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State told the House today, as he told the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts last week, that the IAC is considering that, and we look forward to the Select Committee's comments.

I should like to see more emphasis on supply and demand in teaching recruitment and pay, more local bargaining and more regional agreements. I believe most passionately that living costs in greater London are different from those elsewhere in the country. That factor must be considered when we are looking at teachers' pay.

We obviously need a well trained, well paid professional teaching force. We owe teachers a great deal. The hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms. Gordon) was wrong to say that Conservative Members do not appreciate the difficult job that teachers have to do. We want them to be paid a decent salary, but we must look at the whole problem and not just at specific parts of it.

We need a new body to negotiate teachers' pay and conditions, and we look to next year with great interest. Conservative Members hope that this is the last time that we have to debate and discuss an interim advisory award and an extension of the Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act 1987. Under my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, we shall get there, and we shall have a good new negotiating body which will do the best for the teaching profession.

11.48 pm

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): Two main themes have run through the debate—the quality of education, and the democratic rights of teachers. It was very interesting to note that every hon. Member who spoke was prepared to accept that we are now facing a crisis in the supply of teachers and that we have a teacher shortage. The hon. Member for Great Yarmouth (Mr. Carttiss) even went so far as to say that, if the problems had come to Norfolk, they must be deep elsewhere.

I suspect that one discordant voice will not recognise the problem of teacher shortage, and it will be that of the Minister of State. At the beginning of this term, when she was presented with the figures on teacher shortages and vacancies, she said that they were "very encouraging". They do not seem to encourage Conservative Members, nor do they encourage parents. As my hon. Friends the Members for Peckham (Ms. Harman) and for Bow and Poplar (Ms. Gordon) and others have said, parents are concerned about the quality of education. They are concerned in London and in the inner-London boroughs because there may not be a teacher in front of the class. Parents in many parts of the country are concerned because there are hidden shortages and because a teacher in front of a class may not be qualified to teach the subject on the timetable. They are concerned because they know that the problem of the supply teacher may get worse.

The Minister may have recourse to the Prime Minister's response to me during the debate on the Queen's Speech. The answer, she said, for all parents and children in inner London is to live in Barnet. Does that not show total contempt and disregard for the children and parents of this country and for the quality of our children's education?

Conservative Members talk about teacher supply and say that they are now concerned about teachers. I am pleased that Central Office has now supplied them with a new script and that they are talking to it. In the early years of this Government, every Conservative Member used to denigrate the teaching profession and run down teachers' contributions.

Mr. Key *rose*——

Mr. Fatchett: I cannot give way.

That is why there has been such a collapse in teacher morale. The Secretary of State shakes his head and says that that is not true. Let me pose two more questions to him about teacher supply and morale. First, I refer to the £600 million envelope on the interim advisory committee recommendations for this year. The right hon. Gentleman knows, as every Conservative Member knows, that that figure will lead to a reduction in teachers' real living standards. How will we attract people into the teaching profession if we are to run from paying teachers what they need and what they deserve? This country should value their contribution to our society and economic well-being.

My second question is about democratic rights. How are we to restore teachers' morale when we hear from the Minister of State that teachers' democratic rights are still not to be restored and there is still no definite promise from the Secretary of State? As the hon. Member for Great Yarmouth said, the Secretary of State chose his words very deliberately. It is his aim to restore collective bargaining machinery. We heard those words from the previous Secretary of State in 1986, 1987, 1988 and 1989, and we have heard them from the Minister of State. When will the Government act and turn that promise into reality?

The Government are quickly turning an interim, temporary arrangement into a permanent arrangement. I suspect that teachers will simply not believe the Secretary of State and the Minister of State when they say that this year is the final year for the interim advisory committee. Teachers have good reasons for that. The previous Secretary of State, backed up by Conservative Members, at a stroke wrote away teachers' democratic rights to bargain with their employer, so why should they believe the Government now? Why should they believe a Government who, under section 222 of the Education Reform Act 1988, challenged the employment rights of teachers and others in the teaching professions? Why should they believe a Government who take away from workers at GCHQ the right to belong to a trade union? Why should they believe a Government who, in consecutive Employment Acts, have taken away from workers rights that are enjoyed throughout the rest of western Europe? Why should they believe a Government who so passionately and dogmatically resist the social charter? This is a Government whose record on employment rights stinks, and that is why teachers simply do not believe them.

What we want to hear from the Minister of State is not just a name or an objective but what the hon. Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves) said, a real commitment and a real promise that this is the last occasion on which teachers will have their pay fixed by the Secretary of State. We want to hear a real commitment to the restoration of collective bargaining.

We shall oppose the order in the Division tonight and make one final promise to the teachers: in two years, when there is a Labour Government, we shall restore collective bargaining to teachers.

12.56 am

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): We have had an interesting debate and I have noted with pleasure the number of hon. Members who have made a contribution this evening. It has been interesting not only because we have heard from several hon. Members who represent London constituencies and who have expressed their concerns about the situation of teacher supply, recruitment and retention in the London area, but because we have also heard from colleagues of all parties who have been teachers in the past.

At the outset, I should say that I hope that all hon. Members will vote for the order, if for no other reason, for the very good reason that without a clear vote for the order, the recommendations that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will receive from the interim advisory committee will not be able to pass through the House and into teachers' salaries next year, which would be a great mistake. Of course, many teachers throughout the country will note those hon. Members who did not wish to give them the rewards to which we believe they are entitled.

Several hon. Members have spoken about teacher morale and have made their points in various ways. Some have said that teacher morale is low because of the circumstances in which they find themselves, especially in inner cities and in London—[HON. MEMBERS: "Everywhere."] It is particularly important to realise that there are difficulties for hon. Members representing London. We have been talking with the London education authorities-to-be following the abolition of the Inner London education authority. A number of those authorities are taking the retention and recruitment of teachers extremely seriously and are making intelligent plans, such as those to which the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) referred, including recruiting married women back into the profession.

Like several of my ministerial colleagues, I spend a considerable amount of time in schools talking to teachers about their conditions and about the new national curriculum and many of the things coming into schools at present. When one discusses with teachers the introduction of the national curriculum and of local management schemes, one finds a great deal of enthusiasm for the new ways in which the schemes are going to be taken on in their schools. They recognise the great improvements for the children of this country from the introduction of the national curriculum and the ability to run their own schools with their own budgets. They see possibilities in that for the schools to achieve better value for their budgets and for better resourcing, because they are managing their schools as governors and teachers.

When it comes to considering the interim advisory committee and the discussions that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and his predecessor have had with the teacher unions, it has been said that we have not been moving very fast. I must point out to the Opposition that discussions have taken place for a number of months about, for example, the Green Paper published for discussion with the unions. That document made important proposals for a teacher negotiating group that gave some rights to the Government to intervene should that group not reach satisfactory conclusions.

After extensive discussions with the teacher unions over a considerable time, it was not possible for the unions to agree. For that reason, a new set of proposals were put to the teacher unions and to the local education authority employers earlier this year. My right hon. Friend has already said that those proposals included the possibility of a new negotiating body composed of the unions and local education authority representatives, which might also include Government participation. Another proposal related to local negotiations. I note that my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, South-West (Mr. Madel) warmly welcomed the possibility of introducing some form of local negotiation. My hon. Friend and others have recognised the difficulties encountered in the home counties and in London in recruiting as successfully as other less costly parts of the country. The third possibility related to some form of review body.

Those various proposals are currently under discussion by the unions and the employers, and they are showing considerable interest in them. My right hon. Friend wants those talks to reach a satisfactory conclusion. Although he has been in office for only a relatively short time, he has already managed to conclude a complete round of discussions with the interested parties. That shows conclusively that he is extremely interested in making progress on this matter. Hon. Members must therefore accept the good faith that he has demonstrated.

My right hon. Friend, other Ministers and myself have been accused tonight of under-estimating and under-valuing teachers. My right hon. Friend has gone to great lengths to demonstrate his genuine belief that teachers are doing an excellent job.

My hon. Friend the Member for Great Yarmouth (Mr. Carttiss) asked about appraisal. My right hon. Friend asked the teachers if they would postpone the introduction of appraisal because he understands the pressures to which our teachers are now subject with the introduction of the national curriculum and local management schemes. That request was not made because my right hon. Friend does not want appraisal to be introduced—he knows full well that the teachers are anxious for such appraisal to be introduced. As soon as the national curriculum and the local management schemes are operating, it will be possible to introduce the appraisal scheme. I believe that all hon. Members want that.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) noted the letter that had been signed by the six leaders of the teacher unions. We are glad that those unions have agreed on at least three points in that joint letter. That letter is significantly briefer than the individual representations from those unions to my right hon. Friend. Therefore, we must continue to have discussions. We shall have those discussions in good faith, and I hope that the House will vote for the order.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 221, Noes 181.

Division No. 9] **[12.3 am**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Page, Richard
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thurnham, Peter
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Greg Knight.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)

Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Frank Cook.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act 1987 (Continuation) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 7th November, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.

PETITIONS

Wages Councils

12.15 am

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): I wish to present a petition on behalf of about 8,000 people in Gateshead and other parts of the county of Tyne and Wear who wish to protest against the proposal to abolish the wages councils. The petitioners are concerned at the large number of people in the north-east who have to live on very low wages, below the Council of Europe decency threshold, and who have fewer employment rights than people in virtually every other country of the Community.

The petition reads:

> Wherefore your petitioners pray that your Honourable House urges the Secretary of State for Employment to withdraw the proposals on the abolition of the wages councils and work towards the introduction of a basic minimum wage and an extension of current Employment Protection in line with TUC agreed policies.

To lie upon the Table.

Broadcasting (Deaf People)

12.16 am

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): I seek to present a petition signed by 650 people, not all of whom are my constituents, but all the signatures were collected by my constituents. The petitions asks for more access to television for deaf people through the use of teletext. The part of the petition to which I draw particular attention is:

> Wherefore your petitioners pray that your Honourable House will ensure that legislation be passed placing an obligation on television channel operators to make their programmes more accessible to deaf people by using teletext, subtitles, sign language or other means, and to reach complete coverage by a fixed date.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

12.18 am

Mr. Iain Mills (Meriden): I should be most grateful to be allowed to present not one but two petitions, both on behalf of those who would like better access to the entertainment and interest of television but who are deaf.

The first petition has been presented to me by Mr. Austin Reeves of Balsall Common who, despite the handicap of deafness, is secretary to the Deaf Broadcasting Association and a tireless worker on behalf of those who try to achieve better facilities for deaf people. I have supported his work for many years.

The second petition is from Mrs. Lister of Knowle in my constituency, whose son Jonathan prompted her to take tireless trouble to ensure that there are so many signatures that I hold two huge bundles of thousands of them. The petition reads:

> Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House will ensure that legislation be passed placing an obligation on the television channel operators to make their programmes more accessible to deaf people by using teletext, subtitles, sign language or other means and to reach complete coverage by a fixed date.

Adding a final thought about the coverage of this House on television, I beg leave to present the petitions.

To lie upon the Table.

12.19 am

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): I am pleased to present a petition, which is signed by my constituents and others, on behalf of the deaf and the hard of hearing. It bears more than 500 signatures, and urges that the 4 million of our fellow citizens who have little or no hearing should be able to enjoy television programmes through the far greater provision of teletext subtitling and sign language to accompany programmes. The advent of television in the House emphasises the need for such facilities, and the forthcoming broadcasting Bill provides an opportunity to oblige the BBC and television companies to provide it.

The petition reads:

> Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House will ensure legislation be passed placing an obligation on television channel operators to make their programmes more accessible to deaf people by using teletext subtitles, sign language or other means, and to reach complete coverage by a fixed date.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Homelessness (West Yorkshire)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

12.20 am

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): I wish to highlight the lack of awareness shown by the Government of homelessness outside London and the south-east. I do not begrudge a penny that is used to alleviate homelessness wherever it occurs.

I draw the Minister's attention to the excellent report that has been produced by Shelter in Yorkshire and Humberside, which is entitled "Housing Myths—Northern Version". By using Government and local authority statistics, Shelter firmly exposes the myth that there is no homelessness in the north. In 1988, almost 9,500 households were accepted as homeless by local authorities in the Yorkshire and Humberside region. In west Yorkshire alone, there were 4,551, and more than 12,000 presented themselves as homeless. These figures relate only to households eligible for housing under the Housing Act 1985, which places a responsibility on councils to house those who are homeless and in priority need. I believe that the definition set out in the Act is inadequate and needs redefining.

In the local authority of Calderdale, which comes within my constituency, 271 households were accepted as homeless in 1988, yet 1,158 presented themselves as homeless. The director of housing, Mr. Brian Fairclough, said:

> "For every homeless person known to the authority, there are at least twice as many who we do not know about. Most young single homeless do not show up on the statistics, and nobody knows exactly how many there are."

We know, however, that in the past five years homelessness has doubled in Calderdale, while in the country as a whole it has taken 10 years to double. That is a worrying trend by any yardstick. In the past 12 months there has been a increase of over 20 per cent. Even more worrying is the fact that, during July, August and September, 281 single-parent or parent-with-children households were recognised as homeless. That is an increase of 17 per cent. on the previous quarter.

These figures expose the myth that homelessness is only a big city problem. Most housing experts recognise that that is so. In its briefing on the Autumn Statement, the Institute of Housing stressed that areas other than London and the south-east needed resources. I contend that that means areas such as west Yorkshire.

There is a growing national problem and local councils find it increasingly difficult to deal with it. At the beginning of 1988, 43 per cent. of homeless households, as accepted by councils, were living outside the inner cities. In Calderdale, as I am sure that the Minister is aware, there is 75 per cent. owner-occupation. That is a higher than average percentage, because there is much low-cost terrace housing in the area. Also, we are faced with the same problem as many other authorities in that we have been badly hit by the right to buy and by Government restrictions on council building. That has led to a shrinking of housing stock at an affordable rent. As a result, people on low incomes are stretching themselves to the limit in order to buy. Those are the very people who can least deal with the current high interest rates, and will end up as part of the homeless statistics.

Until now, many people have sold up before repossession because they have seen a way out and tried to find rented accommodation or some other alternative. Also, building societies have been tolerant and have acted responsibly. However, time is running out. Building societies are answerable to shareholders and accountants and there is a time bomb ticking away of which we are not yet aware. The Government are betraying the very people they say they want to help. With the high number of home owners in my constituency and the high incidence of low pay, I am sure that the Minister will understand why I am worried about the problem.

Young homeless people are totally ignored by the Housing Act 1985 and by the Government's review of homelessness. When that group become homeless, they are not eligible for rehousing. No matter how caring a local authority is, they are not a priority under the 1985 Act. Recent research carried out for the Government showed that, on average, single people under 26 represent only 7 per cent. of acceptances by local authorities.

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): Is my hon. Friend aware of the direct consequence in terms of homelessness for young people in West Yorkshire of the provisions of the Social Security Act 1988? Is she aware of the growing concern among social workers and probation officers in West Yorkshire about the increasing number of young people—male and female—who become involved in prostitution because they have no other means of survival?

Mrs. Mahon: I also attended a briefing at which social workers told us about that problem. I know that my hon. Friend has had to deal with such cases in his surgery. It is a tragedy.

In 1988, my local authority, in partnership with Stonham housing association, put forward an imaginative scheme for the provision of furnished flats—Hebble court in Mixenden—for 16 to 25-year-olds. Some of them were ex-offenders and the scheme had the support of the Home Office. That scheme has now collapsed because of Government cuts in benefit. That confirms the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe).

The targeted age groups could not afford to meet their outgoings from income support and housing benefit. It is a disgrace to have in Halifax a problem of homelessness of the young coupled with empty but usable buildings and no mechanism to bring them together. The costs of the project were economical and effective, especially when compared with the high cost of institutional care. The cost in human terms is immeasurable.

In Halifax last year the housing department estimated that there were over 1,000 young people with nowhere to live. Those are the people we know about. Many do not bother to apply to the council because they know that they do not stand a chance. It is a fallacy and it is cruel to suggest, as did the previous Secretary of State for the Environment, that they have a roof over their head and that they demand a free home. We are often talking about youngsters who have had little chance in life, who have lived in care and who do not have the support of a loving family. We may also be talking about youngsters who have been abused at home or who left the family because of some form of breakdown. It is disgraceful for a Secretary of State, who is supposedly responsible for the more vulnerable in society, to make such a remark. I should love to recommend the Minister to read the report of case studies that I have received from Shelter in West Yorkshire. It links poverty and homelessness among 18-year-olds to the Government's benefit cuts in 1988.

Earlier this month, the Government announced a £250 million package to help the homeless in London and the south-east. We welcome any help for the problem wherever it is, but it is worth pointing out that Shelter and other reputable organisations have estimated that the £250 million is enough to repair 10,000 houses only. Not a penny is coming to the north. It goes to areas where the Government are embarrassed by the visible presence of the homeless or to constituencies in the south-east of Tory Back Benchers who have got on to them. We are entitled to ask about the 9,500 homeless households in Yorkshire and Humberside. Why are they invisible? Why cannot the Government recognise the problem in Bradford, Kirklees, Leeds or Wakefield? Why do the Government think that only one part matters? They have a nerve to say that they have no intention of subsidising inefficiency. They have deliberately starved councils of money for repairing and building housing.

This year, my authority is asking for £35 million for its housing investment programme. Last year, it was granted less than £2·5 million. The local authority estimates that it will cost about £8 million to bring the stock up to date. Government policy is inadequate and disastrous. The Government should give the local authorities the resources that they need to cope. Most of all, we need the Government to recognise that a home is a fundamental right.

12.31 am

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) for allowing me to take part in this brief debate. It is inexcusable that so far the Government have not initiated a debate on the homeless crisis in Government time so that it can be given a proper airing and full consideration by Parliament. I shall highlight one feature where the interaction of social policy in the social fund is compounding the problem of homelessness because people in hostels cannot move from them.

It was encouraging that the Government's recently published homelessness review at last accepted that homelessness was caused by a shortage of homes to rent, especially for those on low incomes. The northern region has experienced a 10 per cent. rise in homelessness during 1988. It also has the highest proportion of poor quality housing. The money recently made available for the next two years will be divided between councils which will get £117 million and housing associations which will get £73 million. It will go to schemes in the London boroughs and the following districts: Essex, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire, Surrey, Oxfordshire, Hampshire, East and West Sussex, Kent and the Isle of Wight. It is difficult not to ask why none of those resources can go to West Yorkshire, which has the same needs.

In the current financial year, Leeds city council bid for permission to borrow £97·6 million for its housing investment programme. The Government approved an allocation of only £15·5 million. This year's bid document states:

"The regional office of the Department of the Environment are satisfied that last year's submission represented a comprehensive statement of needs across a

[Mr. John Battle]

> whole range of housing problems of the city and do not require repetition in detail . . . A further year, therefore, has started where it is not possible to make significant inroads into the range and scale of housing problems. If anything this lack of investment compounds the problem for the future."

It is that lack of investment, that short-termism, which is the real waste and the real test of inefficiency in the Government's policy.

The practical impact of reduced resources in Leeds has been an escalation of homelessness, to the extent that it is now estimated that 300 people are accepted as homeless each month, 150 of them young people. During the past few weeks, that number has increased as a result of relationship breakdowns and people finding themselves in difficulty with mortgage repayments because of high interest rates. Meanwhile, there has been a decrease of more than 2,000 in the number of local authority properties during the past two years. Because the housing stock is diminishing as a result of discount sales under the right to buy, there is little permanent accommodation on offer. As a result, more people have to go into the hostels in Leeds such as Brett Gardens, Richmond Court or Mount Cross.

The problem is that the pressure on temporary accommodation is such that two or three families have to share units. They even have to sleep on the floor or be put up in the play room. There are 70 families in units for 31—and that is temporary accommodation.

There is one barrier to which I want to draw the Minister's attention. It is the working of the cash-limited social fund which, in 1988, replaced single payments. The cash-limited arrangements for social fund loans and community care grants means that the local Department of Social Security office cannot make an offer of assistance, sometimes for up to six weeks, because it has spent that month's allowance. More than half the 70 families in the units for 31 have had offers of a transfer to permanent accommodation lined up by the council, but they cannot move because the grants and loans designed to help them set up a new home are not available. In other words, the DSS social fund arrangements are trapping people into temporary hostel accommodation when they could be in their own homes.

The Government should not tell us about empty properties that are kept empty by councils when the social fund makes it impossible for people to move into their own homes. The Minister should ask his counterpart in the Department of Social Security to break that logjam, otherwise care in the community will unfortunately remain one of the Government's slogans but be beggared by the inefficient working of the social fund.

Today I received a report from Leeds citizens advice bureau entitled, "Homes and Money". The covering letter said:

> "At Leeds CAB we are very concerned currently about the growth in our housing caseload, particularly in connection with homelessness and householders faced with possession proceedings. Our experience confirms that actual and threatened homelessness is an increasingly severe problem in Leeds."

My surgery experience and what my colleagues in Leeds tell me bear witness to the accuracy of that statement.

On Friday, the Yorkshire region's radio station is to have a phone-in programme on homelessness. I am informed that the Minister for Housing and Planning, the hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard), has said that he cannot take part in the questioning session but that he will make a telephoned-in statement at the end. I invite the Minister to ask the hon. and learned Gentleman to reconsider that decision. The people of West Yorkshire are not convinced that housing can be provided by the market alone. They want their questions about the right to a home being a basic need to be answered. They want the right to rent at a price that they can afford. If the Minister is not prepared to take part properly in that programme, the only conclusion that the people of West Yorkshire can draw is that the Government's housing policy is calculated, callous and indefensible.

12.38 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): The hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon), who was lucky enough to secure the debate, has spoilt her case slightly through exaggeration and a rather negative attitude, which was perpetuated by the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle).

All hon. Members recognise that homelessness, wherever it occurs, is a problem that must be tackled, and that is true whether the homeless are in west Yorkshire, or anywhere else in the country. However, fair-minded hon. Members will accept that the scale and intensity of the problem varies greatly from one place to another.

The Government have recently completed their review of homelessness and I was disappointed that there was only the most grudging acceptance on the part of the hon. Members for Halifax and for Leeds, West of the Government's conclusions in that review. It has been generally welcomed by people who do not have a party political axe to grind, and it will make a genuine contribution to solving the problems of homelessness.

One of the most striking features of that report is that it reveals that 50 per cent. of the homelessness acceptances are concentrated in 10 per cent. of the local authorities. Although statistics have to be treated with caution, it is clear that the hardest hit areas are in London and the south-east. That is why we have designated those as the pressure areas, and we shall be making an additional £250 million available over the next two years to reflect their special problems.

I can understand that hon. Members from west Yorkshire and other parts of the country are disappointed that local authorities and housing associations in their areas will be unable to bid for the additional £250 million of resources. But I hope that hon. Members will accept that, if we are to tackle the problem sensibly, we should recognise the geographical incidence of the problem and target resources accordingly.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): Will the Minister advise hon. Members from West Yorkshire and other parts of the country what level homelessness in their areas must reach before the Government will give assistance? Will the Government allow time to debate in the House the report to which he has referred and the issue of homelessness?

Mr. Chope: The Government help local authorities with problems of homelessness not just by this additional £250 million, but by the general housing investment programme and the credit approvals. The new system that we are introducing for next year is designed to target more resources to the sort of authorities represented by Opposition Members. It is nonsense to suggest that the only money provided by the Government is the £250 million. That is £250 million extra to go to the particularly hard-pressed areas of London and the south-east.

A brief examination of the relevant figures in the housing investment programme returns shows that the five local authorities in west Yorkshire recorded 4,900 homelessness acceptances in 1988-89, around 4 per cent. of the total in England. By comparison, the London boroughs of Southwark and Islington alone accounted for 4,900. The total for London and the south-east was more than 40,000. Some London boroughs are having to allocate 70 per cent. of their new lettings to homeless people, compared with a national average of 32 per cent. and an average for West Yorkshire authorities of 17 per cent. The hon. Member for Halifax quoted many statistics, but she declined to quote those. However, they show the relative scale of the problem and the ability of the respective local authorities to deal with it.

In West Yorkshire, 17 per cent. of the lettings are going to families and to other individuals accepted as homeless. In some parts of London, the figure is as high as 80 per cent. and in many boroughs it is 70 per cent. I hope that hon. Members will agree that, in the light of such comparisons, it would have been irresponsible of the Government if they had not targeted the additional resources for the homeless on the pressure areas in London and the south-east.

In the past three years, more than £139 million has been allocated to authorities in west Yorkshire for their general housing needs. Spending can also be supplemented by the ability of authorities to use capital receipts for housing purposes and additional allocations totalling nearly £19 million were made available for Estate Action to tackle problems of rundown estates and to bring vacant property back into use in the West Yorkshire area. A further £1·6 million has been allocated specifically for the homeless projects, enabling the provision of 148 units of accommodation, including 41 in hostels for the homeless.

We shall shortly be informing local authorities in West Yorkshire and elsewhere of their housing allocations for next year, in the form of their annual capital guidelines. The amounts calculated for individual authorities will, as always, take into account their responsibilities for the homeless. This year, the new capital control system will enable my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to distribute resources more accurately in accordance with housing needs, to take account of the authorities' ability to generate resources through receipts as well.

I emphasise that it is for each authority, within the guidelines and controls laid down by Government, to determine its own priorities. *[Interruption.]* If Labour Members are so concerned about the subject, I am surprised that they are spending so much time talking among themselves during my reply to the points that they have made.

Mr. Battle: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Chope: No, I will not give way now. The hon. Gentleman has not been taking any notice. I am just coming to what I understand will be a sensitive point—empty properties.

In Calderdale, where in 1988-89 there were 265 homeless acceptances, there had been 250 in 1986-87. That is hardly a massive increase. In 1988-89, there were 508 vacant properties in Calderdale—3·5 per cent. of the housing stock. That shows that Calderdale has considerable resources available to help the housing problems in the area, and has not been making sufficient use of them.

Mrs. Mahon: The Minister knows that 200 of those properties are tower blocks, and I have already explained that the Government prevented one of the blocks from being brought back into use. The council is waiting for the right to borrow to do something about the other tower block. It is cynical of the Minister to make that comment.

Mr. Chope: The Government have already allocated money to help to meet the cost of improving one of the tower blocks. Specific money was allocated for that purpose, but the local authority, which has the right to spend money as it wishes, chose to spend that money in a different way. The Government believe in giving local authorities discretion to spend their resources, but if the local authority chooses to spend its money in one way, it ill behoves it to do so and then to blame the Government for the consequences.

It is right that there are empty tower blocks in the hon. Lady's constituency, but they could be brought back into use if the local authority had the will to do so. Strong hints have been given to the local authority that an Estate Action submission on those blocks would be considered favourably by the Government, but no such application has been made. I can only assume from that that the local authority lacks the will to put its house in order.

Mr. Battle: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Chope: No, I shall not give way again; because of the time taken by Labour Members, I have little left to conclude my remarks.

The Government recognise that there is a need to ensure that help is available for people who have problems with their housing, and that includes young single people who leave home and come to London and other cities. We are currently examining the way in which various departmental policies interact, and how they might better work together and we shall make further announcements on that.

I was asked about the social fund. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Social Security has said that, if people between the ages of 16 and 18 are experiencing genuine hardship, their cases will be looked at by Ministers at the Department. Loans are available and there is little evidence to suggest that people who need and find accommodation are priced out of it. Housing benefit is widely available, and all that is needed is for proper advice to be given to people at local level——

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at ten minutes to One o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 6 December 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

SCOTTISH EPISCOPAL CLERGY WIDOWS' AND ORPHANS' FUND ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

Read the Third time, and passed.

Oral Answers to Questions

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Renaval Programme

1. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the operation of the EEC's Renaval programme in the United Kingdom.

The Minister for Industry (Mr. Douglas Hogg): The Government have submitted Renaval applications for Plymouth and Gibraltar. My right hon. Friends and I hope to be able to decide soon whether to make further applications. Our decisions have been delayed by changes in the position in Brussels.

Mr. Griffiths: The Minister may not know that I was a member of the European Parliament's regional policy and planning committee which considered this programme. We were concerned that extra help, besides normal regional fund assistance, should go to areas where traditional industries were in decline. Can the Minister confirm that the shipbuilding areas in Britain that have had the biggest job losses will receive the greatest assistance from the fund, and can he tell the House the position on Tyne and Wear?

Mr. Hogg: The position is this. I understand the concern of hon. Members about the Renaval programme. Hitherto, we have taken the view that it would be premature to make a final decision on the matter, although we have not decided against making a decision. We may make an application, but we have come to no final view. The problem is that a decision on Renaval has to be taken in the context of other objective 2 funding programmes because they impact one on the other. As soon as we can have a clear view of the whole, we shall be in a good position to make a final decision.

Consumer Credit

2. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what measures he is taking to ensure that prospective borrowers are aware of their rights and duties under consumer credit legislation.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs (Mr. Eric Forth): Regulations under the Consumer Credit Act 1974 require that consumer credit agreements include statements about the rights of consumers under the Act. It is one of the duties of the Director General of Fair Trading to provide information and advice to the public about consumer credit legislation.

Mr. French: Will my hon. Friend curb the activities of credit reference agencies that give out references on people's creditworthiness by reference not to the individual, but to the address at which the individual lives? Does my hon. Friend accept that that is a dangerous and misleading practice, and will he provide a means of redress for people whose reputations are harmed in that way?

Mr. Forth: My hon. Friend has touched on an undoubtedly difficult area. We believe that the laws and regulations in this area are generally adequate and have been so until now, but my hon. Friend is right to point out what can be a difficult area. I undertake to look at the matter again urgently and to see whether there are any methods that we could use to improve the position and to address the problems that my hon. Friend has identified.

Mr. Janner: When the Minister is looking at consumer credit legislation as it affects borrowers, will he arrange for more information to be given to people who borrow from banks so that they know, for example, that when they obtain money on an overdraft it is normally repayable on demand—most people do not know that—and that if they exceed the limit they could be charged a prodigious, unwarranted and disgraceful rate of interest of which they have had no advance notice?

Mr. Forth: The hon. and learned Gentleman will be pleased to know that new regulations on credit advertisement will come into effect next February. They will cover some of the points that he has raised, such as the use of more understandable English, and they will close certain loopholes. It is always difficult to legislate or to regulate this area in such a way as to take care of all developments. One often feels that almost as soon as one has identified one difficulty, others arise. I assure the hon. and learned Gentleman that we are constantly vigilant in this area and that we shall look carefully at the point that he has raised.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Does my hon. Friend realise that constituents of mine with children and young people in their families are very worried by the fact that they are perpetually bombarded with invitations to borrow more and more money? My wife has a great sackful of these unsolicited appeals. What regulations does my hon. Friend propose to introduce to ensure that people fully understand what they are signing up for?

Mr. Forth: I know that that causes a lot of concern. Let me say immediately that section 50 of the Consumer Credit Act 1974 prohibits the sending to minors of circulars inviting them to borrow money or to apply for information about obtaining credit, so that aspect is already dealt with. Generally speaking, it is up to lenders to assess the way in which they offer credit, and they rarely offer it to minors, although that is something we shall have to watch. In general, existing legislation covers the point adequately.

Mr. McAllion: What has the legislation done to protect and extend the rights of savers? A constituent of mine who has spent more than two years in an old people's home, during which time her deposit account at the bank remained untouched. Without her knowledge, the bank redesignated the account as dormant and reduced the rate of interest paid on it to 1 per cent. Are the banks acting within their legal powers in doing that and does the Minister think it right for banks to profiteer at the expense of old people in the despicable way that I have described?

Mr. Forth: It is quite right that the hon. Gentleman should raise an important constituency matter at Question Time, but I ask him to write to me with the details so that we can consider the case properly. I should not like to try to give an instant answer, but if he will write to me I will see what, if anything, can be done to help to remedy his constituent's grievance.

Departmental Expansion

3. **Mr. Norris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has to expand the role of his Department.

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): None, Sir.

Mr. Norris: I thank my right hon. Friend for giving exactly the sort of reply that I wanted; it was excellent. Does he agree that although from time to time his Department has an excellent role to play as an enabler, it has been an unmitigated disaster whenever it has tried to act as an intervener?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right on the latter point. I note that the Labour party policy review says:

> "The DTI's role will be to develop strategies, to identify priorities and provide the assistance, resources and organising capacity which industry will need."

Is not that the very policy that east European countries have been following until now?

Mr. Vaz: Will the Minister consider establishing a specialist unit in his Department to monitor and support the work of the British textile and footwear industries? Is he aware that in the past 10 years 380,000 jobs have been lost in those two industries? The Minister for Industry came to Leicester last Friday and was made aware of the deep concern felt by textile and footwear manufacturers about the future of their industry. May we have a unit to support that vital sector of the British economy?

Mr. Ridley: We do indeed monitor the operations of all industries, including the textile industry. It is for the industries themselves to become competitive if they are to preserve their positions, and there are encouraging signs in the textile industry. The industries have benefited from the multi-fibre arrangement over the years. People in the industry have had time to adjust and in many cases have done so successfully.

Sir Anthony Grant: Has my right hon. Friend any plans to reduce his Department's role?

Mr. Ridley: We have certain problems in our industrial performance at the moment in parts of our industrial effort where the Industrial Reorganisation Corporation, the policies of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) and intervention generally left some deep holes.

Mr. Gordon Brown: With regard to one expanded role for the Secretary of State's Department—that of providing hidden subsidies—and given that the Secretary of State said last week that there was no need to inform the European Commission, will he tell us now whether there were any discussions between British Aerospace and the Government about failing to inform Parliament and the Commission and the risks associated with that? Are there any other matters in addition to hidden subsidies that he now feels that he should disclose to the House?

Mr. Ridley: For the hon. Gentleman's benefit, I would make a distinction between hidden ongoing subsidies or even overt ongoing subsidies and the necessary deal which has to be struck to end the tyranny of state ownership of a loss-making public corporation. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the acquisition of MBB by Daimler-Benz, which involved the privatisation of a loss-making German nationalised industry. The hon. Gentleman will discover that there, too, a deal had to be struck which was well worth it in the interests of the taxpayer to get rid of that loss-maker.

Mr. Oppenheim: Are not the Opposition guilty of trying to have it both ways on this? If the Government had tried to sell the Rover Group to the highest bidder, we would have been accused of putting the group up for a free for all instead of looking after the interests of that company. That is precisely the accusation which the Labour party levelled against us in 1976 when we tried to sell the Rover Group.

Mr. Ridley: I well remember the extraordinary commotion on the Opposition Benches when it seemed possible that the Ford Motor Company might try to buy Rover. That was not a very propitious curtain-raiser for a possible public auction of that company.

Trade Performance

4. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what measures he intends to introduce to improve Britain's trade performance.

Mr. Ridley: The keys to trade performance are macro-economic policy, non-interference in the working of the market, the maintenance of open, competitive markets at home and abroad and not setting up an industrial reorganisation corporation.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: May I have a reflective reply to the following question? Would a falling exchange rate in any way help Britain's trade performance?

Mr. Ridley: It is not for me to answer for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on matters of macro-economic policy. However, the export figures in recent weeks have shown a decided tendency to improve now that the pound is at a slightly lower level than before.

Sir Hal Miller: Does my right hon. Friend also see a need to help to protect the competitive position of our manufacturing industry against the more extreme green demands, which would lead to an increase in energy prices and drive company cars off the roads of this country?

Mr. Ridley: All those factors are extremely important in maintaining the competitiveness of British industry. If we are to improve our trade deficit, it is vital that we do nothing to put British industry at a competitive disadvantage in a level playing field game with the rest of the Community and the world.

Mr. Henderson: Given the alarming £4 billion trade deficit in electronic products, and now that British Aerospace has withdrawn its interest in purchasing Ferranti, will the Secretary of State intervene to ensure that the future of Ferranti is secured through a joint venture partnership? Does he recognise that if he fails to act, Ferranti could be gobbled up by yet another hostile foreign predator with further untold damage to our balance of trade and to jobs?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman should look carefully at the trade in electronics. He will find that although our imports in that area are very large, so are our exports. That shows that in a modern sophisticated industry a heavy import and a heavy export are signs of success, not failure. With regard to Ferranti, it is for the Ferranti board to decide what action it wants to take with the various people with whom it is discussing its future. At the present time, I have no role to play in those matters.

Mr. Wells: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the programme that his Department has pioneered in Japan has produced a remarkable increase in British exports to Japan? Will he now consider a second phase to boost that successful programme so that we can increase our trade with Japan and thus substantially decrease our trade deficit?

Mr. Ridley: I agree with my hon. Friend, but there has also been a large opening up of the Japanese market in many different ways as the result of the pressures that my right hon. Friends have placed on the Japanese and other nations. The Japanese are trying hard to open their market to exporters in other countries. It is a combination of two factors. We will certainly redouble our efforts to make every facility available to British exporters to increase their share of Japanese trade.

Toys

5. **Mr. Buchan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps his Department is taking to monitor the safety of children's toys.

Mr. Forth: Local authority trading standards departments have a statutory duty to enforce the Consumer Protection Act 1987 and the toy safety regulations made thereunder. The Act provides the necessary powers for the discharge of this responsibility.

The new Toys (Safety) Regulations 1989, which implement the EC directive on the safety of toys with effect from 1 January next year, will provide more comprehensive safety measures to ensure that only safe toys are placed on the market. They will also require enforcement authorities to notify my Department of enforcement action taken under those regulations.

Mr. Buchan: It is fine that the provisions exist, but we are about 20 per cent. short of trading standards officers. That is the real problem. We are entering a period in which there is a constant television propaganda campaign for parents to buy toys. There was a disastrous case involving Kinder eggs, which are chocolate eggs with tiny inedible and poisonous toys inside them. Will the Minister ensure that there is urgent action by the Department in the form of a television campaign to warn parents?

Mr. Forth: The hon. Gentleman has raised a number of points. The number of trading standards officers is a matter for local authorities. I am sure that they will discharge their responsibility fully in that regard. My Department is organising a campaign to reach out to parents to remind them at this time of the year of what is principally their responsibility—to ensure that they purchase only safe toys for their children or relatives.

The Kinder chocolate eggs case was a tragedy. A young girl died as a result of the contents of a Kinder egg. We considered the matter carefully and agonised about what we should do. In the end, my view was that as millions were sold every year it would be wrong to seek to ban the product but that we should instead seek to reinforce precisely the hon. Gentleman's point—that parents must always satisfy themselves that anything that their young children have, use or play with is used safely and responsibly.

Mr. Buchan: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of the Minister's grossly unsatisfactory answer, I give notice that I shall seek to raise the matter on the Adjournment.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has the right to say that, but it ends supplementaries on that question.

Internal Market

6. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what additional help is being given to businesses to help them to take advantage of the internal market in 1992.

16. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what additional help is being given to businesses to help them to take advantage of the internal market in 1992.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We provide a comprehensive single market information service through our Europe Open for Business campaign, which is regularly updated and expanded. The practical assistance available through our enterprise initiative is also particularly relevant to firms preparing for the single market. In the private sector an increasing level of information and advice is being provided to help business to adapt to the liberalised European trading conditions.

Mr. Clelland: Is the Secretary of State aware that although other European countries have been forging ahead for some time with their preparations for 1992, his Department has been so dilatory that the television advertising campaign aimed at assisting British industry was arranged so late that the British taxpayer has been landed with a bill £300,000 higher than it need have been, for which the hon. Gentleman has been severely criticised by the National Audit Office? Is the hon. Gentleman further aware that if a local councillor took a similar decision he would be liable to surcharge and disqualification from office for gross negligence?

Mr. Hogg: British industry is singularly well equipped to go into the 1992 market. The developments in the hon. Gentleman's own constituency demonstrate that.

Mr. Clelland: What about the £300,000?

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Hogg: Unemployment in the hon. Gentleman's constituency has fallen in the past 12 months from 12·1 to 9·8 per cent. and there are two extremely exciting developments there—the Newcastle business park, which will create 2,000 jobs by 1991 and the Gateshead Metro centre, which will create 6,500 jobs by 1991. That shows how well the economy is equipped for 1992.

Mr. McFall: The Minister will be aware of the comments of Sir John Harvey-Jones, a former chairman of ICI, who said that only half Europe's businesses will survive and that over the next five to seven years the rest will disappear, by acquisition, by mergers or by going bust. Since the implications for big businesses and for small firms are profound, will the Minister turn his attention to the hidden agenda—or is he prepared simply to accept that in areas such as my own in Scotland small businesses on the periphery will disappear because they will be sacrificed on the altar of the Government's twisted approach to 1992?

Mr. Hogg: Yet another hon. Gentleman is allowing his imagination to run riot. As the hon. Gentleman mentioned his own area, let us look at that aspect. I am glad to say that in the past 12 months unemployment in his constituency has fallen from 15·9 to 12·6 per cent. The hon. Gentleman will be pleased, I hope, to know that in the next five years the Scottish Development Agency is planning to spend £10 million in the Leven valley, which is close to the hon. Gentleman's area. That is precisely the kind of commitment that the hon. Gentleman has urged upon us.

Mr. David Evans: I congratulate the Government on the help that they are giving to companies in the run-up to 1992, but does my hon. Friend agree that companies should also be gearing up to meet the opportunities presenting themselves in the eastern bloc and the Soviet Union? Is his Department underwriting the future on the Export Credits Guarantee Department so as to help companies in that new area?

Mr. Hogg: I certainly think that the opportunities offered by the changing situation in the eastern part of Europe are exciting and that British industry should be considering how best it can respond to the investment and trading opportunities in that part of Europe.

Mr. Tim Smith: Will my hon. Friend encourage the European Commission to give higher priority to the creation of a genuinely single market in insurance services by 1 January 1993?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend is quite right to address his remarks to that question. It is a material part of the programme and, generally speaking, we encourage the Commission to produce flat playing fields wherever possible.

Ms. Mowlam: Shall we have to wait until the arrival of the internal market in 1992 before the Minister releases for publication the ombudsman's report into the negligence of his Department in the Barlow Clowes affair?

Mr. Hogg: That goes rather wide of the question—— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Hogg: Indeed, when one thinks about it, Mr. Speaker, it goes very wide of the question. That being so, I am not going to answer it.

Mr. Favell: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is of the utmost importance to construct high-speed links to the Channel tunnel as soon as possible? Can he tell the House why the two Labour members of the King's Cross inquiry Committee did not turn up the other day, at enormous cost——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Proceedings in private Bill Committees are not discussed in the Chamber.

Mr. Favell: Can my hon. Friend confirm that the King's Cross inquiry will be conducted with maximum efficiency and speed?

Mr. Hogg: I certainly hope so, but in view of what my hon. Friend has said, I fancy that that is not entirely in my hands.

Export Credits Guarantee Department

7. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what consultations he has had regarding the future operations and funding of the Export Credits Guarantee Department.

Mr. Ridley: The interdepartmental working group of officials on the Kemp review of status options for ECGD consulted interested parties both within and outside Government. It has now submitted its report to me, and I am considering it.

Mr. Morgan: In view of that characteristic piece of masterly inactivity on the part of the Secretary of State and with Britain's trade deficit about to enter the "Guinness Book of Records", is it not true that only a lunatic or the Secretary of State, or perhaps both at the same time, would think of monkeying around with those essential support services for exporters? In particular, will he give attention to the fact that any monkeying about of the kind that he may have in mind would affect 770 jobs in Cardiff where essential services are provided for small and medium-sized export businesses—support which is vital as we approach 1992?

Mr. Ridley: I do not see why the hon. Gentleman feels that the question calls for insults. They are completely misplaced. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ridley: I suggest that the hon. Gentleman awaits the Government's decision about the Kemp report instead of trying to come to conclusions before the Government have given it the attention that it deserves. The purpose of the operation is to improve the services provided to our exporters and there is no threat to ECGD in such a course.

Mr. Grylls: Does my hon. Friend agree that as 70 per cent. of British firms do not export we need to give them maximum help and encouragement to be bold and go into the world markets to export? Is he aware that while other countries offer export credit guarantees, British firms, especially small firms, need the services of ECGD? Will he bear that in mind when he makes his decision?

Mr. Ridley: I shall most certainly bear that important point in mind. There is no question of withdrawing services for exports of goods, from large, small or medium-sized enterprises. It is a question of the status of the ECGD and its duty to perform that function.

Ms. Quin: While I understand that the Secretary of State has still to make a final decision on the matter, will he give a clear statement to the House that he does not accept the ludicrous suggestion put forward by his hon. Friends in the Treasury that the projects division of ECGD be closed down? Will he further undertake to listen carefully to industry and those who work in ECGD before making a final decision? Does he agree that, with a £20 billion trade deficit, our export efforts need to be increased, not reduced?

Mr. Ridley: I cannot respond to both parts of the hon. Lady's supplementary question. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?"] She asked me not to foreclose my eventual decision on the matter and at the same time to foreclose on the question of the projects group by deciding against the zero option. I promise the House that I shall make a decision abundantly clear as soon as possible, and I hope that that will be before long.

Mr. Cran: Does my right hon. Friend recognise that considerable disquiet has been caused by the Government's delay in coming to a decision? In coming to a decision, will he consult the recent important study by Northern Engineering Industries which shows the effect down the line of project finance, which we now hear that the Treasury is against?

Mr. Ridley: We have not had the working group's report for long. My hon. Friend will find that the delay in giving the House a decision on the matter is not at all long. I fully understand and hear what he says about the projects group and the importance of capital goods industries to the north-east. It is certainly one of the factors that we shall take into account.

Golden Shares

8. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the golden shares for which he has responsibility and state his policy towards the use of these shares.

Mr. Ridley: I hold special shares in British Telecom, Cable and Wireless, British Aerospace, Rolls-Royce, British Steel, and Jaguar. Decisions on using the rights attached to each of these shares depend on the particular circumstances of each company.

Mr. Rooker: Can the Secretary of State tell the House whether he will dispose of any of those golden shares in the same way as he is to dispose of the golden share in Jaguar, thereby giving the company away to Ford? *[Interruption.]* Of course it was given away. Was that done in order to stop Ford complaining about being shut out of the secret negotiations with British Aerospace over the Rover group? He cannot object to Ford having Rover because he has given it Jaguar.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman should realise that there are two sorts of special share. There are those which are timeless, run for an indefinite period and seek to protect national security interests of one sort or another. The other is time limited. Of the companies that I mentioned, the two which have time-limited special shares are British Steel and Jaguar. The point of those special shares is to protect an industry which is trying to convalesce from the mauling it has had as a publicly owned industry for a few years until it can stand up on its feet and compete in the market. That condition of recovery for Jaguar was abundantly met when I decided to waive the gold share.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) said that we threw the company to the wolves, but the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), who was there at the time, did not much like that expression. I must quarrel with the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker). The price of £1·6 billion, which Ford paid for Jaguar, cannot be described as giving it away.

Mr. Roger King: Is my right hon. Friend aware that notwithstanding the rather Neanderthal approach of some Opposition Members, others, namely the hon. Member for Coventry, North-West (Mr. Robinson), have welcomed the opportunity that the Ford-Jaguar arrangements provide? My right hon. Friend's speedy decision on the question of the golden share has enabled that company to join forces with Ford to provide us with a strong element in the British motor car industry.

Mr. Ridley: I am fully prepared to accept what my hon. Friend says, although I do not think that it is for me to comment on the merits or otherwise of any particular bid or takeover. I am sure that both alternatives before Jaguar should have strengthened it and that is a great tribute to the performance of the Jaguar management until now. I do not particularly like special shares because they put one in a position where one might have to make a choice which could be said to be partial. I am more prejudiced against them having discovered that the Labour party is thinking of using them for its nefarious purposes if it ever gained power.

Mr. Hoyle: So that we might have some guidance on future policy, will the Secretary of State tell us what discussions, consultations or assurances he received from Ford prior to waiving the golden share about manufacturing in this country, research and development, and the preservation of the Jaguar mark? What consultations has he had with Ford since waiving the share?

Mr. Ridley: I wish I could have an opportunity to give the hon. Gentleman guidance on a whole range of matters. He certainly needs it. The answer to his question is none.

Mrs. Currie: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is about time in this trading country that we stopped being so hostile to inward investment? Is he aware that my constituents in south Derbyshire work happily for the Swiss company of Nestlé and for the Swedish company of Asea Brown Boveri and that we are about to welcome a Japanese company? I honestly do not believe that my constituents in Rolls-Royce are all that bothered either way about the golden share held by my right hon. Friend. Is not a real golden share, and the only one worth having, the share in prosperity that is brought by these companies and this investment to my region and this country?

Mr. Ridley: I should like to agree with my hon. Friend that the role played by inward investment into this country from overseas has begun to fill some of the industrial gaps left by the ravages of the Socialist Government when they tried to have an industrial strategy.

Northern Development Company

9. **Mr. Trotter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to be able to announce the level of his financial support for the Northern Development Company for 1990.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I expect to announce the levels of grant in aid which will be awarded to each of the regional development organisations, including the Northern Development Company, for the financial year 1990-91, in March 1990.

Mr. Trotter: When my hon. Friend comes to consider the funding of the NDC, will he give due regard to the great value to the region of the excellent work performed by it in promoting the region both at home and overseas? Will he further give regard to the commendable level of support which it receives locally from industry and authorities in the region?

Mr. Hogg: Most certainly. I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend for the help that he has given to the NDC and for the part that he played in setting up that organisation. He will be pleased to know that, over the years, funding has steadily increased. For example, in 1981-82 funding was £230,000, but in 1989-90 it is £1,182,000, inclusive of core funding.

Mr. Caborn: The Minister gave his usual non-answer. What does the Secretary of State have in mind for English Estates? Incidentally, in 1936, the right hon. Gentleman's father was one of the first directors of English Estates and it is evident that he had more vision than his son, especially as press reports suggest that it is about to be privatised. That privatisation would be a further blow to the northern region because English Estates has played a significant role in the development of science parks and technology transfer centres. Those developments are sorely needed if we are to get manufacturing back on to a competitive edge so that we can start to reduce the £20 billion trade deficit.

Mr. Hogg: I have a very high regard for the work of English Estates, but the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I say that if he wants to ask a question about English Estates it would be a good idea to do a bit of homework and table a question. We are now talking about the Northern Development Company, which is a different thing altogether. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman appears to be unaware of that difference and I find it remarkable that such a person should be sitting on the Front Bench of the Labour party.

Mr. Jopling: Is my hon. Friend aware that the NDC does not give the appearance of having much more than a polite interest in the affairs that it is supposed to overlook in Cumbria? Before he starts giving it a whole lot of money will he try to extract an undertaking from it that it will demonstrate a more positive approach to the problems of Cumbria?

Mr. Hogg: Having had the privilege of serving under my right hon. Friend when he was Chief Whip I can think of nobody more competent than he to remind NDC of that. I look forward to the discussion that I am sure will take place between NDC and my right hon. Friend.

Consumer Protection

11. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to introduce new legislation or regulations on consumer protection.

Mr. Forth: We intend to improve the protection given to consumers in a number of ways, including the introduction of an order under the Prices Act 1974, as amended, on price indications, and unit pricing about which we are currently engaging in public consultation, and changes to other legislation affecting consumers' interests.

Ms. Armstrong: What steps is the Minister taking to try to implement the recommendations of the National Consumer Council on product guarantees? Is he considering following the practice in the United States where consumers are given a guarantee that if a major purchase breaks down and is not satisfactorily repaired a full replacement is supplied?

Mr. Forth: I am, of course, giving close and careful consideration, as I always do, to the recommendations by the National Consumer Council. Although I yield to none in my admiration for the United States I do not believe that we should always seek to copy what our friends in the United States do. Although I shall consider carefully the recommendations of the National Consumer Council, I have yet to make up my mind about whether they would be beneficial to our consumers.

Mr. David Shaw: Does my hon. Friend agree that the best way to provide consumer protection is to have a proper degree of competition between the companies that provide the goods and services consumed by the public? Surely it is competition and free enterprise that provide good consumer protection.

Mr. Forth: I have enormous sympathy with what my hon. Friend says. I am sure that if we look carefully at these matters we shall see that consumers in the West under capitalism have enjoyed a much greater degree of consumer protection and benefit than their opposite numbers behind what we used to call the iron curtain. Therefore, the best possible approach is the one that we are now taking, which is to temper the advantages and benefits of the market and competition with a light regulatory touch.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: In view of the Minister's direct responsibility for consumer protection, will he be contacting the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to urge him to make available to the consumer information regarding the safety of the use of microwave cookers?

Mr. Forth: The hon. Gentleman has wasted his opportunity because, as he well knows, my right hon.

Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will shortly be at this Dispatch Box giving a full and comprehensive statement on the matter.

Mr. Barry Field: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the joys of the market place is the ever-changing perspective of the need for consumer protection, as with the levelling off of the housing market? Does he agree that now that the frothiness has been taken away, the need to legislate against estate agents has been reduced?

Mr. Forth: As my hon. Friend knows, I have asked the Director-General of Fair Trading to look carefully at estate agency and its business practices, and to come up with recommendations. When he reports to me early in the new year, as I have asked him, I will look, as always, most carefully at his recommendations to see whether we can agree on the best way forward.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: Does the Minister accept that public confidence in any new legislation to protect the consumer is severely dented by his failure to implement current legislation? A young girl died on 5 November after swallowing part of a toy in an egg like the one I have in my hand. That was the second such death and the manufacturers are withdrawing the egg. Consumer protection officers have asked for it to be banned, and yet despite that it is on sale in large quantities in hundreds of thousands of shops throughout the country. Why does not the Minister use his powers under section 13 to ban the toy altogether?

Mr. Forth: I slightly regret the tone and terms with which the hon. Gentleman has presented the matter to the House, but I shall give him a full answer. As he well knows —or perhaps he does not—the enforcement of existing laws is a matter for the trading standards officers who do an excellent and superb job in enforcing consumer protection laws at local level. In this case, which one of his hon. Friends raised earlier, we looked carefully at the matter and were affected by the death of the young child. However, on balance, given that the product has been on sale for many years in this country and throughout Europe —millions of them are sold every year and its packaging contains a warning—I took the difficult decision that the death did not justify banning the product. I did so mainly because the child's tragic death was caused by the ingestion of a small part of the egg's contents. Many other products and toys with small parts are available in the market place. If we were to start banning every product that could be swallowed by a child, there would be very few toys left in the market. This is primarily a matter for parents and I am sure that all parents are aware of the potential danger to children of small items. On that basis, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept that we look at all such cases most carefully and, in this case, made a difficult—I believe the right—decision.

Takeovers and Mergers

13. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress is being made within the European Commission in agreeing Communitywide powers to regulate cross-border takeovers and mergers.

Mr. Ridley: At the 23 November Internal Market Council, major progress was made in negotiations on the proposed EC merger control regulation setting out Community powers to regulate certain EC mergers. Agreement was reached in principle on a number of important issues. Discussion will be resumed at the Council on 21 December.

Mr. Taylor: Will my right hon. Friend accept congratulations for the work that his Department has done to speed progress in European co-operation towards achieving the 1992 programme in competition policy and other matters such as insurance services? Will he confirm that the French have dropped their requirement for an industrial element in this policy as opposed to our desire for competition principles to be predominant? Has the Commission decided satisfactorily on the degree of flexibility in referrals for smaller countries?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and I can confirm that good progress was made at the last Council. I am hopeful—but not certain—that an agreement will be reached during this Presidency. We can be satisfied with the criteria for the Communitywide mergers to be considered by the Commission, which are almost entirely on competition grounds.

On the possibility of smaller nations with no mergers control machinery inviting the Commission to consider mergers betwen the thresholds of 2 billion and 5 billion ecu, we have a satisfactory formula which will allow the Commission to take remedial action only in the smaller member state that makes the application in the first place.

Mr. Ron Brown: Whether the House is for or against the EEC—I am certainly against it—can the Secretary of State tell me exactly what the Government are doing to protect Ferranti, bearing in mind the predators within and outside this country who intend to take it over and asset strip it? That means that jobs will go and a major asset will be reduced to ruins both north and south of the border. Are the Government doing anything about that? Will the Government act as a guarantor for British industry or will they just sit back and listen?

Mr. Ridley: I think that everything in that supplementary question was out of order and unacceptable—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Batiste *rose*——

Mr. Hood: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Am I right in thinking that you are the only person who can rule whether something is in or out of order in the House and not a Minister from the Dispatch Box?

Mr. Speaker: If I had thought it out of order, I would have said so.

Mr. Batiste: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is an important strategic need to develop large transcontinental companies across Europe in many of the important industries of tomorrow? In order for those companies to emerge, is there not a need for a coherent and consistent takeovers and mergers policy across Europe? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that he is wholly committed to the creation of such a regime?

Mr. Ridley: I do believe that the regime—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ridley: I believe that the regime in Europe should put as its first priority the preservation of competition, both in distinct markets and in the Community market as a whole. It is more important that there should be competition than that we should seek to construct large European champions in any industry. I believe that there is room for both, but competition must come first.

Mr. Riddick: Once the European countries have hammered out an agreement on this, will my right hon. Friend confirm that the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in this country will not carry forward its unfortunate practice of investigating whole industries where companies are competing unless there is clear evidence that prices are being fixed or that the companies are following other incorrect trade practices? Will he stop the MMC from producing grand bureaucratic designs for those industrial sectors as it did with the brewing industry?

Mr. Ridley: The subject matter of this question has been Communitywide mergers of assets in excess of 5 billion ecu. Of course it is true that the Monopolies and Mergers Commission is also asked to carry out investigations into situations of imperfect competition. Those investigations are agreed by myself or, in the case of the beer report, by my predecessors. It would be wrong not to turn the spotlight on uncompetitive aspects of the particular industry under consideration. We should continue to have that power. I am sure that my hon. Friend will have views on the beer report that he might wish to express when the orders come before the House.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) raised a point of order about the Secretary of State not being allowed to decide which questions are in order in the House, and you indicated your agreement. Surely the Secretary of State cannot brush aside a question by declaring it out of order? He should apologise to the House for usurping your job; otherwise, any Minister could ignore questions.

Mr. Speaker: I have said endless times before that I am not responsible for what is said in answer to questions. I said that I did not judge the question asked by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Brown) out of order.

Japanese Market

15. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent representations he has received regarding access for British exports to the Japanese market.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) on 1 November. In the first 10 months of this year our exports to Japan increased in value by 30 per cent.

Mr. Yeo: Does my hon. Friend agree that, given level playing fields in the markets of Japan and elsewhere, plenty of British exports such as Scotch whisky and financial services are world beaters? As we allow free access to our market for the benefit of British consumers, will he do everything that he can to ensure full reciprocation in Japan and other countries?

Mr. Hogg: I agree with everything that my hon. Friend has said. My hon. Friend the Prime Minister pressed the Prime Minister of Japan vigorously on this point, and Japanese markets are being substantially liberalised. I have already mentioned the increase in exports in the first 10 months of this year. Last year, I am glad to say, there was an increase of 17 per cent.

My hon. Friend referred to the Scotch whisky market. He will be pleased to know that whisky sales between last August and April of this year increased by 102 per cent.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: The Minister will know that that 102 per cent. increase is greatly appreciated, not least in my constituency, in which there are 43 distilleries. What specific action is he taking to ensure that the advance achieved over the past year will be enhanced by finally breaking down all barriers against Scotch whisky in the Japanese market?

Mr. Hogg: I should like to have said that I had the hon. Lady in mind when I gave the figure but that would not be wholly true. She is right to be concerned. The problem relates to deception by look-alikes. The hon. Lady will be pleased to know that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister strongly pressed the Japanese Prime Minister on the need to take action to prevent deception by look-alikes in the Japanese market and she was able to obtain considerable reassurances from him on that point.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Does my hon. Friend agree that one way of getting more products into the Japanese market is to make British products more competitive? Under a previous Conservative Government there was a 6 per cent. payroll tax, in the form of employers' national insurance; under the next Labour Government it was 13 per cent., and it is still too high in the United Kingdom, at 10·5 per cent. Will my hon. Friend talk to the Chancellor about reducing it is soon as possible?

Mr. Hogg: As so often, my hon. Friend is right. The Labour party has learnt nothing on this sort of matter. For example, it proposes a payroll tax, echoing the errors that it committed in the past.

Citizens Advice Bureaux

17. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions he has had with the citizens advice bureaux on the funding requirements in 1990-91 of their comprehensive advice service.

Mr. Forth: The funding of individual citizens advice bureaux is a matter for local decision, and my Department is not involved in those discussions. I have however met representatives of the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux and of Citizens Advice Scotland in recent months and among the topics discussed was their funding requirements.

Mr. Davies: Will the Minister take this opportunity to express his appreciation of the invaluable work carried out by CABs in giving free and confidential advice to members of the public? Will he acknowledge that the CABs are now dealing with a vast increase in the number of inquiries about, for example, unemployment benefit, health and social security payments, cuts in housing benefit and now problems about debt repayment following the increase in interest rates? Given that many of those problems stem directly from the Government's social and economic policies, does he think that he has a moral responsibility to ensure adequate and continuing funding for the CABs?

Mr. Forth: I certainly join the hon. Gentleman in praising citizens advice bureaux all over the country for their marvellous work in advising people who come to them for advice on a range of matters. I remind the hon. Gentleman that the Government have funded the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux to the tune of £9·9 million this year, an increase from less than £2 million 10 years ago. That demonstrates the Government's recognition in funding as well as praise, which I am happy to give to the work of the national association. I emphasise that, as the hon. Gentleman well knows, the funding of local bureaux has always been and remains a matter for local authority decision. Local authorities can amply take care of that and I expect them to do so.

Mr. Mallon: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I shall take the point of order later.

Microwave Ovens

3.30 pm

Dr. David Clark (South Shields) *(by private notice)*: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he would make a statement on the list of models of microwave ovens which failed to reach the required safety standards in tests undertaken recently by his Department; and what proposals he has to inform the 8 million owners of microwave ovens of the details.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Gummer): Last summer I was informed of the results of tests on five microwave ovens carried out by my Department. These indicated that some ovens, when operated in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions, did not always perform sufficiently consistently to kill the bacteria in the food. I therefore announced a larger test programme to cover all the most popular brands.

The day before yesterday I received the first facsimile copy of the report on the programme, which covered 102 ovens and 70 different models. Two thirds of these performed satisfactorily, but the remainder gave rise to a range of different concerns. I provided copies of the report to the microwave working party, which includes representatives of consumers and manufacturers, published it in the afternoon of the day I received it and placed, a copy in the Library of the House. At the same time, before there was any request from the Opposition or from any other quarter, I called in the manufacturers' representatives and insisted that they make available a list of the ovens tested, together with the advice and new instructions which would ensure that the ovens would perform properly.

I was pressed publicly to give a list of those ovens but I made it clear that such a list, without the detailed information and advice, would be of no use. I announced that the manufacturers would produce this information as rapidly as possible and, I hoped, before the weekend. The house will be pleased to know that the full list of every oven tested, together with these updated instructions is being published by the manufacturers this afternoon, that is, within two days of my receipt of the report.

Anyone who has a microwave oven will be able to check against the list and see what steps, if any, are needed to ensure that food is fully cooked. The manufacturers have also agreed to rush through updated instruction literature, where that is necessary, so that customers will be able to get the new instructions to keep with their machines.

The Association of Manufacturers of Domestic Electrical Appliances—AMDEA—has further agreed that all its members will ensure that new microwave ovens will meet the higher standards which the tests that my Ministry carried out have shown to be necessary. I promised all that on Monday.

As Minister with responsibility for food, my first responsibility is the protection of the health of the public. That is why I insisted upon this research. That is why I wanted the earliest possible results and the earliest possible publication. Today the House will recognise that we have been able to get the earliest possible advice to the public. By seeking co-operation and not confrontation, this whole programme has been completed faster and the public have been more fully informed. As a result, the information that I promised on Monday, a promise that I repeated on Tuesday, has been delivered on Wednesday.

Dr. Clark: I am glad—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a matter of great interest to our constituents.

Dr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am glad that, at last, we have managed to drag the Minister to the Dispatch Box to make a statement—*[Interruption.]* I remind Conservative Members that the Minister had refused to make a statement to the House. He has now given us the information we requested only as a result of my private notice question.

I am pleased that the Minister has changed his mind since his broadcast this morning, when he gave a completely different answer. Why does he think it right that the manufacturers should publish the results of a Government study? Why do not the Government publish their own independent results? Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that the simple reason for the delay in persuading manufacturers to make an announcement was his agreement with them that, to save the Government money, the manufacturers would provide the models on the understanding that no results would be published about any models that failed?

Will the Minister make it clear—and it is his job, not that of the manufacturers—which models are safe and operative because it is vital that the firms survive and that the jobs of those working in the industry are maintained? Is it not time that the Minister began to speak up for the consumer, and not the manufacturer?

Mr. Gummer: It is a little difficult to understand how I have changed my mind when all that I have done is what I announced on Monday I would do. I had the manufacturers in my office at exactly the moment that I published the report and at exactly the time that the working party meeting ended. It had been sitting from 10.15 am on the day that I received the report, and the manufacturers, together with representatives of the consumer, were present at that meeting.

There is no question of any delay. Indeed, I congratulate my scientists on the speed with which they have moved. The report was published by the Government on Monday because it was a Government report. A statement on how the models should be used is being published by the manufacturers because it is their models that are involved and they are updating their information.

The hon. Gentleman's third question shows that he has come to understand that, by unnecessarily stirring up people's fears, jobs have again been endangered by the Labour party. It is precisely because I put the consumer first that the document has been published today. That is why I did not merely seek headlines, as the Opposition have done.

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): Would my right hon. Friend care to say a word about the role of the Consumers Association in this matter? I have looked up some recent reports. Is it not extraordinary that the consumer magazine "Which?" has at no time mentioned minimum temperatures in relation to microwave ovens? From its statement yesterday, it might be thought that the association was more interested in promoting itself than in the interests of consumers.

Mr. Gummer: I think that the my hon. Friend should be rather careful about mentioning the Consumers Association on this occasion. It turns out that the one oven that proved so unsatisfactory that it had to be withdrawn was one of the "best buys" recommended by the association after its tests. I note that the association said:

> "When you buy a microwave, choose one which comes out well in our tests for cooking and defrosting: we take evenness into account."

I suspect that the association's concern in this instance has been motivated more by its history than by any desire to protect the consumer.

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): I congratulate the Minister on his rapid climbdown. I heard him give a very different account on the one o'clock news yesterday; as always, he instinctively took the manufacturers' view, taking consumers into consideration only under pressure from my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark).

What provision do the Government intend to make for the repair of defective microwave ovens? Two million are now known to be defective in households up and down the country, and one third of cook-chill foods are contaminated with listeria. Microwave ovens are now posing a danger in every one of those homes.

Mr. Gummer: I find it difficult to see how the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) can have forced me into doing something, given that I said what I was going to do before he had even heard about the problem. Let me tell the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) that, admirable though his hon. Friend is in many ways, he has not been at the forefront on this occasion.

As for the hon. Gentleman's second question, he plainly does not understand what has happened. The machines themselves are, in large measure, not defective at all; the problem is simply that the instructions do not tell housewives or other consumers how to use them properly. The hon. Gentleman ought to remember that, rather than 2 million ovens being defective, a number of ovens require updated instructions, and those instructions are being given out today. The hon. Gentleman should thank my staff for the unparalleled speed with which they have moved.

Dame Janet Fookes (Plymouth, Drake): As one who is not always a friend of the Minister of Agriculture, may I congratulate him on the speed with which he has worked? I hope that he will ignore the long-winded waffle that we have heard from Opposition Members. Can he recall a time when the Labour Government worked with such speed, or to such effect?

Mr. Gummer: I thank my hon. Friend. In such circumstances it is necessary to make a choice: do we wish to serve the consumer's needs or not? Serving the consumer's needs in this case meant obtaining the co-operation of all involved, and as a result not a single oven that was on the list is not now covered by up-to-date instructions. That was very speedy action. Any hon. Member who wants to look at that list need only visit the Library of the House, where I hope that it has been placed by now.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): Nevertheless, surely the Minister accepts that the public will find it extraordinary that his first reaction was to go to the manufacturers for his information rather than to the consumers. Why did he reveal yesterday, in a written answer, that no tests on cooking from raw are being conducted, although it is well known that that process involves many bacterium problems in microwave ovens? Is it not high time that we had a Ministry of Food that put people first, rather than the manufacturers and the industry?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman must have thought of that question before he heard the statement. What he has said is nonsense; it bears no relationship to the facts. The report that was made to me on Monday morning was given to representatives of consumers, manufacturers and scientists at a meeting beginning at 10.15 and it was published in the afternoon. Immediately we received the details I was able to announce that the manufacturers had published them. I do not understand how much faster the hon. Gentleman feels that we could have moved. If he dislikes manufacturers generally and hates their products, he had better tell the people of Cornwall.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his eminently sensible approach to this latest attempt to drum up a hysterical outburst against a perfectly safe piece of equipment. I have owned and used microwave ovens for at least 20 years on a daily basis. I can assure my right hon. Friend that most people use microwave ovens for defrosting or warming food and that they are well aware that they simply need to stir the food while it is being cooked to ensure that it is heated through evenly.

There is a political dimension to this problem which my right hon. Friend has not mentioned. The Labour party has mounted an assault on the cook-chill industry for a long time and the London Food Commission has described cook-chill food as an assault on the food industry. By condemning the use of microwave ovens they are trying to discredit the cook-chill food industry.

Mr. Gummer: I thank my hon. Friend, with whom I do not always agree, for her kind support. It is a pity that the Opposition and others did not listen to what I said on Monday. If they had, they would not be surprised by what we have delivered on Wednesday.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Will the Minister confirm that when he lost his temper on the "Today" programme this morning he had no intention whatsoever, as he repeatedly made clear, of publishing the list of defective microwave ovens but that a series of panic phone calls took place between his officials and representatives of the industry? May I, in a bipartisan spirit, ask him to join me in commending the person who made the breakthrough possible, my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark)?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman must look back to the statement that I made on Monday. I made it quite clear that a list, with instructions, would be published. The hon. Gentleman must tell the truth and not mislead the House. I repeated on Tuesday what I had said on Monday—that the list would be published—and I have repeated it again today. The Opposition thought that they were going to win a point today. They were rather disappointed when they found that they were entirely wrong.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): Will my right hon. Friend clarify whether we are discussing a food safety

[Mr. Jonathan Aitken]

problem or a manufacturing problem? If we are discussing a manufacturing problem, of course it is correct to allow the manufacturers to publish the list of technical faults and what needs to be put right, but if we are discussing a food safety problem my right hon. Friend must understand that there will be some surprise that his Department is not taking the initiative by issuing a list of dangerous microwave ovens.

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend must see that there have been two publications. I published on Monday the report that had the results of all the tests that had been carried out. What is being published today by the manufacturers is the agreed changes in their recommendations for the operation of their machines—as my hon. Friend said, of the machines themselves. Those are their recommendations, based on our findings. The machines are, of course, those on which the manufacturers had carried out other tests. I am sure that my hon. Friend agrees that I had the responsibility of announcing and publishing the report. I also had the responsibility on Monday of insisting that the manufacturers produced the list and gave the details of the changes with which we had agreed that the machines would be made perfectly safe in use.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is an extension of Question Time, and we must now move on.

Public Expenditure (Scotland)

3.50 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about public expenditure in Scotland.

Following the announcement of the Government's public expenditure plans by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 15 November, I have now completed detailed decisions on the allocation of resources to the expenditure programmes for which I am responsible in Scotland. The total resources that I am able to deploy next year amount to just over £9·5 billion. That is £525 million greater than the latest estimate of outturn in the current year. Plans for future years will take the total to just over £10 billion in 1991-92 and to almost £10·4 billion in 1992-93, the third year of the survey.

In making my decisions on the resources to be allocated to individual programmes over the next three years I have, of course, had close regard to what are known as the "formula consequentials"—that is, the amounts that reflect the increases in the relevant comparable programmes south of the border. However, my final decisions reflect very clearly the priorities that I and my colleagues attach to particular Scottish needs and the requirements of particular programmes. The overall effect of my decisions is summarised in a table which is available from the Vote Office and will appear in *Hansard*. However, I should single out a number of key priority areas.

We are all concerned to see a significant improvement in our drinking water and in the quality of our environment. To achieve that, the Government will provide substantial additional resources, over and above the operation of the normal formula arrangements, for increased capital expenditure on water and sewerage services. That will enable me to boost capital expenditure above this year's level by more than £100 million over three years. That will take our investment level to no less than £190 million in 1992-93, almost 50 per cent. above this year's level, and provide a programme of £500 million over three years. I am sure that that will be widely welcomed.

I have also substantially increased the transport programme, by nearly £30 million next year compared with this, and made further increases which will bring the programme to over £400 million in 1992-93. That will enable us to make a significant start on the new M74 and further improvements to the M8, to the A96 and to other important trunk and local authority roads.

In housing, the resources available to Scottish Homes will be some £36 million—11 per cent.—greater than for the current year. I have substantially increased the public sector contribution to the funding of the local authorities' capital programme. The provisional net capital allocations for council housing will increase in total by £25 million, or 15 per cent. That will allow authorities to maintain the capital programme of improvement and repair of their own stock at the level per house announced this time last year, notwithstanding a forecast reduction in the level of receipts from sales. If local authorities wish to finance higher programmes of maintenance or new construction, they can increase receipts by speeding up council house sales, as Scottish Homes and the new towns have already done so successfully.

My decisions on housing also recognise the importance of the four partnership areas, Castlemilk, Wester Hailes, Whitfield and Ferguslie Park. I am including in the increases an extra £11 million for those areas, split almost equally between Scottish Homes and the local authorities' capital programmes. Those decisions on housing in Scotland clearly respond to the major priorities at the present time.

The priority that we attach to the partnerships in the peripheral estates and to similar deprived areas is underlined by the 50 per cent. increase in the urban programme in 1990-91, which will inject an additional £16 million of Government grant into projects improving the social infrastructure and employment opportunities in those areas.

The Government's strong commitment to education is underlined by my expenditure decisions. Spending on my education programme will rise by 12 per cent. next year to £439 million, and to £500 million in three years' time. Expenditure then will be more than 25 per cent. higher than it was this year. In recognition of the fact that more of our young people and mature students wish to enjoy the benefits of higher education, I am increasing support for students by £134 million over the next three years. This means that we shall be planning for an extra 6,000 students in Scotland next year, and 8,000 in 1991-92.

My spending decisions also reflect the Government's firm commitment to improving the quality of our environment and supporting the maintenance of our heritage. There will be an increase of 10 per cent. in funds for the Countryside Commission for Scotland next year and new provision of at least £3 million over the next three years for projects within the central Scotland woodlands initiative. There will be a 16 per cent. increase in historic buildings grants next year, an extra £2·5 million over three years for repairs to the Royal Scottish Academy building in Edinburgh, and a 25 per cent. increase in the National Library purchase grant to enable it to make heritage purchases and fill gaps in its collection.

Finally, I would single out health for a particular mention. The health programme is, of course, the biggest single programme within my block and it accounts for almost one third of the total resources that I have at my disposal. Indeed, expenditure per head on health in Scotland is well over 20 per cent. above the comparable level in England. I continue to attach a very high priority to the Health Service. I have therefore allocated to it an additional £220 million over this year's expenditure, which is more than the formula consequentials from comparable expenditure in England. Overall, it takes spending on the health programme in Scotland to a figure in excess of £3 billion for the first time—almost three times the size of the programme that we inherited on taking office 10 years ago. By 1992-93, the total expenditure will be fully £500 million higher than in the current year.

In addition to these key decisions on programmes, I have, as already announced, set aside resources to enable a significant start to be made in bringing business rates in Scotland into line with those south of the border. Business ratepayers will be paying £80 million less next year than would otherwise be the case.

I have also already announced details of the provision I am making for the Scottish Development Agency and the Highlands and Islands Development Board. The gross expenditure of the Scottish Development Agency will reach a new record level of £180 million next year, while the Highlands and Islands Development Board will have an additional £9 million over the next three years, in recognition of the particular problems of Caithness. Both bodies have welcomed the generous provision being made.

The decisions that I am announcing today represent good news for Scotland. They will enable us to address the real priorities and needs of the Scottish people. I commend them to the House.

Following is the table:

£ million

	1989-90 Estimated² Outturn		*1990-91 Planned Provision*		*1991-92 Planned Provision*		*1992-93 Planned Provision*	
	Net	*Gross*	*Net*	*Gross*	*Net*	*Gross*	*Net*	*Gross*
Agriculture	200	210	233	233	240	240	250	250
Industry	265	340	251	352	260	350	250	340
Water	130	133	142	143	170	170	190	190
Tourism	12	12	13	13	10	10	10	10
Transport	352	359	382	387	380	390	400	410
Housing³	621	1,109	639	1,024	650	1,140	660	1,030
OES⁴	141	211	133	194	140	200	120	180
LOPS	274	288	302	317	300	320	320	340
Education (including Sport)	390	396	439	440	490	490	500	500
Arts & Libraries	28	28	35	35	40	40	40	40
Health	2,714	2,821	2,937	3,041	3,090	3,190	3,240	3,330
Social Work	38	38	38	38	40	40	40	40
OPS	128	149	139	169	160	190	160	190
NI external financing	−60	−60	−118	−118	10	10	10	10
Sub-Total	5,233	6,033	5,560	6,268	5,980	6,780	6,190	6,860
Central Government support for local authority current expenditure	3,818	3,818	4,016	4,016	4,110	4,110	4,210	4,210
Total	9,051	9,851	9,576	10,284	10,090	10,890	10,400	11,070

Note: Owing to rounding, individual figures do not necessarily sum to the totals. Figures for 1991-92 and 1992-93 are rounded to nearest £10 million.

The figures for each service consist of central Government's own expenditure, net capital expenditure allocations and grants to local authorities and public corporations' expenditure.

[Mr. Malcolm Rifkind]

[2] The introduction of the new planning total means that it is not possible to make precise comparisons between the expenditure plans for 1990-91 and those for 1989-90. It is for this reason that the above table shows comparison between estimated outturn and plans. The estimated outturn figure for 1989-90 is higher than that shown in the Autumn Statement because it takes account of supplementary estimates and supplementary capital allocations since the figures for the Autumn Statement were compiled.

[3] Scottish Homes' estimated gross outturn, excluding NLF repayments, in 1989-90 is £313 million; the proposed figure for 1990-91 is £349 million. Local Authorities' latest net capital allocations for investment in their own stock in 1989, including the recently announced supplementary allocations, total £164 million. The provisional net allocations for 1990-91 will be £189 million.

[4] Estimated urban programe grants in 1989-90 are £32 million; the proposed figure for 1990-91 is £48 million.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): The Secretary of State has made his annual appearance as Santa Claus. He is not very convincing in the role. Certainly no self-respecting department store would employ him to dispense Christmas cheer, and I know of no grotto that would be prepared to house him.

On detailed examination the right hon. and learned Gentleman's message this year once again falls far short of the expectations of the advance publicity. Does he remember last year's confident talk of generosity, and has he seen table 1.12 in this year's Autumn Statement, which shows that general Government expenditure in Scotland is expected to fall by £100 million in real terms between 1988-89 and 1989-90? Does not the Chancellor's own testimony in this year's Autumn Statement make it clear that Opposition Members were right in the comparable argument last year?

Last year central Government support for local government expenditure was included in the individual programmes. This year it has been excluded from the tables and appears as a single unallocated block almost as an afterthought. As that total of about £4 billion in real terms will be at a standstill next year, if the figures had been allocated as they were in the past, they might well have depressed the individual spending increases that the Secretary of State is now parading. It gives some reality to the figures if we remember that central Government support for local government expenditure is expected to fall in real terms both in 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Will the Secretary of State confirm that if we take estimated outturn for 1989-90 against net planned provision in real terms for 1990-91, the increase is less than 1 per cent.? That is anything but generous and is a programme which in no sense measures up to Scotland's needs.

I am happy to welcome certain decisions on priorities such as the increased expenditure on water and sewerage services and the money allocated to the urban programme. However, there are sad omissions and, given the largely standstill budget in real terms, inevitably casualties. Expenditure on the Health Service is planned to increase, as I calculate it, in real terms by under 2·5 per cent., or less than 1 per cent. if we apply the more realistic National Health Service deflator. Will the Secretary of State accept that, having spent a morning earlier this week with some of my colleagues considering the problems of the Greater Glasgow health board, I can see no reason for taking satisfaction from the figures?

Is it not extraordinary that next year the net industry budget is cut in cash terms by £14 million and in real terms by £25 million, or 25 per cent.? Is that not an incomprehensible decision when the economic outlook is so difficult? Does the Secretary of State remember telling the House on 13 December last year that

> "Detailed provision for Scottish Enterprise will appear in my future public expenditure plans."—[*Official Report*, 13 December 1988; Vol. 143, c. 770.]

He went on to talk of an increase in next year's provision for both net and gross expenditure in the industry programme. What has happened to the provision for Scottish Enterprise? How can the cuts over the next year or two give any grounds for confidence in the Secretary of State's ability to honour his recent hints on television that he would be able to persuade the Treasury to go beyond the imposition of a standstill budget on Scottish Enterprise?

I want to ask the right hon. and learned Gentleman specifically about the problem of homelessness. The Secretary of State for the Environment recently announced a special package of £250 million for local authorities and housing associations in areas of particular need south of the border. The figures released by Shelter and local government for Scotland are frightening.

Does the Secretary of State accept that homelessness is significantly worse in Scotland than it is in the rest of the United Kingdom? If that is so, why has there been no equivalent Scottish announcement? Will he accept that it is not good enough to argue that provision has been made within the overall figure, particularly when the net increase in his contribution to the housing budget from £621 million to £639 million next year is, in real terms, an increase of only 1 per cent.? That would be a cruel mockery when gross expenditure actually falls next year by £85 million, or by £126 million in real terms. Every Opposition Member will remember the callous slight to the homeless contained in the Government's original White Paper on housing. The absence of any specific finance to tackle the problem can only confirm the accusation of complacency and indifference.

The Secretary of State's announcement does not add up or measure up to the problems of Scotland. If, as some fear, recession bites, his announcement will be seen as a tragic lost opportunity.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) referred to me as Santa Claus. I am always happy to play Santa Claus against his Scrooge. Yet again he seeks to dismiss a superb settlement as one which should be subject to criticism. He sounded today even less convincing than usual in his argument.

The Government have been so generous to Scottish local authorities that I have been required to divert money from other central Government programmes to sustain local government expenditure. The hon. Gentleman should acknowledge and appreciate that fact. I welcome his support for the announcements on water and sewerage and on the urban programme. That will be widely welcomed.

The hon. Gentleman referred to problems that he has identified in the Greater Glasgow health board. He might like to emphasise the fact that the Greater Glasgow health board is, and will remain, probably the best funded health board anywhere in the United Kingdom. If it has problems, I have no doubt that, under its present management, it will seek to rectify them at the earliest opportunity. It is worth remembering that my announcements today represent an 8·2 per cent. increase in expenditure on the Health Service, compared with the outturn in the current year. In the case of family practitioner services, an increase of no less than 13 per cent. has been announced.

The hon. Gentleman bewailed the absence of any reference to Scottish Enterprise. It would have been rather astonishing if there had been a reference to it. The Bill is yet to be introduced into the House. Scottish Enterprise will not come into effect at the beginning of the public expenditure survey. Obviously the appropriate time to determine resources for Scottish Enterprise will be when Parliament approves its establishment. As the hon. Gentleman has indicated that, unlike the rest of Scotland, he is opposed to the creation of Scottish Enterprise, he is hardly the best person to bewail the alleged lack of resources for it.

We fully recognise the seriousness of homelessness. That is why I have provided for an increase of 11 per cent. to Scottish Homes—a substantial increase on top of the significant resources that were provided for its first year of operation. In addition to local authorities, there has been an increase in the Government's contribution—more than double the rate of inflation. I have told local authorities that, if they wish to increase their gross expenditure, they should realise that, in Scotland, they have the full benefit of receipts from council house sales. If they were to apply the same energy to assisting their tenants to acquire their homes as the new towns and Scottish Homes have done, it would be entirely to the benefit of their housing expenditure opportunities.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I warmly welcome the huge expenditure in Scotland, including a far higher cost per head than is available to England. I welcome also the fact that there is to be a big increase in expenditure on roads, housing, health and education. Bearing in mind the vast increase in local authority expenditure, does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the quality of life in Scotland should be far higher than ever before, and achieved without any increase in the community charge?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is correct. A large number of local authorities in Scotland will be able to contemplate reducing the community charge for next year, given the removal of their contribution to the safety net and the fact that the vast majority of local authorities will therefore receive an increase in revenue support grant. That will mean than any decision not to reduce community charge levels, particularly on the part of district councils, will be almost impossible to understand or justify.

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): The Secretary of State placed great emphasis on spending on education. May I take it that, as a consequence of his statement, he will look favourably at the proposals by the governors of Newbattle college, in Dalkeith, Midlothian?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman will recall that the problem relating to Newbattle college arose out of the unwillingness of local authorities and trade unions over the years to continue their contribution to the support of Newbattle, which left the Scottish Education Department as the only body providing any substantial support. Naturally, one will look with interest at any proposals coming from the college, but I cannot anticipate any change in the Government's position, because the reasons for that policy still appear to be substantiated by the present situation.

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on his statement and on his rejection of the wilder assertions that were made by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) in his annual appearance as the spectre at the feast. I welcome what my right hon. and learned Friend said about increased investment in water. He said that the increases were outside the block and that, in effect, Scotland has benefited enormously from privatisation receipts from England and Wales. I assume that my right hon. and learned Friend used some pretty good Unionist arguments for that, as it seems a considerable political achievement.

I should like also to ask my right hon. and learned Friend about transport. My understanding of his figures is that, in effect, expenditure on new motorway and road construction will have increased by 50 per cent. by 1992-93.

Mr. Rifkind: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, but I do not think that I can claim that the resources allocated for water and sewerage arise out of privatisation receipts from the sale of the industry south of the border. Rather they reflect a willingness by my colleagues—and I am grateful to my right hon. Friends the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and the Chancellor of the Exchequer—to appreciate the need for a substantial increase in expenditure on this important area to improve the quality of our environment in Scotland. There are similar schemes elsewhere in the United Kingdom and I think that we all agree that this is a crucial priority.

Likewise with roads: we have identified an exciting roads programme, especially the upgrading of the M74, which has been widely welcomed.

Mrs. Ray Michie (Argyll and Bute): I welcome the announcement about increased expenditure on water and sewerage. However, will it be sufficient to help the rural areas in Scotland where most of the sewage is discharged straight into the sea as raw sewage and often returns straight on to the shore?

I am still concerned about what the Secretary of State said about homelessness in Scotland which remains unacceptably high, especially in Argyll and Bute, where it has risen by 55 per cent. in the past five years. I know that the council finds it difficult to cope with that.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman also referred to increasing support for students, which I find a bit false in view of the top-up loans that are supposed to be imposed on them. The right hon. and learned Gentleman talked about support and about trying to plan for an extra 6,000 students next year. What proportion of that 6,000 are likely to be Scottish students and which countries will the others come from?

I should be grateful if the Secretary of State would give some detail about the subsidy for Caledonian MacBrayne. Will it be increased or decreased? If it is to be decreased, I hope that the right hon. and learned Gentleman realises what he is doing, because he would be forcing CalMac to

[Mrs. Ray Michie]

make more and more money from tourism, which would mean that in the end it will become a tourist service instead of remembering that its first priority is to serve the islanders.

Mr. Rifkind: I thank the hon. Lady for her warm welcome to my announcement on water and sewerage. We certainly hope that Argyll, as well as other parts of Scotland, will substantially benefit from it.

On the question of homelessness, I am very conscious of the fact that the reduction in receipts from council house sales would, by itself, have led to significant problems for local authorities. Therefore, it is appropriate for both Government and local authorities to do what they can to respond to that problem. That is why in our Government contribution we have provided a substantial increase that is well over the rate of inflation to help local authorities. However, I hope that the local authorities will show more enthusiasm than they have up to now in assisting and encouraging their tenants to use the opportunities of the tenants' rights legislation, because that will also work to the benefit of their housing programmes.

With regard to what the hon. Lady said about students, it is obviously for the universities to determine admissions, but the point of the increased resources is to enable a higher proportion of people in Scotland to benefit from higher education. That figure has already reached 22 per cent., compared with the United Kingdom average of 15 per cent., and the figures announced today will allow for further improvements in that area.

We are not making any announcement today with regard to CalMac. The hon. Lady should recall that support for CalMac is based on the deficit subsidy approach, which means that we cover the difference between revenue and expenditure. We obviously take into account the pattern of use of the service and the need for a fair and reasonable tariff structure.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): My right hon. and learned Friend's statement will be welcomed in Scotland, and especially his choice of priorities. However, that choice of priorities could well be affected by other factors. Is he aware that in Tayside, for example, the region's Labour administration has handled the education policy in such a way that it has not dealt with the problems in Dundee, where there is 40 per cent. over-capacity and consequently Alyth school in my constituency has been forced to consider the possibility of becoming self-governing?

Also, general practitioners in Scotland may find that they will not benefit from the additional funds because their representatives on the Scottish BMA are not prepared to have special discussions on the needs, aspirations and wishes of Scottish GPs because they do not want a separate deal.

Hon. Members: This is a speech.

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is not a debate but the time for questions. The hon. Member must ask a question.

Mr. Walker: I was following the example of earlier questioners. I was present throughout Question Time, but this is the first question that I have asked today.

Mr. Speaker: Unfortunately, that does not entitle the hon. Member to ask a series of questions.

Mr. Walker: I am simply following an example. I trust that you, Mr. Speaker, will accept that I usually endeavour to follow your instructions to the letter.

Will my right hon. and learned Friend bear in mind that he does not always control where funds finally go and that the activities of others could impede his wishes?

Mr. Rifkind: That is indeed the case. We provide resources to several organisations, and ultimately it is their responsibility to decide how those resources are used.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): What adjustment will have to be made to Government expenditure plans if large numbers of people continue to refuse to pay the poll tax? Despite the Secretary of State's brave words to Edinburgh business people the other day, is it not a fact that bankers as well as local authorities are finding it increasingly difficult to cope with the resultant chaos? That chaos is likely only to worsen until the Government come to their senses and replace that iniquitous tax with a fairer system of local government finance.

Mr. Rifkind: I am sorry to disappoint the hon. Gentleman. I do not recall him complaining a year ago about administrative problems caused under the old rating system when Strathclyde regional council had to issue more than 78,000 summary warrants to owner-occupiers and private tenants who had not paid their rates on time, apart from what warrants were necessary for council tenants. The hon. Gentleman found it unnecessary to comment on those matters under the rating system. Similar attempts to delay paying the community charge should not surprise the House, even if it surprises him.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): I thank my right hon. and learned Friend—perhaps I should declare an interest—for the enormous and welcome increase in historic building grant.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): The hon. and learned Gentleman will be able to buy a new suit.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: I thought that my suit had an historic appearance.

I also congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on increasing the expenditure for Scotland, once again increasing the quality of life in Scotland beyond that of any other part of Europe.

Mr. Rifkind: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend. The Government attach great importance to Scotland's natural and national heritage and the Historic Buildings Council, so ably chaired by my hon. and learned Friend, makes a splendid contribution, supported by the whole of Scotland, to ensuring a splendid future for Scotland's national heritage.

Mr. Adam Ingram (East Kilbride): Does the Secretary of State agree that one of the real tests of his announcement will be whether homelessness is reduced and the housebuilding programme is stepped up? What specific sums has he allocated to those worrying and growing problems, and by how much does he estimate that homelessness and housing waiting lists will be reduced over the next four years?

Mr. Rifkind: I said that resources to Scottish Homes were being increased by £36 million, an increase of some 11 per cent. In addition, we have provided £11 million particularly for the partnership estates, which are primarily local authority council estates. The £36 million will be divided between the local authority allocation and Scottish Homes. In addition, local authorities will receive an increase in their net allocation for their capital programmes of about 15 per cent. That reflects the difficulties that would otherwise arise from the reduction in receipts from council house sales. I make no apology for repeating that local authorities also have an obligation to do what they can to increase their resources, as the new towns have done so successfully.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Does the Secretary of State recall that, in previous years when he has come to the Dispatch Box and made glowing announcements about his generosity, it has almost always been followed after Christmas and the new year by Members for Aberdeen and north-east Scotland telling him that he grossly underestimated and misrepresented the sum which was to be available to my part of the country? Will it be the same this year? Can he give us the figures for the north-east? Can we spare ourselves our annual trip down to see him to get justice for our part of the country?

Mr. Rifkind: Naturally, each local area, not just the north-east, would like to get the lion's share of the resources available. Today's announcement is of the global sums available. Over the next few weeks my hon. Friends and I shall determine the individual allocations to individual local authorities. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that we shall continue to treat fairly the needs of Grampion region and district councils in the north-east. Each local area believes that it should have more than any other area, but that is not always possible, as the hon. Gentleman will appreciate.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): When will the Secretary of State take time to educate English Tory Back Benchers and some Scottish ones about the enormous flow of funds for defence procurement, mortgage interest tax relief and transport subsidies which are siphoned off into the already overheated economy of the south-east but mysteriously do not appear in any of the identified public expenditure tables? Is he aware that an analysis from the Library shows that from his period of office to the end of the forecast period in 1992 the Scottish Office budget will increase by 39 per cent., overall United Kingdom public expenditure by 42 per cent. and the Welsh Office budget by 57 per cent.? Why is it that every time the Secretary of State claims a miracle on public spending it turns out to be a mirage?

Mr. Rifkind: If the hon. Gentleman is advocating on behalf of his party levels of public expenditure for Scotland which correspond to those of either England or Wales, he must explain to his constituents why he advocates major cuts in the present level of provision for health, housing, education and roads, all of which are substantially higher for Scotland than for England or Wales. He should escape for a moment from the paranoia associated with his party.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must have regard to the subsequent business, but I shall endeavour to call all hon. Members provided that they ask brief questions.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): As everything is so rosy in the financial garden, why is it necessary to introduce the principle of toll roads from Edinburgh to the M74? Is it because there is a fall in real terms in the money allocated to transport between 1991 and 1992?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is misinformed. There is no proposal for toll roads from Edinburgh to the M74. There are several projects that may include the use of tolls in various parts of the United Kingdom. Our recent discussion document on routes south of Edinburgh suggests that there may be a case for a fast link between part of the M8 and the M74. The proposal has not been previously suggested by other interests, nor does it appear in the existing roads programme. Rather than defer such a project for the good number of years that would be required, given our other transport priorities and initiatives, we have suggested that it might be worth considering whether the fast link could be provided in the form suggested. I stress that it is only a proposal at this stage.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): The Secretary of State told us this afternoon, as he told us in his statement last year, that the health programme has been identified as an area of priority. Yet we learned only this week that during the past year 200 patients at the Lennox Castle psychiatric hospital suffered undernourishment as a result of staff shortages. He can say what he likes at the Dispatch Box, but how does he expect anybody to believe him when so much evidence in Scotland flies in the face of his claims?

Mr. Rifkind: I share the hon. Gentleman's concern about reports of undernourishment at that or any other hospital. Suggestions that it is due to staff reductions cannot possibly be justified. Apart from anything else, staff numbers at that hospital have increased rather than decreased recently.

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): Although the Secretary of State has been addressed as Father Christmas, does he not understand that there is no sanity clause in his statement? He has told us that Scottish Homes and local councils should sell public housing in Scotland, but the Government, through the quango, the Scottish Development Agency, have bribed Barratt's with more than £300,000 to develop the West Pilton Circus site in my constituency. Worse still, they have kept that secret and they will not divulge the facts, but it is all true. Why does not the Secretary of State speak up, or does the kick-back system still operate? Does he support it as part of the capitalist system?

Mr. Rifkind: If the hon. Gentleman wants to pursue that point, he should either put down a Question or write a letter to either myself or to my hon. Friend the Minister concerned, as his question today is somewhat confused.

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): Does the Secretary of State recall that, last year, he painted an optimistic picture of National Health Service funding? I have in my possession a confidential memorandum that shows that Lothian health board has stopped filling vacancies because it does not have the cash to do so. Surely the promises that were given last year were untrue. What reason do we have to believe the Secretary of State this year? A lot of the money that he has announced today will be used to oil the wheels of privatisation and to introduce the health reforms that the Government are so keen to support.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman should be as aware as anyone that the introduction of, for example, competitive tendering in Lothian and elsewhere has led to substantial savings which have remained with the health boards and have been used by them to improve services for their patients. It is true that some of the resources announced today will be used for the NHS review. That is right and proper, because that review will be a further means whereby we can improve the quality of service and therefore the well-being of patients in Lothian and elsewhere in Scotland.

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): Will the Secretary of State admit that, against the background of the Government's high-interest rate economic policy, and taking into account the likely level of inflation next year, the public expenditure he has announced will not be sufficient to stop unemployment rising again next year in Scotland?

Mr. Rifkind: Before the hon. Gentleman reaches such conclusions, he should look at some recent reports and surveys. This morning *The Scotsman* quoted the chief economist of the Royal Bank of Scotland as predicting that economic growth in Scotland will outstrip the rest of the United Kingdom next year; presumably because, in part, the effect of high-interest rates, although undesired in any part of the country, has its greatest impact where mortgages are highest—in the south-east of England. That report this morning corresponds with reports and surveys by the Fraser of Allander Institute and the Scottish Confederation of British Industry, all of which point to the fact that growth in Scotland is likely to be higher than the United Kingdom average for the forthcoming year.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Did the Secretary of State consult COSLA on his statement, or does he plan to do so? In view of the absence of any reference in the statement to community care, how does that match with the Government's rhetoric on the subject? There are problems of homelessness, poverty and fuel poverty as well as problems arising from the notorious social fund, and social work departments experience those problems day after day. What recognition has the Secretary of State given in the statement to those social work departments that are trying to operate and to respond to people's needs under the sort of pressure that they know, and the Secretary of State should know, to be totally unacceptable?

Mr. Rifkind: Central Government provision for social work is planned to rise from £16 million in 1991 to £20 million in 1992-93, which is a substantial increase. As for consultation with the local authorities, my hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for housing met COSLA on Friday and discussed the housing allocations with it.

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): Will the Secretary of State confirm that he has received a major hospital building programme from the Lanarkshire health board? Will he confirm that it includes a proposal for a new district general hospital in the Motherwell district to replace the temporary wartime emergency hospital which is incapable of development because of mining subsidence on the site? Will he confirm that there is room for a start at least on the planning expenditure on this hospital in the next financial year?

Mr. Rifkind: Proposals such as those to which the hon. Gentleman refers have not yet been drawn to Ministers' attention. However, I assure the hon. Gentleman that when that happens I shall take into account the point that he has made.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): How does the Secretary of State justify the cut in public services of £100 million revealed in last month's Autumn Statement—table 1.12, page 30—and what confidence has he that the future spending increases he announced will bring about the desired results over the next year?

Mr. Rifkind: I have already informed the House that expenditure in Scotland, for which the Scottish Office is responsible, will increase by more than £500 million next year compared to outturn for this year. That answers the hon. Gentleman.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): In drawing up his budget allocation for the Scottish Development Agency and the Highlands and Islands Development Board, did the Secretary of State take special account of the possible need to assist the hard-pressed fishing communities on the coastlines of Scotland?

Mr. Rifkind: I share the hon. Lady's concern about the problems faced by the fishing industry, and I have already made clear my total opposition to the latest proposals from the Commissioner in Brussels with regard to haddock quotas for the industry. Clearly we shall have to await further developments to see exactly what the scale of reduction in fishing entitlements might be. The hon. Lady can rest assured that we shall do our best to protect the fishing communities from any unreasonable proposals made by the Commission.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): Does the Secretary of State seriously believe that the people of Scotland will be deluded when he uses terms such as "superb", "generous" and other over-flowing adjectives to describe the settlement when examination of the figures will show that the settlement will mean a policy of cut, cut and cut again? Is it not clear that his evasively complacent answers to my hon. Friends' questions about homelessness in Scotland show that he is cruelly and callously indifferent to the plight of thousands of Scots with no roof over their heads at this time of year?

Is he not aware that to use the increased allocation to Scottish Homes is totally irrelevant because Scottish Homes has no statutory obligation to the homeless? Does not the recent Shelter survey show that there is a major crisis of homelessness in Scotland which he can solve only by dealing with it as his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment did—by allocating special funds for the purpose and allowing local authorities to get on with the jobs that they are best able to do?

Mr. Rifkind: Only the hon. Gentleman could describe an increase of £500 million as a cut. He seems unaware of the work that Scottish Homes is doing and proposes to do with its resources. Far from operating in a vacuum separate from local authorities, Scottish Homes already works closely with many local authorities in Scotland, and a substantial proportion of its resources is being used in the local authority estates in co-operation with local authorities. How the hon. Gentleman, representing as he does the Castlemilk estate, can be ignorant of that fact is extraordinary when Castlemilk is——

Mr. Maxton: What about homelessness?

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, there is homelessness in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. He should know that, even if he is not drawing it to our attention.

Castlemilk is one of the partnership areas into which substantial new resources are being put in co-operation with local authorities. The hon. Gentleman does his constituents a grave disservice by appearing to be ignorant of that fact.

Points of Order

4.34 pm

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I think we would all agree that one of the great strengths of the House is the way in which it respects and defends the position of every person in it, however lowly or exalted. I fully agree that you, Mr. Speaker, cannot be responsible for the ill manners and discourtesy sometimes shown by Ministers to hon. Members. I sat here yesterday and today and watched the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Brown) being treated in a discourteous manner by a Minister. When a pattern like that is established, it becomes the business of the House. I ask your ruling, Mr. Speaker. Would this be the time to ask the Leader of the House and the Government Chief Whip to remind Ministers that, when they offend against one person in that way, they offend against the integrity of the entire House?

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is on this point.

Mr. Speaker: Why?

Mr. Winnick: The explanation is that on many occasions you have asked hon. Members to withdraw or apologise. As you know, hon. Members respond to the Chair. The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry said that the supplementary question of my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Brown) was out of order. You accepted that it was not out of order, or you would have pointed it out. Although you cannot force Ministers to apologise if what they say is not directly out of order, under those circumstances should not the Secretary of State have apologised? By not apologising, has he not shown contempt to the House and to you?

Mr. Speaker: As the House knows, I am not responsible for what is said, provided that it is in order. Yesterday I did not hear the question from the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Brown), because, as I explained, the microphones are out of date. I hope that in due course they will be replaced. However, the hon. Gentleman was heard today, perhaps because I suggested to him that he move his place.

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I would like to raise a separate matter concerning the Secretary of State for Scotland. He said that I should table a question to him on Barratt's. I have done that, but I am not satisfied with the reply, and neither are my constituents. If it is a cover-up job and he does not want to answer openly, then something is wrong. I believe in perestroika, glasnost, and open government, whereas the Government do not.

Mr. Speaker: Again, I am not responsible for the answers given to questions.

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan): On a separate point of order, Mr. Speaker. Are you aware that, while this afternoon's exercise on the Scottish statement was quite useful, it is no substitute for the inquisitorial attitude towards the Government which is required and would come from a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs?

I should like, Mr. Speaker, to take you back a few minutes to the slight altercation between yourself and the

[Mr. Jim Sillars]

hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) who complained that he was not receiving enough time to question the Minister. Is it possible, through you, to invite the hon. Member for Tayside, North to reconsider his position in respect of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs?

Can you explain why, if someone in the House allegedly —I use that word advisedly—disobeys the Standing Orders, he can be evicted from the precincts of the House, yet when a Government refuse to obey Standing Order No. 130 and set up a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, they can do so with impunity?

Mr. Speaker: This matter was raised with me by the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh). I have given him a reply, and I have nothing further to add to what I said the other day.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We do have an important debate before us.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I seek your guidance and, I hope, your protection. May I draw your attention to the fact that the issue of membership of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs is regularly alluded to in the Chamber?

You will remember, Mr. Speaker, that in two Parliaments the Scottish National party refused categorically to serve on that Committee. Those hon. Members are no longer with us, but the present members of the Scottish National party seek to deny me, as an hon. Member, the rights that they enjoyed. Their reasons for refusing to serve were quite different from mine. I have served in two Parliaments and know something about what happened in that Committee.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman, like all hon. Members, has my protection. We have heard what he said, but it is not a matter for me.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Since there is real difficulty in scrutinising Government business adequately, if the Government persist in their refusal to set up a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, might it be a matter for the Procedure Committee to examine? If we cannot have a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, perhaps we can have at least double the ration of Question Time.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman must put that matter to the Procedure Committee.

BILL PRESENTED

BROADCASTING BILL

Mr. Secretary Waddington, supported by the Prime Minister, Mr. Secretary Hurd, Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Secretary Walker, Mr. Secretary Ridley, Mr. Secretary MacGregor, Mr. Secretary Rifkind, Mr. Secretary Brooke and Mr. David Mellor, presented a Bill to make new provision with respect to the provision and regulation of independent television and sound programme services and of other services provided on television or radio frequencies; to make provision with respect to the provision and regulation of local delivery services; to amend in other respects the law relating to broadcasting and the provision of television and sound programme services; to make new provision relating to the Broadcasting Complaints Commission; to provide for the establishment and functions of a Broadcasting Standards Council; to amend the Wireless Telegraphy Acts 1949 to 1967 and the Marine, &c., Broadcasting (Offences) Act 1967; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 9.]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Contamination of Feeding Stuff) (Wales) (No. 4) Order 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 2269) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

Orders of the Day

Property Services Agency and Crown Suppliers Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

4.40 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Chris Patten): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

This Bill is among the shortest that we shall be introducing this Session; it is none the less significant. It provides measures to allow the sale to the private sector of the Crown Suppliers and PSA Services, which are both parts of the Property Services Agency. The remainder of the PSA will remain within the Government.

The success of the Government's privatisation programme is acknowledged throughout the world——

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Patten: The hon. Gentleman sniggers. I notice that they have just appointed——

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): It was a guffaw, actually.

Mr. Patten: They are not guffawing in Poland, where they have just appointed a privatisation Minister. That is a point to which I shall return with enthusiasm later if invited to do so. Having heard the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) on Sunday explaining, or perhaps not quite explaining, that the Labour party was or was not enthusiastic about privatisation, we once again look forward to hearing clarification of this issue by the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould)—his clarifications on share ownership are like no one else's.

Over the past decade, almost 45 per cent. of what was the public sector in the United Kingdom has been transferred to private ownership. As a result, major public corporations have been given greater freedom and their performance has improved beyond measure. The two organisations with which this Bill is concerned are small in terms of privatisation, but they are of considerable significance in the Government's drive to improve the efficiency of the public sector.

In recent years, there have been major changes in the way in which we manage our public services. At the heart of those changes has been the financial management initiative launched by the Prime Minister in 1981. That initiative took as a key principle the fact that the primary responsibility for ensuring managerial efficiency within Government should lie with the spending departments. No longer would concerns about efficiency and value for money rest primarily in the central Departments, in the Treasury, or, for building matters, in the PSA. Responsibility would instead be devolved to the ultimate users; in future the customer, not the provider of services, would decide what should be done—the customer would be king.

Although privatisation rightly has a high profile among our policies for the long-term strengthening of the economy, the importance of improving efficiency within Government is no less significant. For example, the PSA has been handling expenditure of more than £3·5 billion and employing resources of its own of more than £300 million. The prospect of improving the efficiency with which such a large block of expenditure is managed clearly represents a major prize.

To apply the financial management initiative to building and property services, the Government decided that Departments should assume their own responsibility for all works and estate services which had formerly been provided by the PSA. Departments would themselves manage the money voted for this work by Parliament and would be permitted to choose their supplier of works services from the PSA or elsewhere. In the jargon, Departments would be untied from the PSA. They have been similarly untied from the Crown Suppliers since April 1987.

As a result of these decisions, the service providers in the PSA and the Crown Suppliers have needed to match their professional skills and property experience with a more commercial responsiveness and speed. They know, as the Labour party might put it, that they must meet the challenge and make the change if they are to keep their work load.

The case for these privatisations has three elements——

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Before the Minister goes any further, will he help us by explaining how valuable public resources such as property and equipment are to be valued, and who will be given the task of valuing them?

Mr. Patten: I am coming shortly to the mechanics of the privatisations, but I assure the hon. Gentleman that when property is involved, a proper valuation will be done before any sale, and it will be made public——

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I apologise beforehand for the fact that I am off to the Procedure Committee in a moment.

In view of the sweeteners that were given in the Rover case and the strong and justified feeling that corruption was involved, how can we be persuaded that the same degree of corruption will not obtain in future measures of privatisation and of selling off state assets?

Mr. Patten: I reject the hon. Gentleman's allegations. Had I known that he was going to make them and that he was going to leave in a moment—even for the Procedure Committee—I would not have allowed him to intervene——

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington) *rose*——

Mr. Patten: But I shall certainly give way to the hon. Gentleman who, as always, will be staying with us, I dare say, for the entire debate——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Despite the fact that I am also on the Procedure Committee. However, I regard this debate as important.

On the issue of the private versus the public sector, has the Secretary of State been made aware by the Minister of State of what happened two years ago when Richmond house, the DHSS headquarters, was valued? Cluttons, a private sector company, was brought in and charged £44,000 to value the building. It turned out subsequently that an internal memorandum in the PSA had suggested that the same valuation could have been done by its staff for £1,500. Why should the public have to pay an extra £42,500 to use an outside private contractor when the job

[Mr. Campbell-Savours]

could be done by a civil servant? Does not that take us to the heart of the argument today? In the end, the public may well end up paying far more for the same services.

Mr. Patten: Even though the hon. Gentleman has to leave in a moment, he has such an exemplary record of attending debates that I am always pleased to give way to him. I recall that, in the case to which he has referred, the work done involved a particular expertise because of the buildings concerned. I am convinced that, when a Department is managing its own operations and funds, it will make sure that it secures the best possible value for money. That was certainly my experience when I was responsible for a small Department faced with the obligations under the financial management initiative to look after its property interests.

The hon. Gentleman might also note the difficulty in public sector accountancy practice of ensuring that one is comparing like with like. The most important way in which we can secure best value for money in the public sector is to ensure that the customer is responsible for the budget and has managerial responsibility for what ensues.

I return now to the main elements in the argument for privatisations. First, Departments now have delegated authority to make their own choices about the services that they require. That is the way to ensure effective procurement.

Secondly, the PSA and the Crown Suppliers must compete for their work with others who are equally anxious to provide a good service. Thirdly, the PSA and TCS need the freedom to compete effectively and can get it only outside the confines of the public sector.

The House should therefore see that the privatisation of these two bodies arises naturally for the good of the organisations themselves and hence for the good of their staff and customers. It arises out of a simple principle: decisions are best delegated as far as possible to the ultimate users.

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. Patten: I shall certainly give way to the hon. Gentleman, provided he is not going to the Procedure Committee.

Mr. Dalyell: The Minister used the phrase "for the good of their staff". Why does the National Union of Public Employees object so strongly to the proposals? Where is the evidence for saying that it is for the good of the staff? Does the right hon. Gentleman deny that at least in the view of the staff it is not for their good?

Mr. Patten: I have had the advantage of a meeting with staff unions. I shall come later to the detailed questions about staff because that issue forms an extremely important part of the debate and undoubtedly it will be discussed in Committee. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to share in the discussions in Committee.

I shall now deal with the two organisations. The Property Services Agency, as it exists at the moment and despite its name, is a large self-contained part of a Government Department—the Department of the Environment. In the past, because it has been both provider and customer for Government works services, it has had many services that are regulatory or essentially governmental, such as, for example, the management of the Government's civil accommodation. However, the great bulk of its activities involves the provision of works and estate services to other Government Departments, just as existing commercial agencies—consultants, estate agents or building contractors—provide similar services for non-governmental bodies.

The PSA has a mixed reputation within Government. It often gets the blame when Government buildings appear badly maintained, although I concede immediately that that can sometimes be the result of its budget having been constrained because of general pressures on public expenditure. In the past, the customer Departments have been free to make the complaints and the PSA was there to receive the brickbats. In future the decisions about what to spend—the point that I made earlier—will lie with the customer departments. If they decide to spend less on maintenance or more on a new building, it will be their own choice. The PSA will be judged on how well it has provided what the customer asked for. That will be good for efficiency in Government and salutory for Departments and the PSA.

In the past, the system of parliamentary scrutiny of public expenditure through the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee and the studies by the Select Committee on the Environment have ensured that any aspects of the PSA's performance which deserved criticism have received wide public coverage. That is wholly reasonable while the PSA remains a Government department. However, we should not allow that proper degree of public exposure to obscure the less well publicised, but regular, stream of work that the agency does so well.

It receives a large number of awards each year for design excellence—there were 22 last year alone—and it is held in high regard by some of its largest and most demanding customers and by many of its potential competitors in the private sector. My right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor has recently paid tribute to the PSA for its work in the extensive countrywide programme of court building. The United States forces have compared the service that they get from PSA favourably with the service they get at bases anywhere in the world. In 1988-89 the PSA won 11 of the total of 21 awards made by the USAF European Command.

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): Does the Minister agree that the United States Air Force has said that it is worried about the security implications of privatising the PSA? What will he do about security at military installations and at Cabinet Ministers' houses when the service is privatised?

Mr. Patten: We are discussing with the Ministry of Defence and United States forces how we can continue to provide as much excellent work for the Ministry of Defence overseas and for United States forces in this country as the PSA provides at present. A great deal of Ministry of Defence work on matters involving considerable security is already carried out by private sector operators. For example, 70 per cent. of the design work for the MOD is carried out under that sort of security umbrella by the private sector. No great principle is being breached here.

Mr. Dalyell: We have figures here given by the unions and I should like the Minister to tell us whether they are accurate. In 1988, the PSA design costs were shown to be 25 to 30 per cent. cheaper than those of private designers. On the related question of estate surveying, the issue raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), the private valuation of the new DHSS headquarters at Richmond terrace, Whitehall cost 266 per cent. more than a PSA valuation would have cost. Is that correct?

Mr. Patten: Given the way that accountancy operations are conducted at present when a potential private sector firm is in the public sector, it is extremely difficult to work out the sort of figures that the hon. Gentleman has mentioned. If his figures are correct, this firm will do spectacularly well in the private sector as the result of a trade sale or a management or employee buy-out.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The Minister misunderstands the point that is being made. As we understand it, valuations are often carried out on the basis of a percentage. Let us look at the district works office, Teddington. The Minister may laugh, but this is a serious matter. The outside contractor charged £193,722 for his work. The PSA valuation for exactly the same work was £92,112—a saving of £100,000 to the taxpayer. That was the difference between the private sector and the public sector for exactly the same work. The Secretary of State cannot brush that aside and say that in future prices can be cut. That difference arose because of the basis of valuation and it is for the Secretary of State to assure the House that that will not happen in future.

Mr. Patten: I am sure that the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope), will be succinct and will do just as well later in dealing with Teddington as he did in the recent Adjournment debate.

As a Minister responsible for a Department, I think that the disciplines of being responsible for one's own budget on matters such as the maintenance of property are extremely good for the taxpayer and ensure that we get the best value for money. That is an important part of the development of the financial management initiative. I look forward to congratulating the management, the employees or those responsible for the trade sale when the PSA operates extremely successfully in the private sector, as it will in due course.

In 1986, the PSA management launched a fundamental review of its responsibilities and organisation, and its relationship with departmental clients. Shortly afterwards, the Select Committee on the Environment under the direction of my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) carried out a study of the PSA, resulting in 1987 in an important and constructive report. Those reviews paved the way for the Government's decision that, from 1 April 1990, all Departments would be fully untied from the PSA and that the PSA's service activities would be managed commercially.

Steps are now in hand to separate the PSA's commercial activities from its governmental responsibilities, so that, from April 1990, the residual governmental activities, such as the maintenance of the Palace of Westminster and the management of the Government car service, will be transferred as a separate unit to the Department of the Environment with its own accounting officer at deputy secretary level. Within these activities, one has already been established as an executive agency under the Government's "next steps" initiative—the highly successful Queen Elizabeth II conference centre. Two others, the main resident function of managing the Government's common user estate, and the small but significant activity of negotiating contracts for fuel supplies to parts of Government and the public sector, were shown in the recent White Paper "Next Steps" as candidates for agency status.

Since the major portion of the PSA is to be a competitive commercial organisation, many hon. Members will need no further convincing that we should aim for privatisation at the earliest opportunity.

For any who are less committed to the principle of privatisation, even after the words of the hon. Member for Copeland on television last week, perhaps I should explain why I believe that early privatisation will be in the best interests of the PSA and its staff. It is a very large organisation—the country's largest building consultancy —which has had the benefit of a guaranteed work load. Suddenly, it is about to face competition. Even if it competes effectively, as I have no doubt it will, it must inevitably lose some of its market share to its competitors. Unless it can compete in new markets, it will inevitably be an organisation in decline. That is not a recipe for a successful operation. Faced with that prospect, the better staff would start to leave, and the quality of service would fall away. The decline would become a downward spiral and customers would suffer. That is not in anyone's interest—not the customers', and therefore not the taxpayers'; not in the PSA's or that of its staff.

It is essential, therefore, that as a quid pro quo for untying the PSA's protected markets, it must be allowed freedom to widen its market base. For the long term, and on a large scale, that is not an attractive prospect for a department within Government. Government is not the place for a fully diversified consultancy. Any organisation that, in the last resort, is underwritten by the taxpayer cannot be allowed the same unrestricted access as a private company to capital; nor can it be allowed to face the full risks of the marketplace, nor to reap the full rewards.

However, it is right and proper that, for a limited period, and with appropriate safeguards, the PSA should be allowed to compete in the general marketplace to offset its shrinking Government market. That will give the business the opportunity to demonstrate the quality of the service that it can offer so that it can secure a foothold in serving private sector clients to prepare itself for full privatisation.

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): I am sorry to interrupt my right hon. Friend, who has been interrupted many times already. As he will appreciate, many Conservative Members are always a little concerned when the private sector is opened to competition from what is essentially a state-run and state-supported service industry. Does he agree that an appropriate safeguard might be that, during the short time that the PSA is competing with the private sector from within Government, there should be an automatic reference of its tender price to, for example, the National Audit Office? Would that not be a suitable safeguard against the private sector being forced to compete against a subsidised organisation?

Mr. Patten: I can assure my hon. Friend that, during the short time until 1992, we shall want to be absolutely certain that the arrangements in place are sufficient to give my hon. Friend and others the absolutely necessary confidence in the operation. I shall consider my hon. Friend's point, but I can assure him that we have that sort of problem very much in mind.

The timing of the sale of the PSA depends on the business being properly structured for sale, and on having the necessary commercial accounting system in place. The appropriate systems are being installed, but that is a major task. Although the earlier the privatisation date the better, the earliest practicable date seems likely to be the second part of 1992. That is a tight timetable given the scale of the changes that are needed, but it is realistic. It also allows sufficient time for the customer departments to prepare themselves for the time when they will obtain all their works services from the commercial market.

That early target date for privatisation will be good for the PSA and for the Departments in concentrating minds on what has to be done. However, for the PSA's management I am inclined to think that the freedoms that come with being in the private sector cannot come quickly enough. The PSA will be a business whose success depend's on its ability to attract, to motivate and to reward good quality staff. Its freedom to compete for those staff in the marketplace will be very important.

Although there is now undoubtedly more flexibility than there used to be to adjust Civil Service pay rates to particular market circumstances and to recognise good performance, that does not go far enough if the PSA is to be able to respond as quickly and as effectively to sudden changes of work load as its competitors can. Privatisation should make that possible. In the meantime, the PSA's management will need to make as full use as possible of the flexibility that does exist in the Civil Service environment and to press for further flexibility when it can justify it.

I hope that the management and staff of the agency will take the time and the opportunity to consider whether they wish to bid for the business themselves. Although the Government will need to be sure, when the sale is made, that a fair competitive price has been obtained, I think that it would be good for the PSA, and good for the commitment and motivation of its staff if there were a strong management-employee buy-out team as well as trade bidders in the competition at the finish. A management-employee buy-out team would have to compete with other bidders, but if it proved successful I should be delighted.

I come now to the other business covered by the Bill —the Crown Suppliers.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point about staff——

Mr. Patten: I assure the hon. Gentleman that I shall deal with the question of staff in a moment.

The Crown Suppliers is part of the PSA for management purposes, but it operates as an independent business with its own trading fund, supplying furniture and furnishing and related equipment, and operating vehicle hire and document delivery businesses for the public sector.

The Crown Suppliers has been a highly successful organisation. In the 1988 annual accounts, total sales were reported at more than £230 million. Over the years it has developed new ranges of office furniture, most recently one called Laser, which is now bringing in sales of more than £5 million a year. It has supplied equipment to many prestige projects, like the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre.

Over the past two years, the business has changed substantially. Those parts of the Crown Suppliers which were not suitable to be undertaken on a normal commercial basis, or could not be privatised for security reasons, or where value for money could exceptionally be better achieved by retention in the public sector, have been extracted from the business and they are excluded from the sale. Total sales by the businesses that are to be privatised were an estimated £168 million in 1988. That was all business won on its commercial merits. As I have already said, Government Departments are untied, and may purchase where they can find the best value for money.

The business has been increasingly organised on commercial lines. A totally new on-line computer system has been installed this year. In the wake of the decision to privatise, the Crown Suppliers has begun to market its services in the private sector. Since the start of the year, about £600,000 of sales have been made to the private sector. The transport business has won a contract for the maintenance of 150 vehicles belonging to a telecommunication company. These are small beginnings, but there is real promise for growth.

Because the Crown Suppliers already has commercial systems in place, an early sale is possible. Samuel Montagu, the merchant bank advising the Government on the privatisation, has already written to all organisations and management buy-out teams that have expressed any interest in buying the Crown Suppliers and also to all the major firms involved in contract furnishing, vehicle hire and document delivery.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Patten: I do not wish indefinitely to come between the hon. Gentleman and the Procedure Committee.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is it true that the Crown Suppliers has been in breach of European directive No. 77/62 by failing to tender for certain contracts over a value of £92,000 and by extending those contracts? Is it true that the Government's Law Officers have advised the Government that they are in breach of that directive? As I have now raised this matter in the House, which will alert the European Commission, what action will the Government volunteer to take?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will be delighted to answer that question comprehensively when he replies to the debate, and I am sure that he will do so to the hon. Gentleman's complete satisfaction.

We are now considering applications for the purchase of the Crown Suppliers and will shortly be issuing invitations to bid. I am pleased that a number of teams of the Crown Suppliers' staff have expressed an interest in acquiring various parts of their business. I strongly welcome that. It demonstrates the confidence of the staff in the future of the business and in its ability to prosper in the private sector. The Government have offered financial assistance with consultants' fees to assist staff in preparing their bids.

It will naturally be essential to obtain a fair return for the taxpayer from the sale of the Crown Suppliers, but price will not be the sole criterion. We shall be concerned to ensure that its staff are fairly treated, and we shall be particularly interested in bidders' proposals for profit sharing and equity participation. Throughout the sale competition, we shall also be favouring bidders who demonstrate a knowledge of the business and a commitment to its future development. That will help to safeguard the future of the staff; it will also help to ensure that the Crown Suppliers can continue to be a source of competitive supplies to Government.

Before turning to the specific provisons of the Bill, I should say something about the implications of privatisation for the staff of the two organisations. I know from having met the PSA trade unions that there is some uncertainty and concern. I can well understand that, but I assure the staff that their fears are unnecessary: the aim of the privatisations will be to create viable, vigorous competitive organisations in the private sector, with better prospects than they would have if they remained in their present position within the public sector. *[Interruption.]* As the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) will know from his study of these matters, many previous privatisation Bills have said the same. I am sure that he would not wish to be misled by the explanatory and financial memorandum, and will be interested in what I have to say on the subject.

To put the matter simply, the Government intend that the terms and conditions of service of employees shall not suffer as a result of the transfer of employment. Let me explain precisely what I mean. When the businesses are created, the staff who transfer to them will have their conditions of service protected. Most of their conditions will be preserved identically in the new organisation. The Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981—the so-called TUPE regulations—which will apply, will ensure that. They do not cover pensions, for the very good reason that there are so many different ways of handling potential pension provision; however, we shall invite purchasers to offer arrangements for pensions for future service, which—taking all features together—will be comparable with the Civil Service scheme, and we shall take steps to ensure that purchasers' schemes are properly assessed on whether they achieve that aim. Because the old and new schemes are unlikely to be identical, we shall ensure that staff are compensated for any differences. We shall, of course, consult the trade unions about both privatisations.

If staff are to feel confident about privatisation, they must be clear that they will enter the private sector with pay, conditions of service, redundancy entitlements and pensions all safeguarded. Once staff are in the private sector, they will of course be free to renegotiate with their employer for improved conditions, and, if their performance justifies it, they can share in the growing strength of the company instead of being tied to the public pay framework. Their longer-term prospects will depend on their success in maintaining and improving the business.

Finally, let me come to the point made by the hon. Member for Workington, and deal with the specific provisions in the present Bill. It is a short Bill, and I will be mercifully brief. The first and most important point is that the Bill does not seek authority for the sales themselves; it includes technical enabling provisions to facilitate them. The intended method of sale will be to transfer property, rights, and liabilities to companies owned by the Secretary of State, and then to sell the Government shareholding in those companies. The sale of shares, as I said earlier, would be by means of a management-employee buy-out or a trade sale; flotation is not envisaged.

The Bill deals with the problem of technical redundancy. Without this provision, the staff of the PSA and the Crown Suppliers—whose employment will be transferred automatically to the new employer—would become entitled to redundancy compensation as well as keeping their jobs. That would be patently absurd, and the Bill removes the anomaly in clause 2. There are naturally precedents for this provision in earlier privatisations. In case any hon. Members were misled by the explanatory and financial memorandum, let me reassure them that, of course, the Bill does nothing to remove the entitlements of staff to compensation if they lose their employment through redundancy.

Mr. Dalyell: The Bill refers to the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981. I feel that the Secretary of State should tell us in his opening remarks what undertakings he is prepared to give in regard to any person or persons subsequently made redundant under the new private body. What we need are concrete undertakings.

Mr. Patten: Such persons would receive exactly the same redundancy payments as anyone else. They are not losing their redundancy entitlement, as I explained a moment ago.

The Bill seeks to give me explicit authority to establish companies that are wholly owned by the Crown. It will also provide a framework under which schemes may be drawn up to allow for the vesting of property, rights and liabilities in those companies in preparation for sale. The shares of the companies will then be sold to the purchaser for the businesses under a contract.

In the case of the Crown Suppliers it is intended that the shares will be sold immediately on vesting, but in the case of the PSA it may be desirable for the company to trade for a short period while staying within Government ownership. The Bill allows for that in setting out the necessary financial arrangements in clause 3. It provides for the sales of the businesses to take place at different times, for reasons that I touched on earlier.

I have explained the reasons why we are bringing forward the privatisations today, and the way in which they fit into the general policy of improving the efficiency of the public service. I am sure that they will be good for the Government as customer, good for the business prospects of the PSA and the Crown Suppliers, and therefore good for their staff. They are based on a sound principle, which has been implemented with considerable success across large swathes of what was once the public sector. Only the most hidebound and narrow-minded ideology could object to the principles asserted once more in this Bill and to the attempt to put them again into successful practice.

I commend the Bill with enthusiasm to the House, and I am delighted to see on the Benches behind me some of my hon. Friends who have made it possible for us to present its proposals to the House this afternoon.

5.16 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): The Secretary of State began by saying that privatisation was now internationally acclaimed. What he forgot to tell us was that that was because so many companies, both British and overseas, had had their hands in the pockets of the British taxpayer. It is worth reminding the right hon. Gentleman of his own Prime Minister's warning that there is no such thing as Government money; there is only public money—money belonging to the people. Whether that money is the £38 million handed out for the Rover deal or some other handout, it is our money, and it is the duty of the House to ensure that such offers are not made inappropriately. We shall look very carefully at what the Secretary of State has said, to make certain that that does not happen under this Bill.

The Secretary of State has made a thoughtful and careful speech, but—interestingly—one containing an element of schizophrenia. There was a little of the last Conservative Prime Minister—the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath)—in the Secretary of State's desperate attempt to sell to the employees of the two organisations the belief that all this is in their best interests and that he has their welfare at heart, as well as being concerned for the taxpayer.

There is also something rather insecure about the right hon. Gentleman's desperate attempt to prove himself by pretending that the privatisation even begins to be necessary. Perhaps "insecure" is the wrong word to use the day after the Prime Minister's re-election as leader of the Conservative party; "wobbly" might be better. One is reminded of those vases that people stand on the mantlepiece and dust very carefully in case they fall off —as this one surely will in due course.

The truth is that it is neither necessary nor desirable to transfer these organisations to the private sector. That is the central issue on which the Government have failed to convince us.

Mr. Chris Patten: Just to be anecdotal for a moment, since the hon. Gentleman is being so courteous in referring to me at such length, I spent Saturday morning talking, among others, to employees of the National Freight Corporation. That experience confirmed to me the advantages of privatisation both for employees and for shareholders. Were I to take the hon. Gentleman through my constituency diary, I could give him many other examples.

Mr. Soley: Unfortunately, the Secretary of State can give only one example.

Mr. Patten: No.

Mr. Soley: I do not believe that Conservative Secretaries of State have ever been in love with co-operatives. Once or twice they have pretended to be in love with them. The National Freight Corporation is a good example of a co-operative, but there is no other privatisation that the Secretary of State might draw to my attention that can compare with the National Freight Corporation. The work force—I emphasise the work force, not just the management—wanted to benefit from a co-operative system. A co-operative system of that kind remains loyal to the root benefits of the Labour party.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the Water Research Centre is another example of precisely the same kind of employee buy-out? Will he therefore correct his previous statement?

Mr. Soley: I have not considered the Water Research Centre in the same detail. However, it is not enough to assume that such a buy-out is the same as the National Freight Corporation co-operative. There is a very big difference between the two. Without examining it in detail, one cannot be sure that a management buy-out follows the co-operative principles that were adopted to a very large extent by the National Freight Corporation.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Does my hon. Friend agree that if he talked to some of the former employees at the royal ordnance depot in Enfield who lost their jobs shortly after they were bought out of the public sector by the private sector he would find that they were not so happy?

Mr. Soley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. There are many examples of privatisation, most notably in the National Health Service, where the treatment of the work force has been deplorable, by any standards. People are being asked to work longer hours for less money and the job is being less well done. The hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope) puts privatisation as one of his interests in "Dod's Parliamentary Companion". He ought to be ashamed of what has happened to many cleansing and catering facilities. People have been very badly done by, including the customer.

The Secretary of State said that he believes in delegating as close as possible to the ultimate user. That will require some fairly large about-turns by a Secretary of State who is responsible for local government and housing. Contrary to their claims, the Government have centralised power. No other comparable country in the western world has centralised power to such an extent. The Government determine the extent to which local authorities can raise money. They also determine rent increases and how people's homes should be transferred from one owner to another without the people living in them having the right to independent advice.

So much for the belief in transferring the decision-making power to the user. The Government neither believe in it nor practise it. Tenants are not given the right to independent advice in many of the deals that are struck by Conservative-controlled councils. A council that decides to transfer tenants' homes puts its decision to the tenants. They are forced to choose without having access to independent advice. That is a classic example of abuse of power.

Mr. Stern *rose*——

Mr. Soley: Before the hon. Gentleman is foolish enough to intervene—I shall allow him to do so, because I am all in favour of a few suicide cases on the other side —he ought to remember that the National Consumer Council has said that tenants' homes should not be transferred without the tenants having access to independent advice.

Mr. Stern: In the light of the hon. Gentleman's comments, will he put on record his congratulations to the Conservative-controlled Northavon district council, which is balloting its tenants on whether they want their homes to remain in council ownership or to be transferred to a housing association or some other form of ownership? The council has even offered to pay for the independent advice that tenants may wish to take before they reach a decision.

Mr. Soley: You would rightly say, Madam Deputy Speaker, that I was out of order if I pursued that matter. *[Interuption.]* Just before the hon. Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) loses control, I ought to point out to him that that would be perfectly acceptable if the council provided sufficient money for independent advice. Labour-controlled local authorities were transferring houses long before this Government even thought about it, but that was done only when tenants wanted their homes to be transferred. Rent levels were controlled, there was security and there were other safeguards, too. I very much doubt whether the Northavon district council is doing anything like that.

As for the ideological attempt by the Government to privatise for the sake of privatisation, there were a couple of inquiries whose aim was to decide whether privatisation of the Property Services Agency and the Crown Suppliers should go ahead. The Turton report and the Prime Minister's central unit on purchasing report said that it was not in the public interest to privatise. The hon. Member for, Itchen invented the idea of untying, although nobody has known him ever to untie anything. It suggests a degree of finesse and control that he does not exercise.

The Opposition regard him as the mad axeman of Itchen. Just like children who want to get at their Christmas presents and set about it with an axe in the hope of finding what is inside much more quickly, the hon. Gentleman slipped off bits of the PSA and the Crown Suppliers in order to prepare them for privatisation. However, he could not get the independent reports to confirm that they ought to be privatised, so he did what Conservative Ministers are very good at doing—he changed the question. He said to himself, "I've been asking the wrong question all the time. I've been saying, 'Should we privatise it?' Now the light has dawned. I ought to ask, 'How shall I privatise it?'". Therefore he brought in outside consultants who said to him, "Yes, if you've made the decision to privatise, this is how you do it." That is how he got round the difficulty of two major reports which said that it was not in the public interest to privatise the Property Services Agency or the Crown Suppliers.

If the Government could not get the answer that they wanted to the first question and had to change it, why has it suddenly become in the public interest to privatise? The Prime Minister's own unit said that it was not in the public interest to privatise. So did the Turton report, to which I shall return. The two important issues are the way in which privatisation is to be carried out and security, to which, worryingly, the Secretary of State hardly referred. However, both issues raise horrendous problems connected with terrorism and the defence of the country.

The Crown Suppliers has an impressive background. In August 1988, Samuel Montagu and Company, on behalf of the Property Services Agency, set out the main aims of the Crown Suppliers. It said:

> "The main aim of The Crown Suppliers is to provide furniture, furnishings, equipment, materials, heating fuels, transport and selected services related to the domestic and operational needs of Government departments and other public sector bodies more efficiently,"—

these are the words that I wish to emphasise—

> "economically and speedily than they can provide for themselves or enjoy from any other source. In achieving this aim"—

we should note these words from Samuel Montagu and Co.—

> "the Crown Suppliers is required to act in a way which will help industry to improve its standards of design, to operate more efficiently and to exploit new materials and technologies."

If that purpose is being achieved, why are the Government privatising the Crown Suppliers? It is not an old report. It was published in 1988, just over a year ago. The Government's case, therefore, looks exceedingly shaky.

The Government tried to undermine the Crown Suppliers and the PSA by going in for what the Secretary of State described as "untying". It is interesting that the Secretary of State has now said that they will be able to compete with the private sector in the run-up. What is deeply disturbing to Conservative Members, such as the hon. Member for Bristol, North-West, is that they have suddenly realised that some of their private company friends may be in trouble because they cannot compete equally with an organisation that has had a good record in terms of delivery to its customers. The Opposition have no objection to organisations being able to compete for various jobs, but it follows that organisations in the public sector should be able to compete with the private sector on a level playing field. The Government have consistently made it more difficult for companies in the public sector to compete effectively in the private sector, especially in the run-up to privatisation. That has turned them into a burden, rather than the advantage that they are at present.

One of the most damning indictments of the Government's policy was the reference by Lord Macmillan to selling off the family silver. He was talking not only about selling off the silver, but about debasing it before it was sold. That is why the Government, in doing so much damage to the structure of public sector industries, have damaged the private sector as well. As the Montagu report pointed out, it is not in the interests of the private sector for privatisation to be carried out in the way that the Government are doing it.

The review by Lord Jenkin, a previous Secretary of State for the Environment in the early 1980s, said that the answer to privatisation should be no, because it was not in the public interest. The Crown Suppliers has been very successful. I quote the words of the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), who was in the Chamber earlier, but has had to leave now, and who was Minister at the time. He said:

> "The Crown Suppliers have had another successful year's trading. Despite the fact that over 65 per cent. of their business is now untied and optional, they have more than met their financial objective for 1985-86. They have achieved this by raising their level of service, speeding up deliveries, reducing resource costs and offering still better value for money for the products and services they provide to an increasing number of public sector customers. This process will continue. They operate of course under the constraint that, as Departments are increasingly free to purchase goods and services elsewhere, the Crown Suppliers are expected to compete for work within the public sector, yet they cannot, generally speaking, seek business outside it as they would if they were a private concern."—[*Official Report,* 25 July 1986; Vol. 102, c. 572.]

Two Ministers have praised the work of the Crown Suppliers and the PSA. The question that arises again is why, if they are so good, the Government are flogging them off? If that is not in the interests of the country or of the taxpayer, whose interests are being met?

[Mr. Soley]

It is also worth bearing in mind the independent assessment of the work done, part of which my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) quoted in an intervention. It said:

"1. Design: In 1988 PSA's design costs were shown to be 25 per cent. to 30 per cent. cheaper than private designers.

2. Maintenance: In 1988 the Government abandoned its attempt to contract out District Works offices after receiving tenders for the pilot at Southwark which proved to be twice as high as PSA's own costs.

3. Estate Surveying"—

the section that my hon. Friend the Member for Workington quoted—

"private valuation of the new DHSS headquarters at Richmond Terrace, Whitehall, cost 266 per cent. more than a PSA valuation would have cost."

It is no good the Secretary of State trying to wriggle out of answering those comments by saying that he will deal with them later. These are not new facts; they have been known for a long time. Many people have known those facts and the Secretary of State must know them. Why is he unable to tell us why those valuations have been carried out so much more effectively by the PSA than by the private sector? It is not good enough for the Secretary of State to say that he will come back to that at some stage.

In 1987, a report by David Hencke appeared in *The Guardian* which implied that the then Chief Secretary to the Treasury—the present Chancellor of the Exchequer —wanted to halt moves towards privatisation. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Conservative Members may doubt David Hencke, but the story has never been denied and there are many reasons for believing that it is accurate. The then Chief Secretary was worried that Robert Maxwell or Hillsdown Holdings would bid for the agencies, or large parts of them, and because they themselves provided similar services, they would close down or run down the parts that were not necessary to them. That would have been a classic example of asset-stripping the public sector and that is why the Chief Secretary was worried.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): But was not the Chief Secretary, to whom the hon. Gentleman refers, also the Chief Secretary when the decision to introduce the Bill was taken a few months ago?

Mr. Soley: Yes, but that says far more about the Chancellor of the Exchequer's uncertain position than about his judgment of the issue. I do not know whether this new and rather temporary Chancellor of the Exchequer will resign over the privatisation of the PSA and the Crown Suppliers, but I cannot see it happening. Let us be kind and say that he fought privatisation hard in Cabinet, but lost. He may find, like the previous Chancellor, that he loses more than just one battle and it will be interesting to see whether he loses the last battle. The Chief Secretary to the Treasury also seemed to be quite a patriot because he recognised that 90 per cent. of the products were made in Britain and he did not want to see overseas producers supplying British embassies and defence establishments.

It follows from all that I have said that the Opposition and, I suspect, many outside the House, will be deeply concerned about the way privatisation is carried out. I acknowledge fully that the Secretary of State has given a detailed exposition of the way in which he wants to carry it out. It follows from what he says that some of the sweeteners that were offered in the case of Rover could not be used in this privatisation. However, there are questions about whether he will hold the shares, at what value they will be sold, at what point in the market they will be sold and whether any other advantages are built into the company to make it attractive. I warn the Government that we shall be watching all this carefully, as will the Public Accounts Committee and the European Commission. There are many reasons for believing that the way in which the Government go about the privatisation will raise considerable alarm and suspicion.

If the Secretary of State does not want to get into the mess in which the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry finds himself after his predecessor set him up so well with the Rover deal, he should consider independent valuation. Some previous valuations are disturbing and I find it deeply unsatisfactory that public money should be used to prime the pump for the private sector. I know many people who would have liked to buy the Rover works if they had known that £38 million would be thrown in.

One might argue about the other reasons why that was done, as the Secretary of State has, but the crucial point with Rover, is that it did not need to be done in the first place, and that would be true of the PSA. Rover was set to make a profit and the PSA seems to be successful, so there is no need for softening up or for spending public money on that. When we see £21 million thrown away on advertising the water industry to soften it up, we have a duty to ask what the public is getting out of that. They see their money being used to soften up an organisation so that the private sector can take advantage of it. That must be wrong, and I can think of no other country that does such things.

We also want to know how the organisation will be split up. I shall have to read the remarks of the Secretary of State carefully, but I think that it follows that there will be a number of organisations that will be sold off and it sounded as if there would be quite a large number—not just two or three, but a half dozen or more. That will make a great deal of difference as to whether there is asset stripping and how viable the organisations will be on their own. It will also control the the question of whether it will be practical for the employees to produce a successful buy-out scheme. It may not be practical unless they are given a wider job, rather than the organisation being split into small bits and pieces. We shall examine that point carefully in Committee.

I am disturbed—all of us inside and outside the House should be disturbed—that the Government have not touched on security. The Secretary of State hardly mentioned it in his speech, yet security is one of the most profoundly important aspects of the privatisation process. I strongly suspect—although for the moment we cannot know this for sure—that one of the reasons why it was argued in successive reports that it was not in the public interest to privatise was that it was felt that security would be affected. Our Government Departments and our armed forces are advised by the PSA on the physical security of their buildings, and that includes advice on counter-terrorist procedures. The Secretary of State will know that, although he did not refer to it.

The PSA vets employees and contractors on its sites, and the vetting is tough: one in 10 of the applicants do not get through. Suppose that the private building sector takes over and has access to the organisations' plans. We know that the private building sector prefers to employ casual labour. Who will do the vetting? What will happen at Faslane and Aldermaston, let alone in Northern Ireland —a special example, to which I shall come in a moment. Will the work be done by people who have not been subjected to such vetting? Or will the Government exclude those establishments or arrange for the same people to operate an external vetting system, in which case, we ask again, "Why privatise?" What is the point if the same people are to be used to do the vetting?

Mr. Dalyell: The Secretary of State is muttering and shaking his head. If my hon. Friend is wrong, would it not be helpful to our debate if the Secretary of State would say so? It would certainly save time in later speeches.

Mr. Soley: My hon. Friend is right. I suspect that the Secretary of State has not given sufficient thought to the security aspect. I think that that is the key.

I have an important point to make about the terrorist threat. We have seen examples of what has gone wrong with the privatisation of some of the security services that operate for the armed forces, and we know of the criticisms that followed the Deal bombing. Unless the Government get this privatisation right, they are in serious danger of creating a major threat to the security of our armed forces —to married quarters as well as to main bases.

The security implications are wider than that. Both the PSA and the Crown Suppliers operate in Northern Ireland. The hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), who is an expert on Northern Ireland matters, will appreciate the seriousness of my questions, and he will confirm that in Northern Ireland, the building industry is widely infiltrated by paramilitaries, both Unionist and Republican, who use it to obtain money for terrorist activity. We have known about that for some time, and it is one of the most difficult problems with which we have to deal.

The Secretary of State may or may not know that some of the civil servants who work for the PSA and Crown Suppliers are considered to be "legitimate targets" in the jargon of the paramilitaries. The Secretary of State and the Government have simply not considered how serious this matter is. Do they propose to transfer all those civil servants to the Northern Ireland Office, and if so, I repeat my question: "Why privatise?" Or will they make separate arrangements?

Or will they do what I fear most and play into the hands of the paramilitaries, as they often have despite their rhetoric? The Government have a record of profoundly misjudging political and paramilitary activity in Northern Ireland. The Secretary of State is looking worried and shaking his head. Let him say something then; let us hear something from him about security. Why did he not say in his speech that the security implications of privatisation were deadly serious? I choose my words carefully.

Mr. Chris Patten: There is a limit to what I shall say on this issue, not because of a lack of knowledge but because there are some things that it would be extremely irresponsible for me to say, just as there are some things that I think it is bordering on the irresponsible for the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) to say.

Mr. Soley: No.

Mr. Patten: Let me follow the point through. There are some of us who, for reasons of our past, take a personal as well as a ministerial interest in the arrangements. I am sure that Ministers and others have experienced security arrangements being made perfectly satisfactorily by the private sector, just as the design and construction of many of our military establishments is looked after by the private sector.

The hon. Member for Hammersmith should be a little careful in his approach to these issues. I repeat that, for personal as well as ministerial reasons, I have even more cause to be concerned about these matters than he has.

Mr. Soley: That makes it all the more important that the Secretary of State should answer the question. He should not have introduced the Bill without mentioning security—and do not let the right hon. Gentleman stand there and preach to me about what is and is not a responsible thing to do. Does he really believe that the paramilitary organisations are not aware that privatisation is to take place? Does he really think that people concerned about the defence of this country are not aware of it? Does he think that he can pilot the Bill through Committee without ever talking about security? Is that the extent to which the Government would take their secrecy? He is right that he has been concerned with security issues, as all of us who have been involved in the affairs of the Northern Ireland Office have been concerned with them —in opposition or in government.

It is deeply disturbing that Ministers' cars are not to be privatised although the family homes of armed forces personnel are. I want to know why. It is legitimate to ask, on behalf of every armed forces family in this country and overseas, what sort of security they will have once the PSA and the Crown Suppliers are privatised.

Mr. Mans: The hon. Gentleman cannot pursue that argument much further, because large numbers of armed forces families live in private dwellings, miles away from the bases. I think that, on reflection, the hon. Gentleman will agree that his point has nothing whatever to do with the privatisation of the PSA.

Mr. Soley: I shall allow the hon. Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) to get away with that on the grounds of his naivety and ignorance. If he reads the various reports and assessments of the work done——

Mr. Mans: Withdraw that.

Mr. Soley: No. I meant exactly what I said. The Crown Suppliers and the PSA determine and advise on arrangements to deal with counter-terrorist activities on behalf of our armed forces. If the hon. Gentleman does not understand that, he does not understand what they do.

We did not hear from the Secretary of State whether that aspect of the bodies' activities will be wholly privatised, partly privatised or not privatised at all. We need to know that and it is no good the Secretary of State ducking the issue and hoping it will go away. It will not go away because we are not prepared to gamble with people's lives, even if the Government are. The issue is far too important to ignore.

Let us look again at what the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Itchen, had to say:

> "For security reasons, I have decided to exclude from the sale the design and procurement of security furniture and equipment and the car service which transports Ministers and senior officials in London."—[*Official Report*, 28 July 1988; Vol. 138, c. 441.]

[Mr. Soley]

That is all. We have to forget the families, Faslane and Aldermaston. The Government are concentrating only on the ministerial car service, security furniture and equipment and its design and procurement. That is what we have been told in a public document, but the Secretary of State said that he could not refer to that. However, the Under-Secretary of State has already discussed it and it has been discussed in public. The Secretary of State is trying to hide behind the idea that somehow we cannot discuss security now.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman knows, understands or is interested in the fact that most of the married quarters are maintained by private sector maintenance firms.

Mr. Soley: Yes, but who advises them about security against paramilitary activities? Will the Minister accept that the PSA and the Crown Suppliers advise them? The Minister should not intervene unless he knows what the debate is about.

The PSA advised on the security on the Prime Minister's home in Dulwich. Is that kind of advice going to be privatised? Will it be excluded from the privatisation? We have heard only one little statement from the Under-Secretary of State, which I have quoted, that certain parts of the PSA will not be privatised. That is not enough and the House would find it unacceptable if those matters could not be discussed in detail in Standing Committee. I put the Government on notice, as I put them on notice about the money involved in the Bill, that we will not put the security factor at risk here just because the Government want a little extra money in an ideologial bid to back their private supporters. That is not good enough and it will not do for the British people.

Relationships with overseas Governments are also involved. Reference has been made to this and I want to refer to a meeting between senior British civil servants and members of the United States air force represented by Lieutenant Colonel Dean Bartel and General Anderson, the officer commanding the 3rd air force. That meeting took place in October in Germany. The United States representatives said that privatisation would cause great difficulties.

We must consider the way in which the American Government's attitude on this issue differs from that of the British Government. Congressional rules specifically forbid the United States air force from using a private sector firm. Work must be placed in a relevant Government Department in the host country. I presume that that rule exists for security reasons, something which the Secretary of State is not even prepared to discuss on the Floor of the House.

Congressional rules also forbid the location of private sector companies on USAF bases. In other words, such companies will not be able to enter those airfields to work. There are PSA works offices based on USAF airfields. Under that rule, PSA works offices on USAF sites would have to be closed after privatisation unless the Secretary of State can tell us that these matters have been considered and debated with the United States' Government and a satisfactory arrangement has been reached. However, that is unlikely because American procurement is based on official United States documentation which cannot be delegated to a non-governmental body.

Lieutenant Colonel Bartel is responsible for USAF civil engineering work. He has expressed himself fully satisfied with the PSA's performance and has said that the United States Government would oppose the privatisation of PSA because of the interference with USAF operational arrangements. He said that the Americans regarded the privatisation of the PSA as a breach of treaty obligations. I do not know how far that goes in the detail of the treaty, but we will have to pursue that in Committee. However, we should not have this Second Reading debate without the matter being referred to. General Anderson said that pressures were being applied at the highest levels to retain the status quo. Again, we will want to investigate that in Committee.

The situation is extremely serious and I will touch on other issues in Committee. However, I want to refer now to environmental issues because it is important that we remember that it was the Secretary of State for the Environment who moved this Second Reading. No doubt the Prime Minister gave him this post because she wanted to saddle him with the poll tax, water privatisation and a sports Bill, none of which he believes in. That was a useful way of curbing his ambitions. It was also useful for the Prime Minister to appoint the right hon. Gentleman because that gave some credence to her green record.

The Secretary of State is in some trouble with this Bill. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, in one of his enlightened moments, which are very few and far between —although I would not like to deny him this one—said:

> "The sensitive use of the landscape is central to the role of the PSA. With over 300,000 hectares of land under its management, from Cornwall to the Shetland Isles, as well as many places around the world . . . the Agency sets and meets high standards. PSA landscape architects work, along with practices of international standing, to bring about sensitive and effective results."

It is interesting that the notice of the privatisation contained in this Bill appeared immediately next to the phrase in the Queen's Speech:

> "My Government will continue to attach very great importance to protecting the . . . environment."

The environmental side of the PSA will be sold out along with the British taxpayer and the interests of the security of this country.

Mr. Chope: Does the hon. Gentleman believe that it would be a good idea for the PSA's expertise in landscaping to be available to the wider private sector?

Mr. Soley: It is already available and it would be even more available if, instead of this absurd privatisation exercise, the Minister said that work could be put out to tender for private sector contracts.

The problem is that the Under-Secretary of State served on Wandsworth council. That council has one of the few hospitals which has not been closed down under the community care programme and the councillors have not yet been put out on the streets. However, they should be. The Minister is trying to live up to an absurd reputation. He seems to believe that privatising and flogging everything off is the only way to influence the private sector. Reports from the Minister's Department show that the PSA raises standards in the private sector. Why does the Minister deny it that role? Why should it be flogged off instead?

I now want to refer to a very important point, which to give the Secretary of State his due, he touched on. We will want to consider staff conditions very carefully in Committee. Redundancy is also important. I understand why the Bill prevents what might in effect in certain circumstances be double redundancy. However, I do not accept that the Bill or the Secretary of State's speech explain what will happen to staff who are moved from the present system in which they have certain guarantees about redundancy to a company with worse standards.

With regard to redundancy and pensions, we should state that staff should not be transferred to a system which is worse than the one they have. We must bear in mind what happened to many workers, particularly in the Health Service and those in lower paid jobs. They were very vulnerable when they were transferred to the private sector which, far from negotiating up their conditions, negotiated them down. A low-paid exploited midnight army of people are doing some of the most essential but most unattractive work in the country. The type of work in the Crown Suppliers and the PSA is different, but the pension rights and redundancy arrangements of the staff are crucial.

In no circumstances should staff be transferred to a private organisation in which their conditions of service, including redundancy money and pensions, are less than they presently receive from the Civil Service. The Civil Service has an honourable record as a good employer. The last thing that we should do is hand over a group of people as if they were goods and chattels instead of people who need to make provision for themselves and their families. Will they be allowed to transfer to another scheme of comparable value without great cost to themselves? Employees should not have to pay more to get the same pension. We shall explore those issues in much greater detail in Committee.

I repeat what I have already said to the Minister. There are two key matters. The first is the unacceptable way in which the Government are handling the funding of privatisation and the way in which they have used taxpayers' money to feather the pockets of many private companies in this country and overseas. It is a misuse of the public's money. The second matter relates to security. It is deeply disturbing, and the Secretary of State did not even consider it important enough to debate.

The Opposition will not play with the security of this country. We will not allow it to be diminished in any way. We will pursue this matter in Committee to make sure that the protection of our armed forces is at least as good as that of Ministers in their cars.

6 pm

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): It is certainly a source of great satisfaction to me and, I hope, to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to find clause 6(2) included in the Bill. Alas, it is rare to find a Bill introduced into this House or into another place which extends to Northern Ireland. I have long criticised the procedures whereby almost all legislation affecting Northern Ireland is done by unamendable Order in Council, so I am pleased that this Bill extends to the whole of the United Kingdom.

I felt that some parts of the speech by the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) were a little unreal, particularly those parts in which he expressed concern lest there might be a loss of jobs on United States bases following the privatisation of the Property Services Agency. It was not so long ago that the hon. Gentleman's party was advocating the closure of all American bases, so his concern about the possible loss of jobs seems rather unreal. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will make it clear that proper arrangements will be made to protect and safeguard the legitimate and necessary interests of the United States forces who are stationed in this country at our invitation.

The other part of the hon. Gentleman's speech which I found to be rather unreal was his statement which gave the impression that the security of the United Kingdom depended upon the Property Services Agency. I shall say some generous things—at least they will be intended to be generous—about the Property Services Agency, but to describe it as a major factor in the security of these islands is to overstate the case.

The overwhelming majority of the work that is presently done on behalf of or under the direction of the Property Services Agency is done by the private sector. It is ludicrous to say that, if the Property Services Agency happens to go from the public sector to the private sector, which of course I want it to do, there will be less involvement by the private sector. Following the privatisation of the Property Services Agency, some of its security responsibilities will continue to be carried out by the agency itself, whether in public or private ownership, and some responsibility may be transferred to client bodies.

This is a memorable debate. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is the sixth Secretary of State for the Environment in the past 10 years. I had the priviledge to serve under my noble Friend Lord Jenkin of Roding. Each of the former Secretaries of State, even including my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), whose absence from our proceedings upstairs yesterday I deplore, had distinguished careers at No. 2 Marsham street. I mean no discourtesy to any of them, but I predict that the record of my right hon. Friend will be no less distinguished than those of any of his five predecessors. His record is already significantly better than those of any of his predecessors. My right hon. Friend has succeeded where each of his predecessors has failed—he has brought this Bill before the House.

I am happy to see in his place my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), an Etonian baronet from London, not from Clywd, North-West. When I arrived at Marsham street in June 1983, I had the good fortune to find my hon. Friend, who was then Under-Secretary of State with responsibility for the Property Services Agency. I found also that my noble Friend Lord Jenkin of Roding had allocated the Property Services Agency to me. My hon. Friend will confirm that, from the day I arrived at Marsham street until the day I left, I was strongly in favour of bringing the Property Services Agency into the private sector. I shall give way to my hon. Friend if he wishes to dissent.

Sir George Young (Ealing, Acton): I could not miss the opportunity of hearing my hon. Friend's second public performance since our proceedings have been televised. My hon. Friend exhibited impatience when he found that standards in the PSA were not up to his high expectations. He quite rightly pursued the policy of privatisation, which comes to fruition this evening.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): This is a tender moment.

Mr. Gow: The tender can wait.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Acton for his remarks. I hope that he will catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, before 10 o'clock.

The opening remarks by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and by the hon. Member for Hammersmith were characterised by some general references to privatisation. It will come as a surprise to hon. Members to learn that I have always been and remain a strong advocate of putting into the private sector all those aspects of the nation's life that it is not essential to have in the public sector. There may be a legitimate dispute between the hon. Member for Hammersmith and his right hon. and hon. Friends about whether the Property Services Agency must be in the public sector.

The task of maintaining the Government's stock of buildings and responsibility for some of our new buildings, including military buildings, can properly be entrusted to the private sector. It is perfectly proper for the hon. Member for Hammersmith to say, "No. Responsibility for maintaining Government buildings must be with a public sector body." I do not share that view, but it is certainly legitimate.

Mr. Dalyell: As the hon. Gentleman is a strong advocate of privatisation, is it not a matter of dismay to him, and doubtless to the electors of Eastbourne, that, two years ago, the Crown Suppliers was making a profit of about £5 million? Am I wrong in saying that, under the guidance of the Under-Secretary of State, it lost £1 million last year? What a mess the Under-Secretary of State has made of things. Would the hon. Gentleman's constituents in Eastbourne not be extremely angry?

Mr. Gow: I rejoice in the fact that there was profit; I do not rejoice in the fact that there was a loss—

Mr. Dalyell: He caused it.

Mr. Gow: That underlines the very point I am making *[Interruption.]* Well. I have only been a Member of the House for the twinkling of an eye, but in those 15 years nothing has altered the view that I held on arrival—that no special gifts, qualities or abilities were given to Ministers to enable them to run industries and enterprises better than folk outside.

Mr. Dalyell: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that John Stuart Mill coined the phrase.

"the deep slumber of a decided opinion"?

Should not the hon. Gentleman now wake from it?

Mr. Gow: I shall quote some Mill at the hon. Gentleman—

> "The worth of a State, in the long run, is the worth of the individuals composing it . . . A State which dwarfs its men, in order that they may be more docile instruments in its hands . . . will find that with small men no great thing can really be accomplished."

So I believe that John Stuart Mill supports my argument rather than that of the hon. Gentleman.

Sir Giles Shaw (Pudsey): I hesitate to interrupt my hon. Friend when he is in such erudite flow, but I was worried because he said that small men can offer no great accomplishments.

Mr. Gow: I apologise to my hon. Friend. I was not referring to "small men" in any literal sense.

I was asserting that the private ownership of the Property Services Agency, especially by those who work in it—by worker shareholders—is a concept that has long been dear to my heart. When British Gas was offered for sale to its workers, 99 per cent. of those who work for British Gas took up shares. When British Telecom was offered for sale to its workers, 96 per cent. of those who worked for British Telecom applied for shares. I believe——

Mr. Flannery *rose*——

Mr. Gow: Yes, I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman, whose decision not to stand at the next election I deplore.

Mr. Flannery: The hon. Gentleman is wrong—it is nearly 16 years since he became a Member for the House. I remember going to Ireland with him at the time.

On his point about workers getting shares, surely the con is obvious to everybody? They get the shares as part of a propaganda ploy and in no time at all they are sold to the big boys. The hon. Gentleman knows that as well as I do.

Mr. Gow: The hon. Gentleman has chosen a bad day on which to make that intervention, because today is the day of the sale of the water industry. I am happy to be able to tell the hon. Gentleman that tens of thousands of those who work in the water industry have applied for shares in that industry. There will be a great expansion of worker shareholders in the water industry, for which my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope) has responsibility.

I warmly welcome the proposal, because it will give those who work for the Property Services Agency the chance to become owners of the enterprise in which they work, but sadly that will not be until 1992. I hope that my right hon. Friend may be able to bring that forward.

Many other hon. Members wish to take part in the debate, so I shall make just one more point. The arrangements in recent years for managing and administering the Government estate have been most unsatisfactory. For many years, the Government estate has been run only by the Property Services Agency, which then had to find somebody else to do the work. It was almost the case that if the washer broke on a tap one had to get hold of the Property Services Agency simply to get a new washer. That procedure was cumbersome. Despite some excellent people working for the Property Services Agency, much of its work—although by no means all—was inefficient, not through the fault of those who worked for the agency, but because the system itself was cumbersome.

Therefore, I greatly welcome the new arrangements that are about to come into force, whereby each Government Department will be responsible for the maintenance of its own buildings and will be able to go where it pleases to find those who will maintain, repair and improve its buildings. I am afraid that many Government buildings, not only in London but throughout the kingdom, are in a bad state of repair, have been poorly maintained in the past and in too many cases provide a working environment that would be unacceptable in many private buildings and private companies. I hope that the new arrangements that my right hon. Friend described will mean that we can bring to a much higher standard of maintenance and repair the buildings in which so many of our civil servants work, because some of the buildings in which some of our civil servants are working are frankly deplorable.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the Bill. It has only six clauses and deserves to receive a speedy passage through Committee. I congratulate him warmly on having introduced it.

6.15 pm

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): I listened to the pearls of wisdom from the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), who is graciously smiling the smile of the crocodile, with the tears to match, but where does that take us? Where is the justification for the Bill?

Let us look at the Bill analytically. The Secretary of State spent a long time on it this afternoon, but he did not justify what is sought to be done. The hon. Member for Eastbourne made a tour de force across his own Benches, but he did not justify what is sought to be done. We must ask ourselves this simple question; will the service provided to the state be more economical in cost to the state before or after this privatisation? That is the only question and the only test.

Let us look at the history of privatisation, starting way back with INMOS and moving forward through the royal ordnance sale, and Rolls-Royce and Rover as they rolled through. What have those sales really done? The state has received a capital sum. We have also seen the sale of the gas, telecommunications and water industries—assets that belong to each and every one of us.

The state received a capital sum, but who received the benefit of that capital sum? Was it the millions of people who do not pay any income tax? Was it the millions who live on social security, or was it those who pay a lot of income tax or who used to pay a lot of income tax, but whose tax rates have been scaled down from 60 per cent. to 40 per cent.? Those people were the beneficiaries. What of the properties, the goods, the companies and the firms that were sold off? What about our assets? Who now has the profits from those?

I will not bore the House by talking about Rover, because that is a scandal itself, but let us look at the royal ordnance factories that were sold off. Enfield is an example of a once thriving works that is now closed. The value of the land was massive and who has been the beneficiary? The state? No. The beneficiary is the company that bought it so cheaply.

Let us look at Rolls-Royce, British Steel and the gas industry. Who has been the beneficiary of those sales? Certainly not the people of this land. The major taxpayers have received tax cuts and ultimately it is they who own those industries today.

I turn now to the Property Services Agency and the Crown Suppliers. I do not intend to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) and to discuss security, because that matter can be debated later and elsewhere. I shall simply consider the maintenance of the buildings. Let us take as an example the construction of the courts, where much work still remains to be done. The Truro court, built by the Property Services Agency if my memory serves me correctly, stands internationally recognised. Maidstone is another one. It used the wrong marble, but that does not matter. It may have been the most expensive staircase in history.

Leaving that mistake aside, if in future such buildings are built by private companies, they will take into account in their quotations not only labour and material costs but that other element which any private company tendering for a contract includes—namely, profit. The Property Services Agency does not need that profit element so it does not include it in contracts. Hence the examples of valuations that we were given earlier. The costs were considerably less than in the private sector. That is bound to be. The private sector always includes profit in its figures. It has to worry about the variables, because profit is important. Companies do not trade for nothing; they trade to make a profit. That is a piece of simple economics which seems to escape the Government every time. Plainly, the costs to Government Departments will increase.

Who will benefit from the sale of the Property Services Agency? We know that we the taxpayers, and the millions who do not pay tax, will get nothing out of it. Perhaps in 1992—the timing is significant: just before the next election—there will be further tax cuts funded by the sale of state assets.

How will the Property services Agency be sold off? There is talk of turning it into a company. Fine. What will we do then? Turn it into a co-operative, such as National Freight? Its thousands of employees receive the benefit or profit. Will the Property Services Agency be sold to some boys in the city—for example, construction companies such as Higgs and Hill, Tarmac or Trafalgar? How will it be valued? The Government's track record in valuing assets before sale leaves much to be desired.

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): If the hon. Gentleman is so anxious about taxpayers' money, how does he defend a system such as that under which Buckingham gate was constructed where the original estimate was £4·5 million and the completion costs more than £12 million? Similarly, the completion costs of Richmond house were over £1 million more than the estimate. That was a waste of taxpayers' money under the present system.

Mr. Bermingham: The hon. Gentleman makes a valuable point, and I am big enough to concede it. If people under-estimate the cost of construction, whether in the public or private sector, a little column called "extras" is added. The building trade is full of such extras. They represent additions and alterations which are usually certificated by the architects. The hon. Gentleman probably knows that from his experience in industry. There were simply wrong estimates of the actual cost. If someone makes a wrong estimate, they are not employed again, or they are sued.

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves (Birmingham, Hall Green): How often have responsible members of the Property Services Agency or any other governmental or quasi-governmental agency been sued or dismissed for making such wrong estimates?

Mr. Bermingham: There is no reason why they should not be sued or dismissed. If mistakes have been made—the Government have been in charge of the agency for the past 10 years—why have they not been inquired into and sorted out? The Government cannot shy away from the problem and say, "We will sell it off to get away from the problems in the future." That is to dodge the issue.

[Mr. Bermingham]

As I was saying, if the Property Services Agency is sold to the people who work in it, they will make a profit. However, I suspect that it will slip down a sleazy road and fall into private hands at a valuation far lower than its true value. The City has been laughing for 10 years. It has bought up Government assets at knockdown prices.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): It has been the sale of the century.

Mr. Bermingham: They got an even better bargain from the Government. The Government cannot value anything.

The Crown Suppliers services embassies abroad and Government Departments. It has developed its own technique.

It lost money last year, but with proper management it is capable of making a profit. Who will benefit? Certainly it will not be the people who will work in it eventually, unless there is an in-house buy-out in which everyone participates. However, I suspect that, because the Government are not fond of co-operatives, that will not be the case. There will be no winners from the point of view of the state, but simply increased costs.

Costs will have to increase, because companies have to make a profit to live. It is simple economics. The cost increases, the state pays more and the taxpayers receive a lump sum but pay for it afterwards. If ever there was a case of live now, pay later, the Government are a prime example. They sell anything to survive today, knowing that someone else will have to pick up the tab tomorrow.

The Bill is not a good Bill. It is full of doctrine and dogma, and it lacks common sense. It is a bill which the next generation will have to meet to pay for the Government's squandering behaviour.

6.26 pm

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): We have heard accusations from the Opposition that the Bill is full of dogma, but that is the only true accusation that we could level at them. The charge of Conservative dogma is completely refutable. In their defence all that Opposition Members do is to preach what to us sounds like a greater degree of dogma. Some years ago I noticed that at one of its conferences the Labour party decided to repeal the clause—I think it was clause four—in its constitution which contains provisions for state ownership. That clause may have been dropped from the Labour constitution but nothing that has been said by Labour Members today gives us reason to believe that they have forgotten the dogma upon which so many of their policies depend.

I am pleased to take part in the debate and that the measure has at last come before the House after a long delay. Some of us have asked why so much time was wasted in bringing the Crown Suppliers and Property Services Agency into the private sector, but the explanation given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State this afternoon satisfies me. We have talked about efficiency and value for money, but another side of privatisation must be taken into account. It may be described as the social implications of privatisation.

I shall concentrate my remarks on a narrow aspect of the proposals, the knock-on effect of this privatisation on a manufacturer who is largely dependent on the Crown Suppliers as a major customer. I refer to Enham Industries, near Andover. I raise the matter so that the Government may be aware of the effect that privatisation could have on charitable organisations, which could in turn throw an extra burden on to taxpayers, in this case to support disabled people who hitherto have done so much through their efforts in manufacturing to support themselves. Enham Industries is one such organisation. The Papworth centre, near Cambridge, to which it is linked, is another. The well known Remploy factories could be similarly affected by this privatisation measure.

I declare an interest as an unpaid governor of the Enham village centre for the past 25 years. The village is in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell), who is sorry not to be in the Chamber now. He has another urgent meeting to attend and apologises for his absence. He knows the Enham village centre well and has visited it often. Even without hearing what I have to say he wishes to be associated with my remarks.

Enham Industries comprises the industrial and commercial element of the Enham village centre, which is a self-contained community supporting an industrial work force of about 350 people, two thirds of whom are disabled. The centre was founded towards the end of the first world war for the permanent resettlement of disabled ex-service men and their families, with the opportunity to work as an essential ingredient of the rehabilitation process, especially when linked to adjacent living accommodation within the supportive community.

Over the years the village has adapted to changing needs and today it caters for a wide range of physical and other disabilities, including those resulting from illnesses and accidents as well as congenital diseases. To the uninformed observer, Enham looks like a typical English village. That is why it provides such a good environment for the rehabilitation of disabled people. Enham also offers special training and retraining opportunities for handicapped people, particularly the young. Its commercial activities have reduced considerably the dependence of those people on the state. That is something which we all want to see.

Some of that work could be put at risk by the Government's proposals to privatise the Crown Suppliers. There is considerable uncertainty at Enham about the method and precise timetable of privatisation. We have learnt something about that this evening, and I am relieved that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State wishes to proceed with all possible haste. His motto was certainly sooner rather than later. Fears about the timetable have not necessarily been dispelled by the contents of the Bill or the explanatory note which my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State made available to us. I appreciate the Government's need to keep their plans fairly fluid, but it is important for those who work at Enham to have a firm idea about timings.

The survival of the furniture factory, which is the largest unit in the village, is critical to the well-being of the entire village. It has a turnover of £3 million out of Enham's total industrial turnover of £4·5 million. Besides employing many disabled people directly, it supports overheads which enable other disabled people to be employed and has the potential to make money to support some of Enham's other activities, such as a sheltered computer unit and a professional management team who give advice to other employers on the employment of disabled people.

For many years the furniture factory has depended heavily on one customer, the Crown Suppliers. In earlier years, its business was less price-sensitive that it is now and substantial profits were achieved. The money was ploughed back to help the beneficiaries in the village. The risk inherent in over-dependence on one customer was recognised in recent years and every attempt made to rectify it—with, I am afraid, rather limited success, mainly because of the apparent inflexibility of the factory and work force. As a result, they remain about 80 per cent. dependent on the Crown Suppliers to supply their goods to the Ministry of Defence.

Crown Suppliers' work is obtained by competitive tender. The only advantage to Enham as a charity employing severely disabled people is its priority supplier status with Government Departments. Although it competes on price, delivery and other factors, if it does not win a tender, it can still ask to be allocated part of the business on the same conditions as the best tender.

Much of my anxiety for Enham's future hinges on the Government's apparent formula for privatisation. It has been reported that the Crown Suppliers may be broken up into two or three parts, with its furniture side being one major part. I understand that, of its total sales of £230 million in 1988-89, wooden furniture accounted for £40 million and metal furniture for £33 million. Furniture is the main part of Enham village's output.

I should be grateful if my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State could be more specific about his proposals for the timing and structure of the privatised concern. The sister organisation to Enham, Papworth village near Cambridge, is in a similar position, with its furniture factory turning over about £1 million a year—not as much as at Enham—yet remaining 50 per cent. dependent on the Crown Suppliers as its principal buyer.

Of particular interest is the position of the Ministry of Defence as the ultimate prime user. Will it use a commercial middle man after privatisation to replace the Crown Suppliers, or will it be able to buy direct? Enham would favour selling directly to the MOD users, but if that part of the Crown Suppliers is to be sold, Enham would favour a management buy-out. I am glad that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said that he, too, favoured a management buy-out with an opportunity for the company to continue to deal on a "priority supplier" basis.

Benbow furniture designs is the trademark for Enham's furniture products. It belongs to the Ministry of Defence and is manufactured by Enham through a licence from the Crown Suppliers. What will happen to those trademarks following privatisation? I have a letter from my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State who says about them that the Bill

> "also provides for the transfer to the purchaser of Crown copyright attributable to the TCS business. This is likely to include the copyright of Benbow designs."

I am not certain that that is strictly true. I was under the impression that Benbow designs belonged to the Ministry of Defence and could be passed to someone else only if it was prepared to sell the licence.

I appreciate that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will be tempted to say that all these questions are for the Ministry of Defence because it is the ultimate prime purchaser of Enham's output, but he must have a view and we should like to hear it. In particular, we should like an undertaking from him that he will talk to the Minister of State for Defence Procurement to see whether ways can be found to cushion the effect of privatisation on an organisation which has done and continues to do so much to support itself.

6.39 pm

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): Clause 1 relates to the sale of

> "property, rights or liabilities which are associated with the Property Services Agency and The Crown Suppliers."

Clause 2 states that no redundancy compensation will be available to staff who are transferred automatically to a new employer. From clause 3, it appears that the Secretary of State will have shares in the company formed, but the right hon. Gentleman did not make that clear this afternoon. I hope that the Minister will clear up that matter when he replies tonight. Clause 4 relates to the "winding up of The Crown Suppliers' trading fund".

The Bill is about reducing public expenditure, and Conservative Members have stated that clearly tonight. The right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) made a number of speeches as Chancellor in which he said that it was the stated aim of the Government to reduce public expenditure to below 40 per cent. of gross domestic product. The Bill is a further step towards achieving that objective. Unlike Conservative Members, however, I disagree with it. If the Government choose to follow that path, they must remember the cost involved.

Provision for the privatisation of most of the PSA's designs, buildings and maintenance work has a knock-on effect. What will happen to standards? The hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) was right to say that many Government buildings are not in the best state. I have visited many such buildings, and I must agree with him. None the less, what will happen to standards if the Bill is passed? What standard will be laid down for those buildings erected for Government Departments following the passage of the Bill? Will those standards be better than the existing ones? The newer buildings that have been erected to PSA design are excellent. I visited Richmond house yesterday and it is built to a high standard. Perhaps one can criticise the outside of the building, but inside it is excellent.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Although I might criticise the arrangements for the valuation of Richmond house, I regard it as one of the most beautiful pieces of architecture erected this decade. It is a tribute to the architects who designed it.

Mr. Livsey: I agree that the frontage on to Whitehall is truly excellent, but most of us in the Norman Shaw building must look at the back of it, which is not so attractive. The entire building should look well rather than just the front.

We must ensure that standards are maintained and improved. We are talking about a large business and the Secretary of State has already said that it is worth £3·4 billion per annum. It is a big business to privatise, but the most important consideration must be the PSA employees. It employs 23,000 civil servants, and I am sure that we would all want their well-being to be guaranteed and their conditions of service protected and maintained.

The proposals for the privatisation are some of the most radical to be introduced under the Government's privatisation programme.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Reactionary.

Mr. Livsey: Perhaps that is a more suitable word.

The proposals are radical because the Government are going beyond just privatising a nationalised industry—they are striking at the heart of Westminster and Whitehall. They are talking about the privatisation of the services that support the Government, and that is a significant change in comparison with previous privatisations. We must ask whether that quantum leap of privatisation, which strikes at the heart of Whitehall, is desirable. On examination, there remains some doubt as to whether these services are suitable for privatisation.

If the Bill is to see the light of day, safeguards must be built into it in Committee. It is vital to safeguard the pension rights of the staff. The Secretary of State has mentioned that, but we need further evidence that the terms and conditions of the employees will be maintained. If the PSA and the Crown Suppliers become part of the competitive world, what will happen to the 23,000 civil servants who become employees of the new company? Will there be problems of overstaffing, as at present? Will immense cuts be made in the numbers employed? Will such reductions result in a decline in quality of workmanship and design? Will there be many relocations? So far those human-interest questions have not been answered.

It is also important to consider the land holdings and buildings associated with the PSA. We have been told that only the services provided by the PSA and the Crown Suppliers will be privatised, but the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) mentioned 300,000 hectares of land. I am sure that all hon. Members would like to know the location of those hectares. My guess is that they will be found in most of our constituencies. In the past 12 months some responsibility for land holdings has been handed from the PSA to the Ministry of Defence. I should like to know the extent of that split of responsibilities.

We have already flogged the security horse but it is one of the most critical factors of the privatisation. Over and above the questions that I put to the Secretary of State and the comments made by the hon. Member for Hammersmith, I shall mention a report in *The Independent* of 19 October that detailed the fears of the United States Air Force about the proposed privatisation. It said:

> "The US Air Force has voiced concern over the security implications of privatising the Property Services Agency, which carries out building work at bases in Britain.
>
> Representatives are to meet officials from the agency and the Ministry of Defence in the near future. A USAF spokesman said: 'We currently have a very sound working relationship with PSA and any proposed change would require serious negotiations.'"

What happened as a result of the meeting with the MOD in October? Has any agreement been made with the USAF as a result? What guarantees were the Government able to give the USAF in the event of the privatisation of PSA? I hope that the Minister will be able to give answers to those questions.

The security angle behind the privatisation relates to Cabinet Ministers' houses and foreign embassies. Given that they are the target of terrorists, their protection is of grave concern. Privatisation of the PSA begs the simple question: can one privatise a service that services Government? That question has not yet been adequately answered in this debate.

The Department of the Environment, which is responsible for the PSA, will have some difficulties as a result of what is going to happen. The services provided by the PSA, including design project management, property maintenance and estate management, are all competitive parts of the private sector. During the Bill's passage, we are duty-bound to ensure that there are safeguards for those operations. The property holdings are to remain in the public sector and the Government will remain the landlord. I hope that I have correctly interpreted the Bill.

Many weaknesses in the operation of the PSA have been outlined. The escalation of costs for the Department of Energy building—which tripled over 18 months—have been mentioned. That shows the necessity of tightening up the PSA management. Whether there is to be a management buy-out in the long-term future is a matter of public interest. It has been forecast that at least 50 per cent. of present PSA business will be lost as a result of competition. Whether the remaining parts of the PSA operations will prove desirable buy-outs for the management will be called into question.

Mention has been made in the debate of the furnishing business and core furnishing, which has a turnover of more than £70 million and on which many people's livelihoods depend. As the hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) said, the people involved in manufacturing that furniture are involved with charities and the disabled. I am sure that hon. Members would not wish those people to lose part of their livelihood.

The Secretary of State said that some of the Crown Suppliers' vehicles hire services would remain with the Government. Will the courier services and all the transport operations—not just some of them—remain with the Government? What will happen to an extremely desirable residence near Waterloo and one of the future Channel terminals, Wellington house, presently valued at £36 million? Will it be sold off because it is part of the Crown Suppliers? If it is to be sold at a knockdown price, I am sure that there are many sharks willing to take it over and make a great deal of it, because it is in a favourable position.

Why is the Bill being put through Parliament? What is it all worth? If the Government's privatisation programme is to retain any credibility, the Government should produce a balance sheet which has been audited by the National Audit Office so that everyone can be clear of the valuation of these public assets before the privatisation measure goes through so that the public and the House can judge whether this is the proper way to proceed with legitimate matters of public interest. I trust that this will be done and that we do not see the same sort of shabby business as occurred with Rover and Royal Ordnance.

Who will get their hands on some of the services involved? Many of the companies may be building companies. They may win in competition with the PSA or they may wish to get involved in other ways by buying their way in. It is salutary that many of these firms, including Cementation, Taylor Woodrow and Trafalgar House, all support the Conservative party, have a vested interest and might benefit from privatisation. We must regard with suspicion the objectives of and motives for this measure.

The Bill alters the course of Government management which has developed in a direct line since the middle ages when the first public works clerk was appointed to a royal palace. The PSA now looks after 8,000 public buildings. Does the PSA still have any involvement in royal palaces?

The Select Committee on the Environment said that the PSA was inefficient and its lines of communication were too long. The privatisation may be being used as an excuse to try to put right some of these matters. It is legitimate to ask whether options other than privatisation are available to make the PSA more efficient. Alternatives may well exist.

The Bill also involves some aspects of the Secretary of State's career. He has to make a partial commitment to Thatcherite privatisation. He is being clever enough to set up the final stages of the privatisation of the PSA until just after the next general election. It is a good case of the Secretary of State having his cake and eating it.

6.57 pm

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): I am grateful for the opportunity of following the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey), not because of the usual sour platitudes with which he ended his speech, using the normal Liberal tactic of substituting insults for policy, but because he referred earlier to a subject on which I wish to speak: the position of the PSA staff under the proposed privatisation.

I declare a constituency interest in this matter. There is a substantial PSA office at Westbury on Trym, in my constituency. Many people not only work in that office but live close by. When the former Secretary of State for the Environment, now Secretary of State for Defence, visited my constituency during the 1983 general election and walked the high street of Westbury on Trym he was immediately besieged and almost mobbed by PSA employees worried about the implications of the Alfred report. That report would have caused huge upheavals in the PSA and created the ultimate indignity for a Bristol office by putting it under Cardiff's control.

Substantial numbers still work at the Westbury on Trym office in north-west Bristol and I was anxious to receive as wide a briefing as possible on this measure's effects on the staff. Not surprisingly, I received a briefing from the Government and asked the union if it would supply me with a briefing, which it duly did. I received a briefing from the south-west branch of the National Union of Civil and Public Servants earlier this week, immediately grabbed it and scanned it with great interest. I admit that my interest rapidly waned as I read through it. The document did not give a broad view of the Bill's effects on the union members at the PSA, but was an openly party political document which set out to denigrate privatisation and slag off those of its members who happened to disagree politically with the writer of the briefing. It was a thoroughly scurrilous little document.

When dealing with the interests of the staff—its members—the document says that the business of the PSA will decline automatically as a result of privatisation. Let us forget what we heard this afternoon about the favourable costings that the PSA is able to put forward in privatisation because according to the writer of the document, privatisation has to mean decline because that is what the Labour party says it has to mean. Let us forget that the document is trying to look after the interests of its members who will themselves be responsible for whether the PSA is efficient or inefficient in future. I know, apparently better than the trade union concerned, that many of its members regard the PSA as an extremely efficient organisation and are in no way scared of competition. I find it worrying that the people they pay to represent them have totally the wrong idea of the work they are doing.

It is the union's recommendation that the staff concerned should be quickly offered a choice. One would think that we were talking about the direction in which their careers should go. That is not the case. The choice recommended by the union is between remaining in the Civil Service and joining the new PSA on loan. There is no question in the union's mind that any members of staff, whatever their political outlook, should have enough belief in the organisation for which they have worked for most of their lives to want to join it.

The nub of the scurrilous little document is that the union predicts that those members of staff with "highly marketable skills" will automatically leave the PSA and go to an employer of their own choosing. Neither we in the House nor my constituents live in a slave society. They have the right to choose their employers. I do not find it in any way deplorable that, as a result of the Bill, my constituents should be given the opportunity of selling their skills in the best marketplace. I find it deplorable that the people who represent them should so resent them possessing ambition.

The opportunities opened up in the Bill for my constituents are legion. It has already been pointed out that the PSA will benefit from being able to compete with the private sector in the private sector.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: When the hon. Gentleman consulted those civil servants, did he ask them about morale within the PSA? What did they say about that? He must have consulted them as it is an important issue for the hon. Gentleman. Did they say that morale was good or bad?

Mr. Stern: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will appreciate that there is never a simple answer to that question, and I did not receive a simple answer.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Did the hon. Gentleman ask?

Mr. Stern: Of course I asked, as I meet them regularly. They said that morale was variable. Some older members of staff greatly value their titles and positions as civil servants and are reluctant to see those positions changed. One of the reasons that I welcome delayed privatisation in this case is that it will give an opportunity for older members of staff to work out arrangements which will be satisfactory for them for the short remainder of their careers. If I am chosen to serve on the Committee, I will want to look at that point.

There were and there remain a large number of people to whom I have spoken who are excited at the prospects opened up by the Bill. The Crown Suppliers is excited at the prospects of taking part in the management buy-outs that are likely to come about as a result of the Bill. The answer to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) is that, as with so many other issues, there is no simple answer.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): The hon. Gentleman said that a person should be allowed to transfer to where he can obtain the highest reward. He also referred to older people who may have two years to go. What about job satisfaction? Did the hon. Gentleman question those people who are now employed by the Crown Suppliers or the PSA about job satisfaction and the

[Mr. William O'Brien]

fear that they may lose that job satisfaction? Did he question those people with perhaps four or five years to go about their fear that after two years they will not know where they belong? Those issues must be addressed. The prospect of privatisation is causing that concern.

Mr. Stern: I disagree totally with the final point made by the hon. Gentleman. Of course there are concerns in many different areas. They are not caused by privatisation; they exist anyway. The hon. Gentleman rightly speaks up for the people concerned about the effects on their careers, but he discounts the people—and I have spoken to many —who are excited by the prospects opened up by the change in character of the organisation. They are entitled to just as much consideration.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The hon. Gentleman said that he believes that morale is mixed. Can he explain why last year a net figure of 500 senior managers left the PSA? Why did they go? Were they happy and contented? Did it have anything to do with the prospect of privatisation?

Mr. Stern: The hon. Gentleman is seeking to create generalisations where none exists. In any organisation containing 23,000 employees, some will leave in any year and some will be senior managers. They will all leave if they see that prospects are better elsewhere. However, the hon. Member for Workington does not take account of people joining the organisation at the same time.

Mr. Hunter: My hon. Friend is right. He may wish to know that the Select Committee on the Environment discussed that point with the PSA, which said that it had a recruiting and retaining problem because of competition with the private sector.

Mr. Stern: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for underlining my point.

Prospects have opened up for my constituents—both present and future employees of the PSA—and are greatly enhanced by the Bill. For the first time, the organisation will be able to go into the marketplace and fully sell the skills that it has built up. That marketplace is not just in Britain but worldwide. The opportunity for the organisation to compete worldwide will be greatly enhanced by the Bill. I suspect that that is what is interesting many of those employees who are keen to share in the overall organisation. It is a unique organisation that has been held back by its position as part of the arm of just one of the world's Governments.

Many of my constituents are worried about their conditions and prospects under this change, but I welcome the Bill on their behalf. I have no doubt that it will create more opportunities for more people than there would ever have been had the PSA remained in public hands.

7.10 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): If selected, I look forward to serving on the Committee examining this Bill and I hope that the hon. Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) will serve on it, too. This Bill is a can of worms and there is a great deal to be said about it.

As the parliamentary debate goes on, it often happens that more issues are raised. I have a great respect for the hon. Member for Bristol, North-West; he and I are both involved in the promotion of chess, but I beg him to realise that, although he may be right about some people being excited by the prospect, a great many others are deeply worried about what is happening.

On 24 April 1989, I raised this subject by asking whether Ministers would honour the commitment given to this House by junior Ministers that

> "the pensions of the staff of the Crown Suppliers upon privatisation will be comparable to those they are entitled to under the principal Civil Service pension scheme."

The hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope) replied:

> "When tender invitations are issued, prospective purchasers will be invited to offer pension terms to transferred staff broadly comparable to those in the principal Civil Service pension scheme. Detailed future pension arrangements will be a matter for the purchaser to discuss with the Government in the course of the sale."—[*Official Report*, 24 April 1989; Vol. 151, c. *412*.]

That is open-ended.

On 25 April, following a clarification question from me and a holding answer, the Minister said:

> "No decisions have yet been taken upon the detailed criteria which will apply."—[*Official Report*, 25 April 1989; Vol. 151, c. *526*.]

We want to see the small print.

On 2 May, in reply to my question about non-industrial staff, the Minister said:

> "my right hon. Friend yesterday met the unions representing the staff of the Crown Supplier."—[*Official Report*, 2 May 1989; Vol. 152, c. *56*.]

The Minister has not satisfied the unions in these meetings.

On 16 May the Minister said:

> "The pension terms on offer would be assessed by the Government Actuary."—[*Official Report*, 16 May 1989; Vol. 153, c. *185*.]

That is more than an important point for the Committee.

The Secretary of State said this afternoon that, after privatisation, the staff of the Crown Suppliers and the PSA who are transferred will have

> "exactly the same redundancy payments as anyone else. They are not losing their redundancy entitlement".

The Secretary of State referred to the operation of the TUPE regulations. He is aware that regulation 7 excludes pensions, but severance arrangements in the Civil Service are enshrined in the principal Civil Service pension scheme. Does the Minister regard severance arrangements as caught by the regulation 7 exclusion? If so, will he or the Secretary of State tell the House whether he is satisfied that he has discharged his full obligations under the relevant European directive?

In the Civil Service, severance entitlements are guaranteed by Act of Parliament. The total obligation of the state towards civil servants in the PSA is estimated at £1 billion.

Does the Secretary of State recognise that the severance obligations are vulnerable in the private sector?

The construction industry is volatile and not known for its integrity in dealings with staff. Are Ministers aware that the union representing senior managers—the Institution of Professionals, Managers and Specialists—has said that it will take strike action to defend severance terms? The Treasury guaranteed severance terms in the ordnance factories and the dockyards. Why are similar guarantees not being offered to PSA staff?

Despite considerable underfunding, the PSA has been consistently acclaimed for promoting standards of excellence. Over the years, it has won numerous awards, ranging from the Europa Nostra diploma of merit for the superb restoration of Richmond terrace in Whitehall—I pay tribute to the late Duncan Sandys for his remarks about the PSA's work—to the Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland special award for the modernisation of Fort George in Inverness. Fort George was a fantastic performance by the PSA, and knowing as I do something about the Scottish highlands, I venture that no other body could have done the work as well. I am sure that the chairman of the Historic Buildings Council for Scotland, who is present, would not deny that.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): That was indeed a most remarkable restoration, to which the Historic Buildings Council contributed generously, but the idea that only members of the PSA could have achieved it is phenomenal. The PSA is not restoring Westminster abbey, but no one would deny that that is a remarkable restoration.

Mr. Dalyell: That is open to argument, but my point about the highlands stands.

Do the Government accept that the PSA's design costs have been shown to be 25 per cent. to 30 per cent. cheaper than those of private designers?

As for maintenance, in 1988 the Government abandoned their attempt to contract out district works offices after receiving tenders for the pilot in Southwark which proved to be twice as high as the PSA's costs. My hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), who spoke excellently, asked about that but did not receive an answer. Is it true or false?

I have had no answer to my question about the private valuation of the new DSS headquarters costing 266 per cent. more than the PSA's valuation would have done. What are the facts? On Second Reading, the House is entitled to know them.

We are also entitled to know what physical assets will be assigned to a privatised body, and on what basis. Will such property and equipment remain in public ownership? Will it be leased to such a body or given it as a sweetener?

I listened extremely carefully to the Secretary of State's opening speech and took down his phrase that flotation was not envisaged. If not, who will own these assets?

I want to say a word about service and value for money. The Minister has conceded that the sensitive use of landscape was central to the role of the PSA. With more than 300,000 hectares of land, from Cornwall to the Shetlands—as well as many other places around the world —under its management, the agency sets and meets high standards. PSA landscape architects work with practices of international standing to bring about sensitive and effective results. However, the privatisation of the PSA will reflect an ill-considered reliance on market forces to conserve and enhance the environment, and will ignore the PSA's critical role. Ironically, the announcement of the PSA's privatisation in the Queen's Speech was followed by the statement:

> "my Government will continue to attach very great importance to protecting the environment."

Let us start with the north, although there are endless other examples. What will happen to the ownership of all the Orkney and Shetland brochs? They are of European importance and extend right through Britain. It is not clear who will take over the ownership of royal palaces and so on from the PSA and whether there will be leaseback. The economical use of departmental accommodation requires centralised co-ordination. In the PSA's absence, Departments will end up unnecessarily competing against each other for scarce and costly accommodation with the constraint of central pressures to order the proper use of space. Moreover, the lack of professional understanding in the market place will cause Departments to pay higher rents than necessary.

Do the Government deny that? In its second report for the 1986-87 session the Select Committee on the Environment said:

> "PSA should be allowed to manage the civil office and storage estate more positively to ensure that the estate is controlled strategically as a major property resource. It should also have control over major new construction work in this sector."

The unions say that that will not be achieved under the new regime, and they are right. If we are wrong about that, there ought to be some rebuke from the Government.

I should like to raise the matter of quality of service. Departments will have to fund their works organisations either from existing resources, thus undermining the services that Departments are supposed to provide and increasing pressure on their staff, or raise entirely new funding, placing an additional burden on the taxpayer. Departments may use a mixture of those two. The financial pressures on Departments will mesh with the competitive pressures on the PSA to push down standards across the range of Government accommodation requirements. The cheapest is not necessarily the best but Departments will be forced to accept the lowest tenders. Is that denied? I listened carefully to the Secretary of State and did not hear anything in his speech which would contradict that statement.

Will the Minister explain how such valuable public resources as property are to be valued? He did not explain that, nor did he say who will be given that task and how soon such a portfolio will be completed. What assurance can he give the House that such valuations will be able to withstand public scrutiny so ensuring that, bluntly, the public are not ripped off?

Clause 2(2) refers to the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981. What undertakings is the Minister prepared to give in relation to any person or persons subsequently made redundant by the new private body? Like many other parts of the legislation, that has not been thought out.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith mentioned security; I shall delete from my speech what I proposed to say about that because he covered it so powerfully. However, he was not answered. It is to the credit of the Secretary of State that he normally jumps up to answer a question, but this time he did not. His uncharacteristic behaviour reveals that the matter had not been thought through. My hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith posed legitimate questions.

I should like to put a precise question to the Secretary of State. Is it true that he has already decided that work on Ministers' residences and official residences will not be privatised? Has he decided that such work will remain with the Government? If there are no security problems in privatising the PSA, why are Ministers' residences, certain royal palaces and the House of Commons being excluded from his privatisation plans? Does he agree that that is a case of double standards—one for Ministers, their wives and families and another for service men and their dependants? The Minister may be able to answer that, but it jolly well looks as if there are double standards.

[Mr. Dalyell]

I am embarrassed that the security of 650 hon. Members and that of those who work with us should be judged on one set of standards while we lay down different standards for other people. If it is argued that those different standards are in no way inferior, the obvious questions to be posed by people outside is, why are they not good enough for people in the House of Commons and the royal palaces?

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves: They are not.

Mr. Dalyell: Did the Minister say that?

Mr. Chope: No, it was a mere mortal.

Mr. Hargreaves: As a mere mortal, may I inform the hon. Gentleman that Conservative Members would be quite happy to see those standards improved, because we do not find acceptable the standards that have to be endured in this place and in another place. Some of us would urge my hon. Friend the Minister to go further in terms of the standards provided by the PSA.

Mr. Dalyell: If that is so, why is the House of Commons not being privatised like everything else?

Mr. Hargreaves: We are referring not to the House of Commons but to its management and security.

Mr. Dalyell: I do not know whether that means privatising the Serjeant at Arms. This will be seen as double standards, and that is a source of embarrassment. I see that my hon. Friends on the Front Bench agree with me. The matter needs to be dealt with.

Other hon. Members wish to speak, so I will shorten the remainder of my speech. In terms of clause 2(2), will the Minister tell us what provision has been made with regard to the equalisation of pension rights and conditions as contained in the principal civil service pension scheme compared to those that the private body will be required to undertake? That is a rather careful question, and as far as I can make out it has not previously been answered.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): The other questions were careless ones.

Mr. Dalyell: The others were pertinent; I never ask careless questions.

In terms of clause 3, is it the intention of the Secretary of State to hold any shares or part shares in the proposed privatised body? I have ears like Jodrell bank and distinctly heard the Minister say to his parliamentary private secretary, "Never answer his questions." What limits are the Government likely to place on their proposals? Clause 4 is about the Crown Suppliers. Can the Secretary of State advise us about the order and extent of the liabilities that he seeks to extinguish?

In Committee, the debate will become more and more interesting, because some of us will keep an open mind and will continue to ask questions until they are answered. We shall make as much parliamentary difficulty as we can if Ministers are reticent. If they are forthcoming and frank, the Bill will go through Committee like lightning.

7.30 pm

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves (Birmingham, Hall Green): I am grateful for the chance to catch your eye Mr. Deputy Speaker, especially as, unfortunately, because of other commitments in the House, I shall probably not have the pleasure of joining the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) in serving on the Committee to which he is looking foward so much.

I wish to make a few comments on the hon. Gentleman's remarks about standards of security. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary is aware of recent incidents at premises under the management of the PSA in which I and my hon. Friends work. The incidents concerned breaches of security such as theft, the rifling of hon. Members' cabinets and so on. They were brought to the attention of my hon. Friend, the Serjeant at Arms and others whose busines it is to know about such matters. There might just as well have been bombs.

I ask the hon. Member for Linlithgow to pay attention to this point, as he referred to double standards of security. Conservative Members are concerned about the standards of security, and no doubt will be urging my hon. Friend to assure us that, in not transferring these specific services to the private sector, he can undertake that they will be improved by the PSA.

Mr. Soley: The hon. Gentleman is not giving a fair crack of the whip to those who have a duty to manage our security. We put them—quite rightly—in a difficult position because we tell them that we are prepared to take certain risks to ensure that the democratic process is as open and as public as possible. They must balance the security throughout the Palace; that is not the case for Ministers.

Mr. Hargreaves: I respect the hon. Gentleman's view, but I do not think that it applies to the office accommodation of hon. Members. It is a problem that needs to be addressed.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The hon. Gentleman is a valuation expert.

Mr. Hargreaves: Indeed I am, and I make no bones about it.

The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) referred to the whole process of privatisation. The Opposition have previously referred to privatisation as selling the family silver, but this valuation expert considers that we are selling the silver duster and improving it, the better to preserve the silver.

The whole question of privatising the PSA is one of efficiency. The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor asked why the legislation was being introduced. The simple answer is that we require these services to be provided more efficiently and more cost-efficiently. For the benefit of those Opposition Members who tend to be a little sceptical, I shall cite a personal example that I have brought to the attention of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary. In the car park some nine months ago, my car was unfortunately reversed into a pillar by one of the attendants. It took the PSA almost nine months to find out who employed the attendant and who was responsible and, subsequently, to arrange for insurance cover to be paid.

That is not the standard of efficiency that hon. Members would applaud. It is the very inefficiency that the

Environment Select Committee referred to when it said that the PSA was inefficient. It is my experience, and that of many of my hon. Friends, that that is true. It is in an effort to improve that efficiency that we are embarking upon this legislation.

We are discussing, especially in the case of the Crown Suppliers, the provision of such items as light bulbs and fuel. We might as well be talking about the provision of cabbages. Surely the Opposition are not suggesting that only the PSA can provide this House or other Government institutions with cabbages—*[Interruption.]* As one who has stood on the rostrum selling such objects, I assure hon. Members that they can be provided with equal skill, to better effect and more cost-efficiently by the private sector.

The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor referred to striking at the very heart of Whitehall. Many of my constituents—and, I am sure, many others—would welcome a fresh approach to the provision of services and the management of facilities around Whitehall. I have been ashamed by the shoddy condition of Government buildings. I have escorted senior foreign bankers—one, alas, was blown up the other day—to the Treasury. It is a disgrace compared with the Treasuries of other countries, which in a former existence I have visited either on official business or unofficially. I do not refer in particular to the outside of the building, which although not magnificent is reasonably well preserved; it is the inside of the building that shames me.

I urge hon. Members to reflect on what this legislation attempts to achieve—an improvement in the management and the provision of such items as light bulbs and heating oil. To say that only the PSA can supply those items is nonsense. There may be parts of the PSA—and I bow to the superior knowledge of my hon. Friends—which, for security and other reasons, might be better in the public sector, but surely not the provision of light bulbs and heating oil. It is crazy.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Why?

Mr. Hargreaves: Because there is a perfectly good marketplace in which to buy such items direct and more cheaply, which means better value for money. My constituents want cheaper services to Government and therefore lower public expenditure.

I rest my case in saying that there is good reason for privatising the PSA and the Crown Suppliers, and I urge my hon. Friends to support that view.

7.37 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): The hon. Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr. Hargreaves) made an interesting speech, which takes me to the heart of my case. I always try to be extremely objective about commercial matters—*[Interruption.]* Oh yes I do. Those hon. Members in the Chamber this evening, especially my hon. Friends, who have heard my comments on Finance Bills and trade and industry matters generally will know that I have sometimes dissented from a position because I felt that arguments about efficiency, effectiveness and delivery were crucial. However, I have never accepted the premise that efficiency in delivery of service is necessarily the monopoly of the private sector. I cannot intellectually come to terms with that as a proposition.

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves: I would appreciate it if the hon. Gentleman could also include in his remarks the concept that competition tends to lead to great efficiency in companies bidding for the same contract. It sharpens the acuteness with which they attempt to do the job. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman appreciates that.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I accept that and I shall deal with the question of competition when I speak about the Crown Suppliers. I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to a report of the Public Accounts Committee and appendices to evidence that we took on these matters some 15 months ago.

The proposition that the man who buys a cabbage in the private sector can necessarily acquire better terms than the man who buys a cabbage in the public sector is quite ludicrous. Whether I worked in the private or in the public sector would not influence in any way the efficiency and effectiveness of my operations as a buyer for a commercial organisation.

Mr. Hunter: The hon. Gentleman is embarking on an argument for the PSA's efficiency. He must bear in mind that he is flying in the face of the findings of the Select Committee on Environment.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I do not suggest for a moment that the PSA is my ideal example of absolute efficiency. My case is that the efficiency with which problems are handled in any organisation manned by mortal human beings such as myself, who can work equally well in either sector, is entirely dependent on motivation. If those in the public sector are motivated in the right way—

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves *rose—*

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I would willingly give way if I had time, and perhaps I can deal with the hon. Gentleman's point in private conversation. I have a good deal to say this evening, however, and I do not wish to detain the House unreasonably at such an early hour.

Let me ask the Minister to take the advice offered by President Bush last year at the Republican convention in the United States, which I was fortunate enough to attend. Turning to his opponent, the President said, "Watch my lips." I hope that the Minister will watch mine very carefully, as I should like him to address many of my remarks specifically in his reply.

In my interventions this evening, I have persistently argued that in this instance the public sector provides a cheaper service than the private sector. [Hon. Members: "Nonesense."] We are starting the debate in the knowledge that the party with the most votes to deploy at 10 o'clock tonight believes that my view is nonsense. Let me draw hon. Members' attention to the third report of the Public Accounts Committee on the Property Services Agency and management of the civil estate. Questions were asked, and the Committee was subsequently provided with information by the accounting officer, Sir Gordon Manzie.

I asked about a report into in-house and out-house design work done by the PSA. My question was:

> "Is it true that the latest Semple Sweett comparison into in-house out-house major design work shows that PSA are 25-30 per cent. cheaper than private consultants on major design work?"

The question concedes a little to the Government, and I shall therefore read the reply in full so that we can consider the implications:

> "The original Swett/Semple review in 1983 concluded that there was likely to be an additional cost of about 10-20 per cent. in putting work out to private consultants. However,

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"the review also concluded that it would always be more economical for a proportion of the design work to be carried out by the private sector, in particular to give the agency flexibility to deal with fluctuations in its workload. The latest management update of the Sweett/Semple review is still under consideration. When finalised it will cover the 44 year period to March 1987 and allow for the introduction and extension of fee competition for work done by private consultants. But the only really accurate and valid basis for comparison of in-house and out-house costs will not be available until the Agency is moved to a system of full commercial accounts, underpinned by much improved management information and accounting systems."

I understand that those systems of "full commercial accounting", underpinned by

"much improved management information and accounting systems",

are currently being put into place, and that computerised programme is being used in the Department. If I am right, will the Minister confirm that that programme has now been subjected to 1,900 modifications, that the whole system is a disaster and that it is making it almost impossible to evaluate the relative costs of in-house and out-house work?

These are internal departmental matters, separate from the propaganda of the debate. The Minister has come to the House with a proposal to privatise the agency, without having even established whether his proposal will save money: that, at any rate, is what was said in a recommendation that the Government accepted, provided by Sir Gordon Manzie for the use of the Committee.

On the Crown Suppliers, however, the answers given to us are far clearer. Let me quote from evidence provided by Sir Gordon and contained in the appendix to our report. Sir Gordon is in the Chamber this evening, and no doubt is nodding vigorously.

A paper was produced by the central unit on purchasing, which

"followed a review of the future of The Crown Suppliers undertaken by a team of officials led by the Cabinet Office. The Cabinet Office review team concluded on the information available to them that whilst privatisation would be possible"—

it is always possible——

"it would not, in their view, be in the pulic interest."

I understand that that review team is one of the most prominent committes in the land, that it is at the very heart of Government and that it advises the Prime Minister; but it says that privatisation would not be in the public interest. Those are not my words.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): They are the Cabinet Secretary's.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I presume that that is someone like the man who went to Australia some years ago.

Mr. Sedgemore: It was Sir Robin Butler.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: My hon. Friend has now established the identity of the person involved.

The evidence continues:

"They recommended that The Crown Suppliers should be retained as a central purchasing agency in the public sector with rather greather autonomy in accounting and staffing matters, but that further consideration should be given to contracting out certain of their non-procurement activities."

I am reading all this because that is what is says, although I may not agree with it. The thrust of the recommendation is "Keep it in the public sector."

"The Central Unit on Purchasing came to a similar conclusion about the central procurement function, but made rather more radical suggestions about The Crown Suppliers' other activities. A request by Dr. Oonagh McDonald"—

the former Member of Parliament for Thurrock——

"that a copy of the paper by the Central Unit on Purchasing should be placed in the Library was refused by Sir George Young"—

the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton, then a Minister in the Department——

"because it was not in a form suitable for publication."

What that really means is that the paper was embarrassing, that it should not be read by the public and that the union should not have access to it, because it reinforced its case.

I asked another question, about the study of the feasibility of privatisation by Coopers and Lybrand in association with Samuel Montagu, and the study of the options other than privatisation by Mr. Dewi Jones. They

"were commissioned because Ministers believed that, taking into account the wider commercial benefits"—

again, I am quoting Sir Gordon's reply—

"privatisation might prove to be a valid option despite the conclusions of the earlier reports. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State"—

who is now in his place but who is not watching my lips—

"responded to a request by Mr. Tam Dalyell for these reports by saying that summaries had been placed in the Library; the full reports were not proposed for publication because they contained commercially confidential information."

That was the second occasion on which Ministers were hiding the truth from Parliament because they did not want the case against privatisation to be put, based on accurate information produced by those who had had the opportunity to go into the Department and evaluate what was in the best interests of the general public.

"The Crown Suppliers Board prepared a commentary for Ministers on the Dewi Jones report."

Again I quote Sir Gordon:

"This was an internal document commenting on a commercially confidential report and"—

in the words of Sir Gordon—

"was not intended or suitable for publication."

I can presume only that that is yet another example of Sir Gordon having to defer to the Minister's instruction not to publish information that might be highly embarrassing to the Department.

I understand that there is another matter to which I might briefly allude at this stage.

"A team of staff of The Crown Suppliers, who are assembling a bid for all or parts of the business of The Crown Suppliers, asked for assistance with the cost of consultants' fees. The Government has agreed in principle that assistance should be given for some of these costs but no decision has been reached on the level of assistance to be provided."

I understand that that is a precedent. I hope that the Minister will comment upon it.

The Government do not want the truth to come out. The privatisation is being driven through by a Minister who is determined to foster his reputation as the grand privatiser of everything in the private sector. However, he has a small problem on this occasion. He has always promoted himself as effective and efficient and as a leading light in the formulation and promotion of the Government's privatisation policies, but the Minister has turned the Crown Suppliers, which was a highly profitable organisation, right round. In 1987 it made a profit in previous years. The Minister has turned the Crown Suppliers into a loss-making organisation. A profitable state concern has been turned into a loss-making state concern.

In desperation, therefore, the Minister now comes to the House to propose the privatisation of an organisation that he has been unable to manage effectively. He may say that he is not responsible for the Crown Suppliers management, but I understand that he has attended board meetings on privatisation. He takes an almost day-to-day interest in what goes on in the Crown Suppliers and at PSA generally. If I am wrong, I hope that the Minister will correct me. I understand that he has a permanent monitoring role.

Mr. Chope: I do not have a permanent monitoring role, in the sense of being a Crown Suppliers executive. It has an independent board that consists of full-time employees and non-executive directors. I have occasionally attended board meetings. I attended my first board meeting earlier this year. I hope to be able to be at another one later this month. I have attended a few other board meetings, and I accept my share of responsibility for the Crown Suppliers' performance. In the last year for which there are published accounts, Crown Suppliers made a profit of over £3 million on its trading activities.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The Minister's information perhaps updates that which I have, but there are those who will have heard what he has said. If what he has said can be challenged, it will be challenged on the Floor of the House during Question Time on environmental matters.

I remind the Minister what happened last year when he was tripped up over Richmond house. He knows what happened. On that famous evening he answered for the Government. We were well-briefed for that Adjournment debate. We knew that he had spent over £40,000 on a service that we knew we could have provided for him, if only he had asked us for our advice, for £1,500. If there had been a Labour Government throughout the Richmond house affair, the taxpayer would be over £40,000 better off, but because there is a Conservative Government who are obsessed with privatisation and contractorisation, public money has been lost.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I shall give way later.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Will the hon. Gentleman give way on this matter?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: No. There is plenty of time. We shall return later to it.

We caught the Minister out last year and we may have caught him out again this year. Does he remember that on 8 May he answered a written question from me, in which I asked

> "the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the Crown Suppliers continue to comply with established public procurement procedures and relevant EEC/GATT regulations."

The Minister answered:

"Yes."—[*Official Report*, 8 May 1989; Vol. 152, c. *355*.]

That was a very clear answer. I understand that no sooner had he given me that answer than there were phone calls to him from the Department asking, "Minister, are you sure that you haven't misled Campbell-Savours with that rather odd reply?" I understand that it was not true. Legal advice was taken by the Department. The Minister might care to intervene to deny what I now say.

I understand that for the last two years the Crown Suppliers has systematically avoided European Community requirements to open its supply contracts to competition throughout the European Community and has done so in the full knowledge that its actions could not be defended either in the European Court or, if contested, by European commissioners, in the same way as European commissioners will now contest the subsidies paid to British Aerospace in the Rover takeover.

The Minister is fully aware of the Crown Suppliers flagrant disregard of the Government's international treaty obligations. He has chosen to hide the information from Parliament by not giving direct and clear answers to questions on these matters. The European Community supplies directive 77/62 requires that

> "Government contracts for the purchase of goods valued at over £92,000 are put out to tender and that such contracts are advertised in the EEC Journal."

The reasons will be obvious to the House. Probity, fair trading, free competition and obtaining the best value of public money are among them.

For the past two years, however, the Crown Suppliers has been in flagrant breach of the regulations on numerous occasions over contracts for furniture and furnishings totalling tens of millions of pounds. When such contracts come to an end and further substantial quantities of the same goods are required, tender competition should be organised and advertised in the *European Community Journal*. Instead, contracts have been extended in clear breach of EC directives and the standard of public accountability that the House expects has clearly been breached. I stand to be corrected at any stage in my contribution, but I have been told that more than 120 contracts have been extended in that way.

I had some notes on Community rules on this matter, but they seem to have disappeared, so I cannot comment on them. I wanted to place them on the record. Perhaps one of my hon. Friends will ask me to give way.

Mr. Sedgemore: Would my hon. Friend care to develop the Richmond terrace affair, as I was the hon. Member who raised the matter on an Adjournment debate and I received no satisfactory answer at the time? The Minister used to be on Wandsworth council and he claimed to be a value-for-money person. He is now more adept at wasting public money than anyone cares to mention. When my hon. Friend has talked about that, will he draw the parallels between the Rover sale to British Aerospace and the extension of the 122 contracts that do not accord with the EC directive? If he will comment on that, we can then have another intervention from a Conservative Member and I shall come to help him look for his papers.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: They were here all the time. In reply to my hon. Friend, the matter of Richmond terrace remains for those who study *Hansard* to read well into the future and I am sure that they will draw the same conclusion as I have. Richmond terrace is a very beautiful building, but it was a very nasty contract.

As I understand the arrangements within the Community, contracts can be awarded under open or restricted procedures or, in specified circumstances, under a negotiated procedure. In open procedures, all suppliers who are interested in the contract can submit tenders. In the restricted procedures, tenders are allowed only from suppliers who have been invited to participate. Negotiation procedures allow contracting authorites to

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negotiate with one or more suppliers of their choice. In certain, closely defined circumstances—and it is on these matters that the Minister will have to comment later—they can do so without prior publication of a tender notice. We may be looking at those areas tonight and I am sure that the Minister will want to be clear about them because we shall be checking to see whether his comment is strictly correct.

Except in such closely defined circumstances, there must be a call for competition by means of a prescribed tender notice published in the official journal of the European Community, allowing minimum time scales for responses by candidates or by tenderers. When a contracting authority makes an award, it is required to send a contract award notice to the journal for publication and to record details of the award for inclusion later in a statistical return.

On the technical specifications of the contracts, whether or not procurements are above the thresholds in the directive, the contracting authorities have obligations under article 30 of the treaty of Rome. The Commission takes the view that decisions of the European Court of Justice mean that where there are no European standards, contracting authorities must consider products from other member states manufactured to a different design, but having an equivalent performance on equal terms with products meeting national or other preferred standards.

There are special procedures for dealing with matters of urgency. The directive provides that purchasers may use the negotiation procedure without prior publication of a tender notice in so far as is strictly necessary when, for reasons of extreme urgency brought about by events unforeseeable by the purchaser, time limits laid down for the open and restricted procedures cannot be met. The circumstances involved must not be attributable to any part of the contracting authority.

The directive provides separately that when urgency makes the normal time limits impractical, the time limit for the receipt of requests to participate shall not be less than 15 days from the day of dispatch and that the time limit for the receipt of tenders shall not be less than 10 days from the date of the invitation to tender. Purchasers should not abuse these provisions—I hope that the Minister is listening—which the European Court, the Commission and, where relevant, other signatories to the Government procurement agreement are likely to give a narrow interpretation.

Many of my hon. Friends are concerned that European Court requirements, Commission requirements, parliamentary decisions and whatever has any connection with the European Community are issues that are too often discarded by this Government.

Mr. Sedgemore: I want to be clear about what my hon. Friend is saying. The Prime Minister tells us constantly that we do not have a level playing field in Europe and that all the other countries are cheating. Is my hon. Friend saying that Britain is cheating?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I have been on my feet for 20 minutes and I have spent 10 or 15 minutes on this matter. The Minister has had the opportunity to intervene to put me right, yet he has not. He is looking for his notes, and I am sure that Sir Gordon is being consulted most vigorously on the matter and that he is enjoying himself immensely.

The directive does not include any provisions for enforcing compliance and it is left to the Commission to take action against a member state under article 169 of the treaty for failing to implement the directive properly. The Commission has said that it intends to do so more vigorously where the directive appears to have been breached and that where a breach is established, any Community funding conditional on compliance may be withheld.

In theory at least, judicial remedies for injured suppliers may already be available in the United Kingdom. Compliance ought to be challenged. It is of increasing importance in the negotiations in Geneva on the improvement and broadening of the Government procurement agreement and suppliers from other signatory countries can be expected to become increasingly aware of the available remedies.

I have references in my notes to the threshold being £92,000, which is the equivalent of 130,000 ecu. I want to know whether the rules have been breached. I understand that the rules were breached and, despite consulting Sir Gordon and having had a most vigorous consultation, the Minister has still not been able to get to his feet to tell me whether the rules have been breached. The breaching of rules is a major issue within the Department. Legal advice has been taken on the matter and the legal advice is that the rules have been breached. Yet the Minister is still not tempted to come to his feet. I am sure that the European Commissioner responsible for these matters will be examining what I have said in my modest contribution tonight, yet the Minister still refuses to make a comment at the Dispatch Box.

I understand that sweeteners have been provided at the insistence of leading members of the management buy-out team in the case of the Crown Suppliers. The Minister has encouraged that bid and financed it from public funds. That breach continues today even though top lawyers at the Department of the Environment have advised that it is in clear breach of the treaty of Rome to which the Government are a signatory. There would be no defence if the European Community became aware of the breach and decided to prosecute the Government—if it had that power. I hope that the European Community takes action.

Mr. Sedgemore: Before my hon. Friend moves on, can he tell us whether he is claiming that it is Ministers who have deliberately flouted European law, or is he claiming —which would be a serious matter in this Chamber—that Sir Gordon has condoned the flouting of European law either tacitly or overtly?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I think that the Minister has condoned the flouting of European law in this case and hoped—as Lord Young hoped—that no one would ever find out.

There is another matter that I want to raise, which I regard as somewhat controversial. An allegation has been made that the Civil Service is being brought into disrepute. As a member of the Crown Suppliers board, the Minister has sat idly by while members of the management buy-out team have indulged in activity which is highly improper for public servants. I put the allegation to the House. I do not know in any great detail what the evidence is, but I have been given vigorous assurances that what I am saying is correct. It seems that one of the people involved accepted an invitation from a manufacturer called Pentos to attend an all-expenses-paid weekend at this year's British golf open. When that fact was discovered, he said that his attendance had been authorised. I understand that it had, indeed, been authorised—by another member of the management buy-out team. The justification was to provide reassurance to a major manufacturer but that same manufacturer had already been provided with hundreds of thousands of pounds' worth of reassurance in the form of numerous extended contracts. It is thus alleged that someone involved in the management buy-out had an improper relationship with a company that was a contractor to the Crown Suppliers.

I understand that such activities can be approved, but there are rules governing these matters. I take my text from the staff handbook of the Department of the Environment and the Department of Transport. Under the heading

"Acceptance of Gifts, Rewards and Hospitality",

the handbook says:

> "Working relationships often bring civil servants into contact with outside organisations where it is normal business practice or social convention to offer hospitality, and sometimes gifts, to facilitate useful contact and working relationships. Offers of this kind to individuals or to their families can place civil servants in a difficult position. To refuse may cause misunderstanding, or offence to the giver, especially if the offer comes from an overseas Government or government organisation. To accept could involve criminal liability or otherwise give rise to questions of impropriety or suspicion of conflict of interest."

The guiding principles are as follows:

> "The actions and conduct of individuals acting in an official capacity should not give the impression to any member of the public, or to any organisation with whom they deal, or to their colleagues, that they have been or may have been influenced by a gift or consideration to show favour, or disfavour, to any person or organisation. . . . The conduct of an individual should not foster any suspicion of conflict between official duty and private interests."

I understand that the permanent secretary is the final arbitor on advisability of acceptance or refusal of gifts, hospitality and so on and is advised by the director-general of organisation and establishments. The handbook says:

> "The correct course to be followed in the case of proffered gifts or hospitality will be determined by the context in which the offer is made."

I want to make it clear that I do not myself make any allegation of impropriety against the civil servant involved. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] Listen to what I am saying. I merely question whether he should have been authorised to do that. That is a fair question.

Mr. Holt: Whether who should have been authorised?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Well, the allegation is that he was authorised to do it. When he was questioned, he said so.

Mr. Holt: Who is "he"?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Whoever the civil servant might be. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would not like to to name a civil servant in the House in connection with such an allegation. Is he really that irresponsible?

Mr. Chope: The hon. Gentleman is making serious allegations. Why did he not write to me about them rather than raise them in the House without knowing whether they are substantiated? He could have given me notice of the matter. It could have been dealt with in correspondence. Surely that would have been a more responsible way in which to deal with the matter.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The Minister will regret that intervention, because it shows that he is not doing his work. If he checks with his Department, he will find that I raised these matters with the National Audit Office two months ago. The correspondence went to his Department, and he should know the answers. If he does not, he should check with his civil servants in the Box. I have raised the matter, and I should have liked it to have been dealt with before tonight.

Mr. Chope: Has the hon. Gentleman received a reply from the National Audit Office?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I have received no reply on the detailed allegation. I do not know as yet what the position is. The Minister must know, because presumably the matter came to him. Or has he once again abdicated his responsibility and told his civil servants to get on with it and ignore any complaints from my hon. Friends and myself?

Mr. Sedgemore: I used to be what is loosely described as a senior civil servant, and, indeed, a private secretary to Ministers in a previous incarnation. I am now a member of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee. My general feeling is that standards of integrity in the Civil Service have declined considerably as politicians have interfered in its conduct. I am sure that the example that my hon. Friend has given is correct, and all that I can say is that in my day that attendance would have been regarded as highly damaging to the integrity of the Civil Service, whether it had been authorised or not.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Perhaps the allegation is baseless. Perhaps it is only a rumour; perhaps it is nonsense. But if it is the truth, the Minister should be asking his Department who authorised and whether, in the circumstances of privatisation, it was correct to authorise.

A note from the chief executive of the Crown Suppliers to all staff, headed "Conflicts of Interest", says:

> "As the sale of The Crown Suppliers approaches, it may be helpful for you to have a note about particular issues that could give rise to a conflict of interest.
>
> Staff Conduct
>
> As privatisation approaches, and particularly after the purchaser has been selected, there is likely to be increasing pressure to look to the objectives and requirements of the prospective new management. Until the sale has been completed (and indeed beyond for those staff who are seconded to the new owner), all TCS staff will continue to be bound by the rules of conduct applicable to civil servants. These are set out in the Staff Handbook."

It is a very good letter. It goes into the special position of, and the separate guidance to be given to, members of the buy-out team. It deals with the question of personal share dealing and staff conduct generally. The gentleman who wrote the letter is obviously a fine civil servant and understands the responsibility that has been placed on him by the House to protect the integrity of the Civil Service.

Even so, we have the allegation to which I have drawn the attention of the House this evening. I do not have concrete evidence. I simply stated my allegation and it went to the National Audit Office, which will have sent it to the Department. As yet, we have had nothing back. I have identified no individuals but the incident has been pressed upon me vigorously and those who have pressed it

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upon me sound very convincing. If the allegation is true, something is very wrong. It means that, during this sensitive privatisation period, the Minister is allowing relationships to develop, which, in the minds of the public could be treated with great suspicion.

Mr. Lofthouse: Did my hon. Friend understand the Minister to say that the organisation had made a £3 million profit this year, as I did, whereas only last week the staff were informed that the profit indicators for the nine months that have so far been worked this year suggest a projected loss of £1 million this year?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: While I was speaking my hon. Friend must have taken advice on these matters and he must have been advised by people who know about these things. I am sure that my hon. Friend would not have intervened unless he had concrete information. The Minister must reply to this. We are like postboxes in this affair. Representatives of the work force contact us on the one hand and on the other there are the civil servants. Perhaps we can establish the truth during this debate.

Mr. Holt: The hon. Gentleman has made some serious allegations against individuals outside this place and against my hon. Friend the Minister.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I have named no one.

Mr. Holt: It is suggested that my hon. Friend the Minister must know what every person in his Department is doing. I am sure that the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) will recall that during the tenure of office of my hon. Friend's predecessor, members of the Department were found guilty of corrupt practices and were jailed. There is no way in which my hon. Friend the Minister or his predecessor would want to shield people who are carrying out criminal activities. It is irresponsible of the hon. Member for Workington to come to the House with a load of smears, no names and no evidence.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Obviously the hon. Gentleman has not listened to me. I have reported no criminal activity. I said that I can understand the context in which this kind of activity could happen. I have simply questioned the propriety of a civil servant perhaps doing these things with the authorisation of his chief. If that has happened, it is wrong. I have waited a long time for answers to my inquiries. In desperation I came to the Floor of the House tonight because I want to know the truth. Where taxpayers' money is being allocated to purchase products, equipment and services from industry, the general public and I do not want to believe that there is any possibility of irregularity. I am sure that the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) and his constituents would not want to believe that.

If the hon. Member for Langbaurgh, or I, were ever tempted by a bottle of whisky or a food hamper in our Constituencies, I am sure that those gifts would be sent back. Although they are meaningless and insignificant in terms of the income of a Member of Parliament, we know that if the public were aware of them, the reasons for those gifts might be questioned. The public might believe that such gifts are wrong, and that is why we do not accept them. The same is true of public procurement. There must be no question of impropriety even if we understand the context in which these matters arise. Impropriety must not happen and that is why I have raised the issue tonight. *[Interruption.]* I am sorry that the Secretary of State was not present to hear me tonight, or to watch my lips.

8.22 pm

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North): I listened with great interest to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). He spoke at great length, and he may now hold the record for making the longest speech in this debate. His filibuster served only to expose the weakness of the Opposition's case with regard to this measure because so few Opposition Members have spoken tonight.

Throughout his overlong speech, the hon. Member for Workington did not advance one positive argument in support of what I would have thought should be the intellectual starting point for the Opposition's case for opposing the measure. I believe that the starting point for any Opposition Member must be to argue why it is necessary for the PSA to remain a nationalised industry.

We must remember that a nationalised industry does not come about naturally because legislation is required to create one. Similarly, legislation is required when a nationalised industry is moved to the private sector. However, any group of citizens can arrange the shareholding for a public limited company.

If Opposition Members were arguing that the PSA should become a nationalised industry, they would surely have argued why that was necessary. The hon. Member for Workington did not do that. However, in that he was not exceptional, because no other Opposition Member advanced any arguments why the PSA should remain a nationalised industry.

We have had a one-sided debate this evening. All the arguments for privatisation and some important reservations have come from Conservative Members. The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) repeated the usual Opposition questions, while making appropriate comments about apprehensions felt by the staff. However, he did not offer any positive arguments why the PSA should remain a nationalised industry. I could not be sure whether the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) was in favour of the measure or against it. He referred to the PSA as overstaffed and said that the management needed tightening up. Perhaps his was the unique Liberal position in that he was neither in favour of the measure nor against it.

Mr. Soley: It is possible that the hon. Gentleman has not been in the Chamber for the whole debate; if he had been here, he would not have said what he has said. He would have heard me and several of my colleagues quote Ministers saying that it was necessary for the PSA and the Crown Suppliers to be in the public sector because that was in the public interest. Whatever else the hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) can say, he cannot say that the argument was not made. It was made forcefully and we used the Government's own evidence as to why it was in the public interest for the PSA and the Crown Suppliers to stay in the public sector. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman should address that and tell us why he thinks the Government's reports were wrong.

Mr. Jones: The hon. Gentleman should not be apprehensive. I know that he has not been present for the whole debate because he has been out for a good dinner.

Mr. Holt: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it not out of order for private conversations to take place inside the Chamber?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Conversations outside the Chamber are beyond my range of vision.

Mr. Jones: I can assure the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) that, unlike him, I have been in the Chamber throughout the debate. He need not be apprehensive, because I will refer to his comments in a moment.

I listened to the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham), who gave us a perfect example of the lawyers' trade. He realised that his case was so weak that he changed the question. Once he had done that, he invented his own answer and claimed that he had proved his case on the most spurious of grounds.

I also listened to the hon. Member for Hammersmith, who spoke for about 47 minutes. On several occasions he said that privatisation of the PSA was not necessary. He said that it was not in the interests of the public sector. On one occasion, he even said that it was not in the interests of the private sector. While he referred to reports, he did not develop one argument as to why it was not necessary. More importantly, he did not address the fundamental question why it is necessary for the PSA to remain a nationalised industry. I invite the hon. Gentleman to read his remarks in *Hansard* tomorrow morning, when he will find that he did not advance any positive arguments in that regard.

I welcome the Bill as I have welcomed all the government's privatisation measures. However, I still believe that the term "privatisation" is something of a misnomer. I do not believe that privatised companies are made private. They have been taken from state ownership and are now owned by the people. When they were nationalised industries, they were far more private affairs than they are now as public companies. The dead hand of nationalisation has been raised from them. They have become successful public companies, in stark contrast to their traditional condition as nationalised industries.

It is appropriate that we are considering the privatisation of the PSA today. As has been mentioned earlier, the offer on the sale of shares in the water companies in England and Wales closes today. We knew that the privatisation of the 10 water companies in England and Wales would be successful. This day we are seeing people put their seal of approval on that privatisation. Many of the 4 million people who have registered an interest in obtaining shares in the water companies of England and Wales will take up the opportunity to do so. We have seen television reports of the last-minute applications and many people queueing to make sure that they do not miss out on the opportunity to own shares in the water companies of England and Wales. I refer in particular to employees, such as those of the Property Services Agency and of the water companies.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) reminded us, perhaps the biggest privatisation occurred when 99 per cent. of British Gas employees bought shares in the company. I remember doing a fellowship with the Industry and Parliament Trust. I was assigned to British Gas before it was privatised. At the start of my fellowship, several employees asked me, "Why do you want to privatise us? We are not a glamour stock like British Telecom." It took about two years to complete my fellowship, and I completed it almost immediately before the sale of shares in British Gas. Attitudes had changed by then. The same employees and many others impatiently turned to me, asking, "When, at last, will we get the opportunity to own shares in our own company?" That was the attitude of British Gas employees, and it is the attitude of water company employees. I am sure that staff of the Property Services Agency will have the same attitude.

The Property Services Agency is an appropriate organisation to be privatised. It is a large, important organisation. It is the country's largest building consultancy, and it has an annual expenditure of £3·5 billion. It has resources of £300 million. Nearly 25,000 people work for the Property Services Agency. Its work comprises five main functions: estate management, in which it is involved in the purchase, disposal and leasing of land for departmental needs; building maintenance; the design of new buildings—reference has been made to 22 awards in 1989; the supervision of construction by outside contractors; and, of course, supply, which is essentially the function of the Crown Suppliers. Among the 22 awards in 1989 was the curiously named Europa Nostra diploma of merit for Richmond terrace. I join hon. Members in paying tribute to what the PSA has achieved in Richmond terrace. It is a good example of an attempt to build a brand new functional building but in a style which is appropriate to its setting in Whitehall. I commend all who were involved in it.

It is appropriate also to mention some other examples which do not hold the PSA to the greatest credit. I have only to think of my own constituency. As some right hon. and hon. Members might know, I have the curious distinction of having in my constituency PD1 of the Inland Revenue—that same Department which handles the taxation affairs of every hon. Member. However, PD1 is sited on a Government block in a surburban part of my constituency. That block contains the most inappropriate high-rise buildings, which should never have been allowed to be built in that setting. They were built some years ago, perhaps before the time of the PSA. I should like to think that the PSA is not to blame for the Inland Revenue complex at Llanishen.

More recently, a new Welsh Office building has been constructed in Cathays park. It is a building of no recognised outside architectural merit. I would not be at all pleased to be associated with the remarks that have been made about it. I wonder whether even His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales might have cast a glance over that great monstrosity, which is totally out of keeping with Cardiff's otherwise fine civic centre.

One of the best cases for privatising the Property Services Agency is contained in a union brief. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern), I have read a brief from the National Union of Civil and Public Servants, which cites evidence from an outside specialist that

> "management has been less geared to commercial aspects of running a business, naturally".

It is most unusual that anyone in this day and age should say that it is natural that the management of the Property Services Agency should be less geared to the commercial aspects of running a business. Surely one must be aware of the commercial realities of life these days. One must be

[Mr. Jones]

aware of the need to achieve and improve a sound economy. How else have we increased spending on the National Health Service, social services and education, improved our defence and provided more police? We do so only by having a sound economy.

The NUPCS brief goes on to refer to

"no proven commercial information records".

That is rather strange. The only answer that is advocated in the brief is that Government Departments should be denied the advantages of competition—that they should be denied the advantage of being able to place their business on the best terms that they can obtain to get the best services at the best price. Instead, they would have to pay the highest price. They would be unable to provide important services because they had to pay the highest price for the PSA. It is nonsense to suggest that, as customers, Government Departments should not be interested in achieving the best return on their money.

The brief goes on to state:

"More money from the taxpayer has to be found for the Property Services Agency."

The hon. Member for Hammersmith started his contribution with a realistic point. He sought to remind hon. Members that there is no such thing as public funding, that it is money from the taxpayer, and that the taxpayer must be remembered. I disagree with the National Union of Civil and Public Servants. If the situation were half as bad as it makes out, we would be considering not privatisation but liquidation of the PSA. I have much more confidence and optimism for the future.

The National Union of Civil and Public Servants brief goes on to state:

"In 1988 PSA's design costs were shown to be 25-30 per cent. cheaper than private designers."

That is strange, because it describes the PSA as an organisation which is

"less geared to commercial aspects of running a business"

when it managed to achieve costs 25 per cent. to 30 per cent. lower. Could it be because, as the brief says, the PSA's spending power and market information enabled it to secure substantial price advantages? A little earlier in the brief, the union claimed that these are

"no proven commercial information records".

One statement does not square with the other.

Clearly, the PSA is not the hopeless case that the union would like to make out. It is an organisation with great ability. It has enjoyed great achievements. It deserves to be freed so that it and its employees can rise above being part of a Government Department. The PSA deserves freedom because of the more competitive arrangements in Government building, construction, management and departmental supplies. Departments now have effective procurement arrangements and the authority to make their own choices in obtaining required services.

The Property Services Agency is losing its guaranteed market and it must compete with everyone else outside by providing a good service; otherwise, there would be the bleakest prospects for staff. They would leave for whatever they could find elsewhere, and customers would suffer. The PSA needs freedom to compete effectively and on equal terms, and that can be achieved only by privatisation.

The Bill will create necessary diversification. Inevitably, when Government Departments are able to choose, some business will be lost through competition. The PSA cannot complacently look forward to retaining 100 per cent. of its business—some will be lost. It therefore needs the opportunity to diversify to replace the business that will be lost. One of the most attractive features of the proposal is that that process will enable the removal of the usual Treasury public sector spending constraints from the Property Services Agency.

We know that the privatisation will take some while to complete. It is suggested that it will not come about before the second half of 1992 at the earliest, but steps are already in hand to reorganise the PSA. The commercial activities, which comprise 90 per cent. of its activities, have been separated from its Government functions. Those activities are now being established in four separate operating divisions: PSA building management; PSA projects; PSA specialist services and PSA overseas. I am glad that, prior to privatisation the PSA will have the scope to expand into other markets and those divisions will be valuable first steps into areas in which I expect greater penetration after privatisation.

All in all, that bears out the view that I was given by some staff in Cardiff yesterday—that the path to privatisation is well organised. That brings me to the position of the staff. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State knows of my concern about the PSA in Cardiff, which is situated in my constituency at Gabalfa. About 250 excellent, able and hard-working staff are based there. I understand from yesterday that almost everyone at the PSA at Gabalfa is dealing competently and effectively with an extremely large work load.

In the run-up to privatisation there has inevitably been some speculation in the press. Some has been well intentioned and some has not. Perhaps the most common story has been that the number of PSA officers will be reduced to eight. I was especially concerned about the future of the PSA office in the capital city of Wales. Accordingly, I corresponded with my hon. Friend during the summer recess. I was pleased that he answered my question in *Hansard* of 2 November, confirming that the office in Cardiff would continue. Indeed, my hon. Friend's actions on the road to privatisation have left open the door not only for retaining the office in Cardiff, but for very much expanding that office.

I see the PSA in Cardiff as growing in line with the growth in Cardiff. We have an exciting expansion programme for the redevelopment of south Cardiff and a large construction programme for the Cardiff bay barrage, which is likely to be an integral part of that redevelopment. The interest that is being shown in the redevelopment of south Cardiff suggests that Cardiff will definitely be one of the sunrise locations. Indeed, I predict that in the next century Cardiff will be the city of the south-western quarter of the United Kingdom. I feel sure that the PSA in Cardiff will grow in line with Cardiff, and perhaps at a greater rate.

I know that the confirmation of the continuation of the Cardiff office has been well received there. It provides the essential framework for the staff in Cardiff to apply their known ability and enthusiasm when taking advantage of the new opportunities and of the open door that is now presented to them.

However, at the same time, we must have the fullest regard for the staff who work in the PSA. Only yesterday a most significant comment was made to me by one employee there. He said that he had not got over his surprise at the fact that he will no longer be working for a Government Department. When he joined the PSA, it was a Government Department, and he had assumed that it always would be. It is important to understand that comment. That employee has completed many years' work for the PSA in Cardiff and others have worked for it for all their lives. We should consider all the staff of the PSA and their natural fear of the unknown and that they might be going into a hostile environment.

It is all very well to talk about great opportunities, about the staff rising up from being Government employees and about the PSA rising up from being a nationalised industry, but we must never ignore genuine anxieties. The staff must be regarded as the PSA's prime assets. The staff are always important in any company, in any industry, but in a service industry such as the PSA, they are especially important and should be given our fullest consideration.

The apprehensions that were spelt out to me yesterday included questions such as: would there be the same conditions of service, the same redundancy arrangements and the same pension provisions? The staff need important reassurances in all those areas. I was told that the staff understood that guarantees had been given in other privatisations, but that no guarantees had been given or could be given in the case of the PSA.

Mr. O'Brien: I am following the train of the hon. Gentleman's argument closely. He is obviously making strenuous efforts to demonstrate the importance of consulting and considering the staff. Will he persuade his hon. Friend the Minister in that context that there should be a ballot for all those who work for the PSA and the Crown Suppliers and that they should decide whether they want the privatisation? Does the hon. Gentleman subscribe to that thought?

Mr. Jones: I am sorry, but that would not be an appropriate proposition. The staff have much more important problems that deserve our fullest attention. I have been trying to refer to their apprehensions about their terms of employment, redundancy and pension arrangements. The staff are very concerned because they have the impression that the staff involved in other privatisations have been in a superior position and that they will not be in such a position. I very much hope that that will not be the case because in each of those three areas it is reasonable for the staff to expect the same conditions that have been given to staff involved in other privatisations and to expect that, as far as possible, their terms in those three areas should be comparable. It is reasonable that there might be some variations, but if there were to be any significant variation in, for example, the pension scheme, there should be compensations for the staff.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that clause 2 defines the difference in how people have been treated?

Mr. Jones: The hon. Gentleman is going ahead of us at this point. That matter is very much for the Committee to consider. However, perhaps he will join me in putting down the largest marker for trying to ensure that the staff are properly looked after and given all the necessary reassurances and safeguards. They must not be treated any less favourably than the staff involved in other privatisations. I want the staff to go forward into the new PSA with whole-hearted commitment, because I believe that there is a tremendous future for them in the new PSA and I do not want them to be put off in that.

Examples have been given to me of staff in their fifties and sixties in Cardiff. Understandably, they might already be thinking in terms of their own pensions and of retiring direct from the PSA. However, they are now worried about facing an unknown future and about what might happen. They are wondering whether they will be able to retire at the time they had expected and whether they will receive the same pension as expected. They are wondering whether they have any reason to be concerned that a new employer might raid their pension scheme. Younger staff do not necessarily have the same apprehensions and although staff under 50 might think that it will be relatively easy to move to another job, that will not be the case for everyone and for some it may involve moving house.

In every respect, my greatest concern is about the staff, all of whom—both older and younger—deserve the fullest reassurances. I want to be able to look forward to them continuing to be employed on the same pay and with the same hours and holidays and—in this remotest eventuality—that the basis of any redundancies will be the same as it is at the moment. I also want the staff to be able to receive the same pension.

I heard what my right hon. Friend said earlier and I imagine that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State may refer to the same subjects when he replies. I hope that he does, because we cannot over-emphasise the great need to publicise to the PSA staff exactly what will happen and the commitments that the Government have made and must make to ensure that they are properly looked after in the change to privatisation.

I very much welcome the Bill, which has been introduced on a most appropriate day. I look forward to our time in Committee. I believe that it was the hon. Member for Workington who said that the Bill could pass through Committee like a knife going through butter. I hope that it will have a speedy and satisfactory conclusion and resolution so that we can look forward to a successful privatised PSA.

8.50 pm

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): In sharp contrast to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours)—I note that he is not in his place—I warmly welcome the Bill as the first stage in the privatisation of the Property Services Agency and Crown Suppliers. I regret that the hon. Gentleman is not here because I had it in mind to take up a point that he made towards the beginning of his speech. I believe in privatisation, not per se, as an item of dogma, but for pragmatic reasons. Some industries and services benefit from passing from public to private ownership, and I firmly believe that the PSA and Crown Suppliers are such services.

I acknowledge that my remarks bear in mind the findings of the Select Committee on the Environment. That Committee has had much contact with the PSA, and it annually reviews the main estimates. For a long time, it has urged fundamental reform. I regard the Bill as the Government's response to that demand for reform.

I strongly welcome the Bill. My reasons have already ben put clearly by several of my hon. Friends, including my hon. Friends the Members for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) and for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones). Those reasons can be

[Mr. Andrew Hunter]

summed up in one word—competition. Competition is wholly good and at present wholly missing. That must be rectified, and that is what the Bill will do.

It is absolutely right that Government Departments should be able to choose where they purchase the goods and services that they require. It will be good for the PSA and Crown Suppliers to have their guaranteed markets removed, because guaranteed markets do no good whatever. Moreover, the measures in the Bill will ensure that, in the few years before privatisation, the taxpayer will obtain greater value for money.

I wish to pick out three specific points of detail. I ask the Minister to note them, because some matters need to be clarified, although perhaps it would be more appropriate to clarify them in Committee.

I note that the Bill and accompanying briefs suggest that the PSA will be reorganised into four operating divisions. One of those will be PSA Specialist Services. Is there really a need for such an operating division? Reference has been made during the debate to the problems of recruiting and retaining staff in the PSA. That is especially true of the most specialist areas where the temptation and lure of the private sector is great. I am of the opinion that the services that PSA Specialist Services would offer can already be provided by the private sector, so perhaps there is no need for further duplication.

A second area of the reorganisation that disturbs me a little is the creation of PSA Overseas, which was the focus of attention earlier. The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) raised the question of security, as did the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley). The speech of the hon. Member for Linlithgow was an important contribution to the debate. I accept the immediate reassurance given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. However, we must go further, and I hope that in Committee we shall receive a detailed reassurance. Security must be considered carefully.

Mr. Dalyell: Absolutely right.

Mr. Hunter: Another point about PSA Overseas disturbs me. We understand that it is to be created mainly to support Ministry of Defence establishments. The different nature of MOD establishments and their geographical spread means that the creation of one PSA Overseas will not prepare that part of the PSA's activities for competition. Perhaps my right hon. Friend should look more closely and consider a subdivision of PSA Overseas.

A third point which worries me—I shall try to put it constructively—is the emphasis on the length of time that it will take to prepare the operational divisions for privatisation. It strikes me that the best part of three years is a long time. I should have thought that one of the best ways to prepare for privatisation is immediately, or as soon as possible, to expose the operational divisions to the realities of the marketplace and to learn from it. I hope that in due course we shall return to that theme. Why do the Government believe that such a long period is necessary?

My next point relates to points made by the Select Committee on the Environment. I mentioned earlier that it has positively criticised the PSA for several years. I wish to relate those criticisms to the next two years, or the pre-privatisation period. Can my hon. Friend the Minister give an assurance that our anxieties about the way in which the PSA has operated in the past will be removed during the run-up to full privatisation?

The Select Committee's first area of concern was the principle of annuality, which has not been mentioned so far in the debate. The Environment Select Committee concluded that one reason why the PSA did not operate efficiently was that it was bound by the principle of annuality. That is not the case for its competitors in the private sector. It can be argued strongly that, in preparing PSA for privatisation, the rigid annuality under which it now operates must be slackened.

The second area that worried the Select Committee is another instance where the PSA operates artificially, and that is the practice of the property repayment service which is the rates that Departments are charged by the PSA, as a token charge regardless of market reality. Again, the PSA does not operate in market circumstances. Arguably privatisation will increase its efficiency, but one must ask whether the property repayment service aspect will continue during the next two years as the PSA prepares to privatise.

My last point is about project management. My great criticism of the PSA—it is my conviction that it is right to privatise it—is based on the poor assessments of PSA project management. We have already referred to several of these. When I intervened in the speech of the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham), I may have unintentionally misled the House. I referred to the cost of the Richmond house project and to an additional cost of £1 million. That was not the total difference between the estimate and the final cost of the project but merely the 1987 increase. There was a discrepancy between the estimate and the concluding price of £5·7 million on the total project. I apologise to the House for getting the figure slightly wrong.

The project management aspect of the PSA has rightly caused great anxiety.

Mr. Dalyell: Is it not the experience of the National Trust and other ancient monuments organisations that it is difficult to estimate the costs of restoring old buildings? Costs can easily escalate. It is not only the PSA that has problems.

Mr. Hunter: There is great truth in that, but it is not the entire truth. In these particular projects, there were miscalculations and changes of plan. Even when projects were started, new ideas came in, for example, at Derby Crown court, Richmond house and Buckingham gate. Slack management allowed the projects to spin out over the years as clients demanded one change after another. Public money was at stake. I take the hon. Gentleman's point, but we must look for other reasons why costs escalated so much in the PSA.

My hon. Friend the Minister may be inclined to argue now or in Committee that for Departments the change from being clients to having financial responsibility will increase the efficiency of project management. I hope that that will be the case. The fundamental question is whether reorganisation will improve project management.

I entirely support and warmly welcome the Bill. There are still questions to be answered and points to be sorted out, but I have no hesitation in saying that I am sure that the new regime will be far better than the existing one.

9 pm

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): I am pleased to speak about this important measure. I have spent a considerable amount of my life living in buildings which have been well or badly built, or modified, by the Property Services Agency and its predecessor, the Ministry of Public Building and Works.

I shall dwell on two aspects of the Bill. They relate to the Opposition's two main arguments why it is not a good idea to privatise the PSA. First, they argue that security will be compromised, particularly in military establishments, if in future the PSA does not have the same ability to look after security matters. Opposition Members, particularly the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), are wrong to suggest that the reservoir of knowledge about security matters resides in the PSA and that, if it is privatised, security will be compromised. That argument is fundamentally flawed.

The major point about good security is that people, not organisations, are important. It is to ensure that those who carry out security exercises and checks on buildings are themselves checked properly and have the necessary expertise. The mere fact that they happen to be members of the PSA or its predecessor or that they work in the public sector does not necessarily mean that the task will be carried out competently. One of the problems has been that security has been judged good or bad according to the organisation rather than the people. In the eyes of many, membership of the PSA seems to have been sufficent to judge that security has been adequate. In the past, that has often not been the case.

Security, rather than arguing in favour of keeping the PSA in the public sector, is a good reason for ensuring that client Departments, particularly the Ministry of Defence, take greater direct responsibility for the many aspects of security that have resided in the PSA. In that way we could look forward to better security in future in many areas, particularly buildings, than there has been in the past.

Some remarks made by the hon. Member for Hammersmith about married quarters and accommodation for serving personnel in the three services are way off the mark. The weaknesses in the Opposition's arguments against these proposals are shown by his resort to such tactics. The vast majority of service men live in private accommodation. In the past the PSA advised on the security aspects of new buildings. Now it is not a case of building many more married quarters. The main emphasis now is, and in future will be, on selling them. That, then, is not a good reason to keep the PSA in the public sector.

The other argument advanced by the Opposition, and specifically by the hon. Member for Hammersmith, is that the PSA is running smoothly in the public sector, so why privatise it? One could turn that argument on its head by asking, why keep it in the public sector? People should not have to make an argument to put things into the private sector, but the argument for retaining anything in the public sector needs to be extremely good.

Although we might accept arguments for keeping the PSA in the public sector, its record does not stand up to close scrutiny. More than 10 years ago a senior civil servant wrote an incredibly good book on the sort of mistakes made by the PSA and, before that, the Ministry of Public Building and Works. It was entitled "Your Disobedient Servant". He listed in great detail the shortcomings of the PSA—the overmanning, inefficiency, lack of objectives and total lack of project planning, which my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) also mentioned. During the latter part of the 1960s and the early part of the 1970s, the author sought to put some of those deficiencies right.

I read that book many years ago and I reread it a few days ago. I am certain that the author, if nobody else, could appreciate the need to move the organisation into the private sector to improve its performance. In fact, the PSA's performance is considerably better than it was 10 years ago. In the past, the PSA suffered from a considerable number of shortcomings.

Mr. Allen McKay: The hon. Gentleman has just admitted that the PSA has overcome the shortcomings from which it suffered 10 years ago. He has admitted that the problems of the PSA have been solved. Recently the PSA has given value for money and has proved better than any private sector organisation against which it operated. It has given the service required. If one gets value, service and quality from the PSA, why change it?

Mr. Mans: The hon. Gentleman has not quoted me correctly. I said that the PSA's performance had much improved on what it was 10 years ago. That improvement has been achieved because more commercial pressures and greater commercial judgment have been brought to bear on the PSA by the present Government. Such direction was sadly lacking during the Labour Administration. A great deal more, however, can be done and the only way in which to achieve that is to move the PSA into the private sector.

I welcome the idea of client Departments taking more responsibility for the buildings they occupy. The responsibility for the fabric of a building has been left to the PSA. The Ministry of Defence, for example, has not taken responsibility for the fabric of its various service installations. The client Departments will not only be able to use the PSA for the necessary work but will be able to approach other, more competitive organisations. That is a move in the right direction.

The move into the private sector will undoubtedly benefit not only the PSA and its staff, but those organisations for which it has worked in the past. Once the PSA is in the private sector it will be able to expand and to use its expertise. Judging from some of the remarks of Opposition Members, there is undoubtedly a huge market for PSA valuation expertise. According to the Opposition, the PSA can undercut the valuation fees of private companies by a large percentage. It is rather odd, therefore, for the Opposition to argue that the PSA should stay in the public sector, especially as it has the opportunity to expand its valuation services rapidly if it manages to keep its prices down to the suggested true levels it has quoted while operating in the public sector.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State talked about the way in which the PSA will be taken into the private sector. I fully approve of, and am encouraged by, his remarks showing that there will be a large measure of employee participation. That is a good direction in which to move. Judging from the experiences of the National Freight Corporation and the water research centre, it bodes well for the PSA if the employees can be persuaded to take part in the buy-out.

It goes further than that. The hon. Member for Hammersmith was less than honest when he suggested that

[Mr. Mans]

the privatisation of the National Freight Corporation was the only previous privatisation to include an employee buy-out. The water research centre is another example, and in many previous privatisations huge percentages of workers have bought shares, despite pressure from their union bosses to do the contrary. Those examples include British Gas and British Telecom, in which more than 90 per cent. of the work force bought shares. Those work forces want the firms to be privatised, despite the advice not to do so given by their own union bosses.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Why does the hon. Gentleman refer to the elected representatives of the workers as union bosses? Why does he call them bosses when they have been elected? Does he refer to the Prime Minister as his boss? [Hon. Members: "Yes."] He may do, but she is an elected representative. The term "bosses" is used by the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends to try to denigrate trade unionists.

Mr. Mans: I shall be quite happy to withdraw the word "boss" if it offends the hon. Gentleman so much. The union leaders—or whatever he wishes to call them—gave information to their members which those members did not take. The members voted with their cheque books and wage packets and bought shares in the companies that were privatised. Regardless of the type of privatisation that takes place in the PSA, I suggest that they will do precisely the same thing and show that they want their firms to be privatised.

So far, 29 state companies have been privatised, 45 per cent. of the public sector is now in private hands, and 800,000 former public employees are now employees of private firms. That is what has happened during the past 10 years. I welcome this latest privatisation proposal, and my only regret is that it has come at the end of this 10-year programme, not at the beginning.

9.13 pm

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): It is significant that we are again discussing privatisation. Doubtless Conservative Members will not agree that this is Tory party dogma. However, if we look at the history recorded in the research note by the House of Commons Library, we find that, since 1979, no fewer than 33 privatisations have been approved by the Government or are in the pipeline. Tonight, we are talking about the 34th privatisation scheme to have been brought forward—the PSA. The Crown Suppliers are included in the list in the pipeline. British Coal is also included in that list.

We have discussed privatisation twice this week. I cannot understand how Conservative Members can deny that Tories are obsessed with privatisation. That obsession is brought to the House and consideration is given to it before any consideration for the taxpayers or the people working in the industry.

The hon. Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) and others have said that it is only Opposition Members who are trying to defend and retain the PSA and the Crown Suppliers in the public sector. That is not true. I remind hon. Members of a statement made on 25 July 1986 by the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) who was then a Minister. He said that the review group employed by the Department to review the issue of the PSA and the Crown Suppliers being brought into the private sector concluded,

> "on the information available to them, that whilst privatisation would be possible, it would not in their view, be in the public interest."

With all the information available to it and the fact that it accepted that it would be possible to include the PSA and the Crown Suppliers in the private sector, the review group believed that it would not be in the public interest. Therefore, it is not just Opposition Members who are saying that it is not in the country's or taxpayers' best interests that the Crown Suppliers and the PSA should be removed from the public sector. Conservative Members have been saying the same thing.

The same team of officers looking into the matter also recommended that

> "the Crown Suppliers should be retained as a central purchasing agency in the public sector with rather greater autonomy in accounting and staffing matters."

The body commissioned to look into the privatisation of the Crown Suppliers thought that it should have greater autonomy in certain matters.

In reply to the hon. Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed), the hon. Member for Acton said:

> "The Crown Suppliers have had another successful year's trading. Despite the fact that over 65 per cent. of their business is now untied and optional, they have more than met their financial objective for 1985-1986. They have achieved this by raising their level of service, speeding up deliveries, reducing resource costs."—[*Official Report*, 25 July 1986; Vol. 102, c. *572*.]

Even when action was taken against the Crown Suppliers to untie it from the guaranteed market to which Conservative Members have been referring, it still had a successful year, increasing business turnover and making the business more efficient and acceptable to the people it was serving.

Mr. Holt: The hon. Gentleman has constantly referred back to a report in 1986. Of course, he has not referred to the Select Committee on the Environment that has been looking into the PSA for several years. A number of Labour Members on that Committee have subscribed to its report and there has been no difference of opinion on political grounds. It is notable that none of them is here today to say anything about the PSA, which was recommended for privatisation by the Select Committee.

Mr. O'Brien: A good number of Select Committees are sitting at the moment, and hon. Members on both sides are engaged in Committee business. I was not trying to elaborate on the proposals made by Conservative Members; I was just saying that reports commissioned from independent bodies by Ministers have all stated that privatisation is possible, but not desirable.

On Monday of this week a report was brought to the attention of the House, stating:

> "Britain's most secret military establishment, the Aldermaston atomic weapons establishment, is to be handed over to commercial management. This raises a fundamental issue of national security. The secrets of Britain's nuclear bomb designs are kept there along with many other American secrets, since the atomic weapons establishment is the main agency for Anglo-US collaboration on warhead development and testing."

The report calls this contractorisation, which is what the Tories now call privatisation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) firmly drew attention to security. It is not only

Opposition Members who point out the need for a secure system—the Americans and others who are involved with security are pleading for consideration of the dangers that might arise if everything were put in the private sector, as proposed.

Hon. Members have mentioned the qualities of the 34 privatisations that have been enacted or are in the pipeline. They have also mentioned the golden handshakes that accompany these privatisations. In this context, I draw attention to a recent report on water privatisation which was commissioned from Arthur Collins and Company, financial advisers, who estimated that water privatisation would cost the taxpayer £8·56 billion, and that the income derived from it would be £5·5 billion—a loss to the ratepayers of this country of about £3 billion. Not only taxpayers but a large number of ratepayers will suffer, therefore, because of the Tories' dogmatic atitude to privatisation.

The PSA is the largest Government department to be privatised so far. The Secretary of State said today that some of the reasons for bringing the Bill before the House were efficiency, customer service and a desire to bring the agency nearer to the people.

The Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope), who will reply to the debate, has served on a number of Committees on which I have served dealing with local government reorganisation. On those occasions it was the policy of Conservatives to take services away from people. We argued for hours in an attempt to retain those services in the domain of local government and to keep them closer to the people so that they could be more efficient and more accountable. However, the Secretary of State says that it is necessary to remove services from the public domain and place them in private ownership.

The Secretary of State said that each Department will be responsible for its own budget and that customer services will be commissioned from the PSA, if it continues, or from whoever is responsible for the PSA if the Bill is passed. I am sure that hon. Members who have served in local government realise that often, when cuts have to be made, the first thing to be cut is maintenance. We have seen that in education and in social services. When there are more important matters to be considered, the first thing to be cut is maintenance. If we accept the philosophy of the Secretary of State, many of the public services, including security, will be the first to be cut by many Departments. That is one reason for retaining the PSA in the public sector.

My hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) admirably exposed the people who will benefit from this privatisation. Neither the workers nor the taxpayers will benefit, because the people who get their filthy hands on the privatisation will benefit most. My hon. Friend spelled that out quite clearly. The Government have given no reason for privatisation except that they believe that the best prospect for the future lies in making unimpeded progress towards privatisation and all the freedom that it can offer.

Mr. Stern: The hon. Gentleman said that the only people to gain from the privatisation are those who will get their filthy hands on the privatisation. I hope that I quote him correctly. Some of my constituents who are ordinary working people in the PSA have already said that they hope to take part in the buy-out that will result from the Bill. Does the hon. Gentleman wish to stand by his statement?

Mr. O'Brien: If the hon. Gentleman thinks that they are the people who will make the real killing out of the privatisation, he is living in cloud cuckoo land. The hon. Gentleman should look at the report in the Library on privatisation. It reveals in a startling way who makes the money out of privatisation. It is not the people who pick up a few crumbs. The hon. Gentleman should read the report, because it is worth reading.

The hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) expressed fears about the effects of the Bill in its present form on charities with which he is associated. The hon. Gentleman is not in his place. If he wants to protect those charities and is sincere in his concern about what the Bill will do to the organisations for which he pleaded, he should join us in the Lobby, because the only way to protect those charities is to vote with the Labour party.

I imagine that all hon. Members and many people outside the House have experience of dealing with the construction industry. It is not famous for its integrity, and we all know the problems that can arise. Government Departments have had the protection of the PSA safeguarding their interests. The Secretary of State and Conservative Members have suggested that each client Department could engage its own PSA—in other words, that there could be many PSAs duplicating services and wasting money——

Mr. Mans: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the PSA's history shows that precisely the opposite is true, and that it did not look after its client Departments? Indeed, in many cases it was far too close to the very contractors in the construction industry about which the hon. Gentleman is now complaining. I am referring to cost overruns.

Mr. O'Brien: The hon. Gentleman should study the report, which refers to the Ministry of Defence and the work carried out on its behalf. It shows that there is protection for client Departments that engage the PSA. Hon. Members have said that client Departments can still engage the PSA to carry out their work. Therefore, the PSA is not so much being taken away as split into a number of PSAs. Services will be duplicated, and that will be a waste of money. No industry would have competition between the various sections within it. The hon. Gentleman is wrong.

It is not only Labour Members who continually plead for the PSA. In May 1972, the Prime Minister said that the inclusion——

Mr. Holt: In 1972?

Mr. O'Brien: Nothing has changed in the need for the PSA. The Prime Minister said:

> "The inclusion of the Agency within the Department of Environment will ensure that the Government's practice as a builder and developer will remain in accord with its policies for the conservation and improvement of the environment."

That statement is as valid now as it was in 1972. We need to demonstrate a conservation and an improvement of the environment. The best way to do so is to engage the PSA.

Mr. Holt: It is apposite of the hon. Gentleman to refer to 1972, because there is a paragraph in the Environment Select Committee evidence headed "Changes since 1972". It shows that the number of people employed has declined

[Mr. Holt]

from 45,000 to 23,000. Of the work that used to be carried out in 1972, 85 per cent. of the planned maintenance and 100 per cent. of new construction work is carried out by private contractors. There have been vast changes, so it is silly to say that there have been no changes since 1972. The PSA has changed dramatically.

Mr. O'Brien: Let me remind the right hon. Gentleman what I said earlier—that the protection, conservation and improvement of the environment are as important today as they were in 1972. If the hon. Gentleman reads more of the report he will find that, although there are contractors carrying out work on behalf of Departments, the PSA is responsible for the preparation and supervision of the contracts. Despite the slimming down of staff, the PSA's protective influence remains. Not only Opposition Members but distinguished Tory leaders have pointed out the foolishness of that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) has exposed a weakness in the case on security—clearly a subject dear to the hearts of Conservative Members. If it is right for the PSA to provide protection for the Prime Minister and other Members of Parliament, how can it be wrong for the armed forces to receive the same service?

Hon. Members have mentioned the protection of staff. What protection will be given to the pension rights of those approaching retirement age? The Minister has been provided with a number of answers by his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, and I hope that he will explain what will happen to those among the 23,000 staff employed by the two organisations who are worried about their pensions.

I appeal to Conservative Members who oppose the privatisation to join us in the Lobby to vote against it.

9.37 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): There have been two notable features of today's debate. First, it has featured high-quality and, normally, good-humoured speeches. Secondly, it has been the privatisation debate in which the Opposition ran out of speakers—which shows, I think, that it is they who are running out of steam, while the Government are moving forward with a vigorous, radical programme.

No Back-Bench speech was of higher quality than that of my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow). All who were present will treasure for a long time the unscripted and unrehearsed exchange between him and the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). My hon. Friend reminded us of his long-standing belief that the proper place for the PSA is in the private sector, supporting eloquently a proposition in which Conservative Members all believe—that organisations should be in the private sector unless there are compelling arguments against it. There are no compelling reasons why the Crown Suppliers and the Public Services Agency should be in the public sector.

There have been positive and constructive contributions from many of my hon. Friends. My hon. Friends the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) and for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) have constituency interests; a number of their constituents are PSA employees. They stressed the positive approach that many of their constituents have adopted towards that privatisation and the opportunities that it will provide for them with the widening of the market. Important contributions were also made by my hon. Friends the Members for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter), for Wyre (Mr. Mans), for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) and for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr. Hargreaves). I shall do my best to reply to their points and to those that have been made by Opposition Members.

I am sorry that the contribution by my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) was so brief. His ministerial experience in the Department of the Environment made him an enthusiastic supporter of these privatisations. It was he who decided in 1986 to seek the advice of an outside financial institution on the feasibility of privatising the Crown Suppliers. In so doing, he helped to lay the foundations of the Bill.

Debating points were made about the reports on the privatisation of the Crown Suppliers. They were published before 1986. The problems connected with privatisation that worried the writers of the reports have been overcome by restricting sales to the commercial parts of the Crown Suppliers. The reports did not take fully into account the potential impact of untying on the Crown Suppliers. It is a commercial organisation. We are strongly of the opinion that it will operate much more efficiently and effectively in the private sector. That has been confirmed by independent outsiders.

The speech of the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) was predictable. It relied heavily on the tendentious briefing document from the National Union of Civil and Public Servants. The hon. Gentleman resorted to irresponsible scaremongering, particularly when he referred to security.

Mr. Soley: I made use of only two bits of the NUCPS document. The rest came from the Library's research document.

Mr. Chope: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on the depth of his research.

Opposition Members are absolutely right to emphasise the importance of security. I categorically assure the House that national security will not be prejudiced in any way by these privatisations. A very few activities, not just those related to Ministers and Parliament, will be excluded from the sale and are not covered by the Bill. The vast majority of both the PSA and the Crown Suppliers services that are covered by the Bill are already commonly carried out for the Government by private firms.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the Minister explain clearly why he is so certain that privatisation is all right for security elsewhere but is not all right for the House of Commons and the royal palaces? We shall be accused, whether he likes it or not, of double standards. People will say, justifiably or not, that the House of Commons takes a very different view when those who sit on green Benches are affected.

Mr. Chope: I do not understand the hon. Gentleman's point. Much of the work in the House of Commons, the House of Lords and the royal palaces is carried out by the private sector. There is nothing wrong about that. There is adequate security. The same procedures will be followed in the future as have been followed in the past.

Mr. Heffer: The private sector is now active in the House of Commons. Is the Minister aware that the House of Commons is filthy compared to what it used to be when it was cleaned by ladies who came in regularly and who were employed as a public service to look after the House. [HON. MEMBERS: "Talk about security."] I am not talking about security, but about the whole principle. The House of Commons is dirty. Hon. Members should look at it. They will find that that is because private enterprise has been brought in.

Mr. Chope: That is a point for the Select Committee on House of Commons (Services). It is stooping a bit low for the hon. Gentleman to attack the staff who work in the House. Most of the construction work that is commissioned by the PSA, including that for the Ministry of Defence, is already contracted out to the private sector. Up to 70 per cent. of the design of new projects is already undertaken for the PSA by consultants in the private sector and it includes a large proportion of work with a high security content. The Ministry of Defence is already familiar with contracting out the manufacture of sensitive defence equipment. On the Crown Suppliers side, secure document delivery and vehicle hire are already carried out for some Departments by private firms. The Ministry of Defence estate will remain in MOD hands, and therefore under the control of the MOD.

Mr. Soley: When the PSA and the Crown Suppliers go, who will vet the staff? Will the Minister also deal with the point about United States bases?

Mr. Chope: I am not going to be drawn—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question."] I am amazed by the irresponsibility of the hon. Gentleman. I shall not be drawn into saying what arrangements will be made for the vetting of staff. All I can say is that it would be unthinkable for this Government of all Governments to do anything that jeopardised or undermined national security or the personal security of individual citizens, whether or not they work in the armed forces. Conservative Members can say openly that we must be trusted. If the hon. Gentleman wants to bring security matters out into the public domain, I can only say that it is regrettable.

Mr. Soley: I charge the Government with being careless about security, as I have on a number of occasions. We know, and it is common knowledge, that the PSA vets staff. The Minister cannot hide behind security. If he is saying that vetting will be carried out by the security services, that is fine, but he must recognise that the manpower consequences of that decision would be enormous. The logical position is to leave vetting with the PSA. I suspect from the answers that he has not even thought about the question, which is a damning indictment of the Government's policy.

Mr. Chope: I shall say no more about that. The hon. Gentleman may want to develop the point further in Committee, but I hope that after consideration, he will realise that it is not appropriate to discuss security vetting in the House.

The hon. Member for Hammersmith and others made points about the work for the United States forces. The relationship with the United States Air Force is valued by both sides and it is the subject of a Government-to-Government agreement. A study has been put in hand to examine how the formalities of the relationship will be affected once the PSA has been privatised. Whatever the conclusions of the review, I am confident that the unique range of skills developed by the staff to meet the specialised requirements and procedures that are demanded by the client will make it possible for the agency to retain a substantial proportion of the business of the United States forces.

The greatest asset of the PSA and the Crown Suppliers is their work force and, rightly, much of our debate has concerned the staff. I pay a warm tribute to the skill and dedication that all staff throughout PSA and the Crown Suppliers bring to their work. As the Minister with day-to-day responsibility for the PSA for the past three years, I have got to know many of the PSA employees all over the country, and I have also been able to witness the high esteem in which they are held by their clients. There has been a period of considerable change in Government organisation which has put a premium on loyalty and commitment. I am proud of the loyalty and commitment that has been shown by the staff.

The chief executive and second permanent secretary of the Department of the Environment, Sir Gordon Manzie has been mentioned several times during the debate, and it is appropriate that I should pay a special tribute to him, as he will be retiring from the Civil Service early in the new year and as his work has been an important factor in bringing the PSA to its present successful position.

The staff of the PSA and the Crown Suppliers are civil servants. Privatisations involving civil servants give rise to particular issues, and I know that hon. Members will want to examine carefully the proposals that we have and the assurances that we shall be able to give to the staff. Staff of both the PSA and the Crown Suppliers are members of the principal Civil Service pension scheme, which includes provisions relating to redundancy.

That has two important consequences. First, because the staff cannot remain members of the Civil Service scheme when the PSA and the Crown Suppliers are sold, they would, unless special measures were taken, become technically entitled to the redundancy compensation provided for in the scheme. It would obviously not be right to expend substantial sums of public money on redundancy compensation to staff who have retained their jobs. As I have said, their employment will continue with the new owner on the same terms and conditions.

The second consequence is that the redundancy terms are not passed automatically to the new employment, because they were part of the pension scheme. Therefore, special measures will need to be taken to ensure that equivalent redundancy terms are offered to the staff to give them continued protection in future.

Mr. Allen McKay: I have never before seen anything like clause 2. It sets a precedent. In the past, all redundancies resulting from privatisation have been as the Minister described. But now the Government are selling the people with the jobs, which is wrong in any case.

Mr. Chope: If the hon. Gentleman had been here to hear the opening speech given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State he would have heard the answer to his question. In fact, such provision has been made in almost every privatisation Bill that has come before the House.

The measures that we are taking to ensure that the staff's interests are protected as regards pensions and redundancy are worth explaining in more detail. When

[Mr. Chope]

invitations to tender are issued, we shall draw prospective purchasers' attention to the terms of the Civil Service pension scheme, as regards both pensions and redundancy. We shall make it clear that we expect them to offer broadly comparable terms for pensions. The terms that they offer will be subject to analysis by the Government actuary. If the pension terms offered by the chosen purchaser are not assessed as being as good as the Civil Service scheme, some means will be found to ensure that the staff are not disadvantaged in terms of the overall terms and conditions of service.

The position on redundancy will be slightly different. We shall ensure, by means of the contract for sale, that the staff will be provided in the private sector with redundancy compensation that mirrors what they have now.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): If the present pension scheme is to be transferred to the private sector, does not that mean that it will in future be a funded scheme? The Government will be liable to pay a large sum to set up that scheme. Will my hon. Friend tell the House roughly what his estimate is of the sum that will be transferred into a funded pension scheme?

Mr. Chope: My hon. Friend draws attention to the difference between the pension arrangements in the public and the private sectors. The job of providing pensions in the private sector will be the responsibility of the purchasers of the organisation, and they will have to take responsibility for providing a fund. At the point of sale all the contributions that have been made so far will be preserved. The money that is available in the public sector to enable the pensions to be paid will be called upon in the future when the pensions become payable in respect of service carried out prior to privatisation.

Mr. Soley: The Minister is clearly getting into difficulty again. I am here to help him although I appreciate that he does not always see it that way. The hon. Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) asked quite rightly about the amount of money and how it would be transferred to ensure that pensions do not fall below what staff receive at the moment. There must be some transfer of funds. That was the question: Will the Minister answer it?

Mr. Chope: I have answered the question. The employees will retain their existing pension entitlement until the point of sale. Thereafter, the responsibility for their future pension entitlement will be taken up by the new owner. That is perfectly clear and I am sorry that the hon. Member for Hammersmith does not understand it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) raised an important point about Enham Industries and Papworth village. As he said, I have written to him about that. I am sure that the points that I have set out in my letter will reassure the employees in Enham Industries. As my hon. Friend suggested, I will take up the issue with my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces. As I have said, privatisation does not alter the position of the priority suppliers scheme. Therefore, the Bill is in no way bad news for Enham Industries.

Mr. Colvin: Has my hon. Friend taken on my principal point, which is that organisations like Enham Industries and Papworth, which are charitable organisations, and manufacturers have done pretty well out of the Crown Suppliers' buying policy over recent years? Will my hon. Friend talk to other Ministers? If preferential treatment is not maintained, the Housing Corporation, the county council social services committees and the Department of Social Security are likely to be burdened with additional costs. My hon. Friend the Minister should alert his colleagues to that eventuality.

Mr. Chope: There will not be additional costs for Departments. The priority suppliers scheme will continue as it is now, but the Crown Suppliers will no longer necessarily be the intermediary.

I believe it was the hon. Member for Hammersmith, although I am not sure, who wanted to know how we were going to ensure that the privatisation would be fair. He drew attention particularly to the sale of Wellington house. I can assure the House that Wellington house will be valued carefully prior to sale because it is one of the largest assets belonging to the Crown Suppliers. That sale will be on a competitive basis, thereby ensuring the very best value for money to the taxpayer.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Chope: I will not give way, because I have only three minutes left. We have had a long debate and, as I have already explained, Opposition Members were not present to take their turn and we heard a series of speeches from Conservative Members.

The PSA is basically a major building and estate consultancy. The Crown Suppliers is basically a furniture supplier. Neither has a natural place in the public sector. They are commercial organisations which will operate best in a fully commercial environment. The Government will ensure that adequate safeguards are put in place to ensure that the staff who are transferred have equivalent conditions under the new employer.

This is a radical Bill, which will bring major benefits. It facilitates privatisation. In that way, it offers a major benefit for employees because for employees the Bill is a springboard for further success.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Chope: The opportunities offered by wider markets and the disciplines of the private sector will replace the controls and shackles of the public sector. I look forward to the time when 20,000 more employees join the 800,000 who have already moved to the private sector as a result of the Government's privatisation policies. The Bill will give customers increased choice and lead to greater competition and increased efficiency. For taxpayers, there will be better value for money all round. This is a good Bill, and I commend it to the House.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 237, Noes 181.

Division No. 10] **[10 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry

Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knox, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Nicholas Baker.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)

Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George
Rooker, Jeff
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Soley, Clive
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Frank Cook.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Property Services Agency and Crown Suppliers Bill *[Money]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Property Services Agency and Crown Suppliers Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(a) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any sums required by the Secretary of State for making payments or for defraying his administrative expenses under that Act;

(b) the payment of sums received by him by virtue of that Act into the Consolidated Fund or the National Loans Fund.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

10.15 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I want to raise one or two questions. During the reply, the Minister did not seem to grasp the nature of the question from his hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern). Therefore, he might avail himself of this opportunity to explain precisely whether the money resolution, which is in fairly general terms, covers the position to which his hon. Friend referred.

The hon. Member for Horsham was saying that some obligation for pension payments would fall on the new companies and asked what provision the Government would make when the new companies take over those activities. It was not my question, but the hon. Gentleman's. He sought information. By common consent, the question was not adequately answered.

It is awkward when a money resolution is found to be inadequate for a range of purposes. There have been occasions when that has happened. I fondly recall one instance when the Minister had to return to the House three times—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask hon. Members who are beyond the Bar either to come into the Chamber or to leave it.

Mr. Cryer: It would be embarrassing for the Minister if he had to return with another money resolution to meet those payments. I want him to be clear in his own mind and to assure the House that he will not be required to do that.

Administration expenses are raised specifically in the money resolution. Paragraph (a) authorises

> "the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any sums required by the Secretary of State for making payments or for defraying his administrative expenses under that Act."

It may well be that pensions can be included under that paragraph of the resolution, but the Minister gave no indication either of the sums that he would make in payment or of his administrative expenses. In the introduction to the Bill, the financial effects, which normally give an indication of the sort of money that will be needed, do not give an idea of the money that we are talking about. Clearly, the Minister will say that there will be revenue and that the resolution provides for payment from the Consolidated Fund, and we understand that. At the same time, however, it would be interesting to know what the administrative costs of this privatisation venture will be. Parliament has a right to know.

So far, the entire privatisation programme has cost more than £2,000 million in fees and advertising charges. The privatisation programme of the Government has meant that public assets, which we own, have been sold off. Those assets have been sold to the public as though the public do not already own them, and that amounts to legalised theft. The privatisation programme has been extremely costly. Perhaps the administrative money mentioned in the money resolution is a relatively small amount, but I hope that the Minister can tell us something about it.

What will happen during the construction of, for example, the Crown courts in Bradford? The PSA will start off that work because, presumably, the privatisation will not be accomplished by the time the construction starts. What will happen then? Will work be handed over? If the private contractors run over time and need more money, how will we hold the Minister to account? I had an Adjournment debate on the construction of the Crown courts in Bradford, to which the Minister replied. I spoke of the potential damage that might be caused to an important cross-Bradford rail link, which would provide a much improved rail service in Bradford, but that is not germane to the argument tonight.

How will hon. Members hold the Minister to account? With privatisation, does it follow that all public accountability will disappear out of the window? Will Ministers no longer be required to answer questions, whether about money resolutions or about their general level of accountability? It would be a sad day for Parliament were that so. If the Minister has some concern for democracy, he will assure the House that, irrespective of privatisation, Ministers will still be open to question, to challenge and to account. The House holds that right dearly and I would hate to see it diminished, but I suspect that that will be the case.

I have not detained the House too long, but I believe that the questions were worth raising, and I hope that the Minister will provide the answers.

10.22 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): The money resolution deal with two issues. First, it authorises payment of expenses incurred by the Secretary of State for the Environment in implementing the Bill. Secondly, it also authorises disposal of receipts from the sales of the Crown Suppliers and the Property Services Agency.

On the first question, the expenses will be administrative and will relate mainly to advice from consultants about the sales. In the case of the PSA, the privatisation itself is not sufficiently advanced to be able to estimate the total costs that will be needed. In the case of the Crown Suppliers, I can tell the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) that £54,000 has so far been spent on the expenses of the sale. We expect the total expenditure on the sale to be less than £2 million.

Clause 3 would give the Secretary of State power to subscribe for or otherwise acquire shares or securities of a transferee company, and to make loans to those companies. We do not expect to make use of those provisions for the Crown Suppliers, since the companies will be sold immediately the Crown Suppliers' assets are transferred to them. In the case of the PSA, since the privatisation is some way away, and because we expect that the companies may trade as wholly owned public companies, there may be a need for the Secretary of State to make injections of capital from time to time.

On the second question, receipts from the sale of PSA and the Crown Suppliers will be paid into the Consolidated Fund. In the case of the Crown Suppliers, its debt with the national loans fund will first have to be repaid. The Secretary of State may therefore, with the Treasury's consent, direct sufficient proceeds of the sale into that fund, with the balance paid into the Consolidated Fund.

The hon. Gentleman asked about pensions. When the existing staff transfer to the new employer, should they opt to have their pension entitlement preserved, those pensions will still be the liability of the Treasury, through the Consolidated Fund, at such time as they are called upon. If the individual employees choose to have their pension rights consolidated and transferred to the new organisation which is setting up a pension fund, a sum or sums of money will have to be transferred from the Exchequer to those pension schemes. However, that is not new money, because it represents the present contingent liability of the Exchequer for the pensions of existing staff of the Crown Suppliers and the Property Services Agency.

I hope that I have answered most of the points raised by the hon. Gentleman. He also referred to the Crown courts in Bradford, an issue which, as he said, I have previously debated with him across the Floor of the House. The procurement of the Crown courts, as of all civil projects, is, and will be, the responsibility of my right hon. and noble Friend the Lord Chancellor. He and his Department will be accountable to Parliament for the expenditure incurred on such projects.

Question put and agreed to.

Local Government (Sports and Leisure)

10.25 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Colin Moynihan): I beg to move,

That the draft Local Government Act 1988 (Competition in Sports and Leisure Facilities) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 25th October, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.

The order seeks to extend the range of activities which must be put out to tender by local authorities under the Local Government Act 1988 by including the management of facilities for sport and leisure. The order adds a new defined activity of "managing sports and leisure facilities" to section 2(2) of the Local Government Act 1988. It also adds a new paragraph 8 to schedule 1 of the Act which sets out a definition of the activity and it brings the requirements of section 4 and 5 of the 1988 Act into effect in respect of works contracts for managing sports and leisure facilities from 1 October 1991.

Let me emphasise that the Government place the highest possible value on local authority sport and leisure facilities. We recognise that they meet an essential need in the community and provide a wide range of opportunities for local people to participate in sport. This order is not about selling off local authority owned facilities, nor about preventing them from being built in the future. As everyone from the world of sport should know, competition is both a means of ensuring better delivery of the service which such facilities can provide and of promoting value for money. It is in the interest of the users of facilities as well as ratepayers more generally to find ways to improve the management of facilities and to make them cost effective.

Hon. Members may be aware that the Audit Commission published a report earlier this year entitled "Sport for whom?" which stated that there was scope for improvement in the management of sport and leisure facilities throughout local government. The Audit Commission has confirmed estimates which show that typically, savings from voluntary contracting out have been in the region of 20 per cent. or more of previous costs. Clearly major savings are available, perhaps as much as several hundred million pounds a year. Only by facing up to the constant pressure of open competition for the management of sport and leisure facilities is it possible to ensure efficiency. That is what this order is about.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): Is the Minister aware that the all-party parliamentary Scottish sports group, of which I am convenor and which consists of hon. Members from both sides of the House, is strongly opposed to and has roundly condemned these measures? It feels that not only will it decrease access to sporting facilities for many people, including disadvantaged groups of people, but it will probably be a disincentive for local authorities to invest in new leisure and sporting facilities because the local authorities will have to spend a great deal of money and hand over the management of the brand new facilities to private operators. Those operators may simply be intent on making a fast buck out of public facilities which have been financed by public money.

Mr. Moynihan: I recognise that there was considerable concern when the draft order was first published about the points raised by the hon. Gentleman. There was concern that pricing, admissions policies and subsidies for disadvantaged groups, to whom the hon. Gentleman referred, would be handed over to the private sector. It is for that reason that I hope that the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues will be pleased to hear that all three of those criteria will continue to be vested in the hands of the local authorities. They will continue to have the right to determine admissions policies, pricing and opening hours in order to protect the interests of the people to whom the hon. Gentleman referred. It is important for the House to recognise that. I am sure that we all recognise that it is important for all users to continue to benefit through participation in sport.

It is clear to me that in many cases it is not a lack of sports facilities or even resources which is a problem. Often the facilities available do not match local needs. Expensive modern sports centres are often under-used in inner cities while down the road other facilities cannot cope with demand. More professional marketing and a better understanding of needs will, I am confident, go a long way towards redressing the problems. In a competitive environment, there is a powerful incentive to get the planning right.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): The Minister mentioned under-use. Will he accept that the Crowtree leisure centre in Sunderland has the highest usage of any leisure centre in Britain because of its wide range of facilities and its competitive pricing and because it is well managed? Why should the people of Sunderland and its forward-looking council which provided that facility find themselves disadvantaged by the measure that the Minister is introducing?

Mr. Moynihan: They will not be disadvantaged. When the contract goes out to competitive tendering, we will see whether the hon. Gentleman's statement is correct. I am confident that the management in the sports and leisure facilities of many local authorities is of outstanding quality and will take considerable beating when contracts are put out to competitive tender. However, it is in the interest of the users for that to be put to the test. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] Hon. Members ask why. Where a more efficient and effective management team can be put in place, it must be in the interests of the users, not least because that team may be able to recognise, through the contractual arrangements, that more effective marketing and outreach policies to the local community will bring more people into the facility. That matches the objective of most local authorities, which is "Sport for all."

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): I am interested in what my hon. Friend is saying. I am sure that he will have had a chance to look at the work of Westminster city council, which is a trend-setter in many ways. Has my hon. Friend had an opportunity to look at the Queen Mother leisure centre, which is a fine example of exactly what he is talking about? Far more private clubs are going through its doors.

Mr. Moynihan My hon. Friend has mentioned an extremely good example. It is one of five leisure facilities currently owned by Westminster city council. Several major improvements have resulted from its voluntary decision to put out the management to competitive tender.

For example, in 1988, 172,000 people used the facility and 216,000 now use it under private management. Furthermore, under local authority management, it used to open at 8 am, but it now opens at 6.30 am. Most importantly, many people were concerned about special local clubs being denied the opportunity to use the facility under private management. In fact, there has been an increase in the use of that facility.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West) *rose*——

Mr. Moynihan: I want to finish answering my hon. Friend first, and then I shall give way.

Most importantly, in response to concerns about pricing in this facility, under the new management entrance prices have risen by only 6·5 per cent., whereas in previous years under local authority management they were increasing by an average of 10 per cent.

Mr. Madden: Having commented on Westminster, will the Minister comment on developments in Bradford over the past year? When there has been bidding for services, groups of senior council officers have proposed setting up private companies to put in bids for services on the basis of confidential information that they have received as council officers. Does the Minister welcome that sort of development, which seems to raise a number of important ethical issues to do with the conduct of a public service?

Mr. Moynihan: In the implementation of this order it is vital that the detail in the contracts be as comprehensive and clear as possible, and that local authorities ascertain and ensure that no individual gains an advantage because of his knowledge of what is not in the contract. Uncompetitive practices of that sort must of course be frowned upon. When local authorities draw up contracts under this order, it is vital that they make all the information available clearly to all parties who may want to compete for the contract, be they direct labour organisations, people who used to work for the council, or private sector management teams.

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): In view of the importance of competitive tendering, will my hon. Friend share with us his thoughts on the point made by the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden)? Competitive tenders of this sort should not go to council officials, as there will be no independent audit. Not very surprisingly, organisations can then mysteriously tender for an item at less than a certain figure.

Will my hon. Friend consider sending these bids to the district auditor, who is entirely independent, not to council officials who are entirely dependent on the political will of the party in power?

Mr. Moynihan: I agree that conflicts of interest should be avoided—that applies as much to people working in local authorities as to others bidding under the tendering documentation outlined in the order——

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield) *rose*——

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford) *rose*——

Mr. Moynihan: When I have made more progress, I shall be happy to give way.

Hon. Members will be aware that there have been two rounds of public consultation. The first was in 1987, when the Government set out proposals to extend competition to sports and leisure facilities. The second period of consultation was at the end of 1988, when the Department of the Environment issued the first draft of the order. Seventy-four organisations and individuals commented on the draft order. Ministers in this Department and in the Welsh Office and Scottish Office have given careful consideration to all the responses which we received.

Four main issues emerged: first, the question of which facilities are to be subject to competition; secondly, the circumstances in which facilities would be exempted; thirdly, the activities which should be included in the managing function; and, fourthly, the implementation timetable.

Mr. Lofthouse: Will the Minister assure me that the league clubs with grounds at Featherstone, Castleford and Wakefield which were recently purchased and are now owned by the local authority will not be affected by this order?

Mr. Moynihan: I am happy to have this opportunity to clarify the position. We are talking about the management functions of local authority sports and leisure facilities, not about their ownership. Where private sector managers already exist in clubs, whether professional or amateur, those arrangements will continue. In this case, it is not the ownership that leads to a difference in moving towards privatisation. Where the management team is currently from the local authority, the order becomes relevant. I have been privileged to see many northern local authority rugby league clubs in which the management is already seconded. It is leased to individual sporting clubs. Where such leases apply, as in many professional football clubs, the competitive order does not apply.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): It is said that consultations took place with representatives of local government where such consultations appeared appropriate. The Minister has said that there have been 74 replies. This year alone district councils have received 30 consultative documents from the Department of the Environment to which they have been asked to respond. Those councils are overworked, which means that proper consultations and responses do not take place. Did proper reponses occur in this case and were there facilities for correct consultations? Is the Department going through an exercise by sending documents to local authorities and not providing a real chance to consider them? If there was no chance to give firm consideration, would the Department take account of representations?

Mr. Moynihan: The round of consultations has proved to be an extremely important exercise. As the hon. Gentleman will recall, the House has debated competitive tendering before. One of the matters that emerged from consultation with some of those consulted concerned the whole question of pricing. The local authorities that responded expressed great concern about the possibility of pricing being vested in the new management teams from the private sector. We listened to those anxieties because we were concerned, as were Opposition Members at that time, that that could lead to new management teams pricing out of the local authority sporting and leisure facilities specific groups of local people, disadvantaged groups and others who were not able to pay the going rate for, perhaps, a neighbourhood private club.

[Mr. Moynihan]

That led to the Government responding to the first draft order and to the consultations from which we have had responses from local authorities and governing and national bodies. We sought to vest the pricing decisions with the local authority when drawing up the tender documentation. That was one example of the Government amending the legislation in the light of the consultation exercise. That exercise did not take place over six or nine months: it has now been in place for over two years. That shows the importance that we rightly attach to consultation.

Mr. Meale: My hon. Friend for the Member Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) asked the Minister about clubs that were in existence and their management servicing. The new paragraph to the schedule talks about courses for horse racing. The Minister knows that three race courses in Britain are owned and controlled by local authorities: Worcester, Yarmouth and Doncaster. Doncaster is granted by royal charter. Because of the relationship of the Jockey Club to that course, there is a limited list of personnel who can be recruited to the course, and that list is provided by the Jockey Club. There is a limit on the people who can even be shortlisted for jobs. Will the Minister give to those three race courses and in particular to Doncaster the same guarantee that he gave my hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford in relation to rugby clubs? Doncaster race course, which enjoys the royal prerogative, does not cost the ratepayers a penny but earns many hundreds of thousands of pounds. Surely he will give the guarantee that I ask for.

Mr. Moynihan: The hon. Gentleman's point is not relevant to the debate. It is relevant not to the management of the facility but to the decisions that the local authority has taken in relation to its ownership and the criteria under which the race course is managed. As a result, provided that the tender documentation is not anti-competitive, it will be possible to include details that outline the very high standards required. That will be a matter for the local authorities concerned, both with race courses and with other facilities. There is nothing to stop local authorities, in determining the high standards that they require for management, outlining that sufficiently high standards should be obtained by the management team when, for example, contracting out the teaching of swimming. The governing bodies can have a positive and important role to play just as much in the Amateur Swimming Association as in the Jockey Club.

On the question of the managing function, a number of those who responded to the document were concerned that the definition of "management" in the first draft order precluded coaching, instruction and supervision by anyone other than the new management team——

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Moynihan: I shall not give way. Many hon. Members wish to speak and there is only one and a half hours for debate.

I understand the concern expressed, and the order has been amended so that the new management team can, if it wishes, arrange for coaching, instruction and supervision along the lines that I have outlined. That will allow it to bring in local coaches or trainers if it wishes.

Under the terms of the 1988 Act, the implementation timetable is not specified in the order but will be included in a separate order that is subject to negative resolution. Hon. Members may be aware that we postponed the original implementation date by one year to January 1992 to avoid cutting across the timetable of competition for other services under the Local Government Act 1988. As a result of that——

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside) *rose*——

Mr. Moynihan: I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me, but, having refused to give way to Opposition Members, it would be unreasonable of me to give way. I am sure that my hon. Friend will wish to contribute to the debate. I apologise to him.

To spread the work load of the councils in preparing tenders and also that of the contractors, we propose to phase in implementation on a percentage basis. Thus, all authorities in England and Scotland will be required to have exposed to competition facilities representing 35 per cent. of their gross expenditure by 1 January 1992, 70 per cent. by 1 August 1992 and 100 per cent. by 1 January 1993. In Wales, competition will be phased in over a two-year period. The detailed interpretation of the order will be for local authorities themselves. It must be for individual authorities to make sensible judgments about, for example, the facilities that will or will not be exempt within the terms of the order.

To assist the Department of the Environment, the Scottish and Welsh Offices will prepare for publication during the first half of next year circulars giving guidance on a number of issues. They will offer general guidance, and local authorities will continue to have a close interest in the running of facilities, even if the contract is awarded to a private sector firm. In addition to retaining control of pricing and admissions policy, they will be responsible for drawing up the tender specifications.

As I hope I have made clear, this order is about improving the management of sports and leisure facilities. It is about securing better value for money and heightening local government's sensitivity to local sporting needs. I believe that everyone will benefit—the local councils, the ratepayers and the users of the facilities. I commend the order to the House.

10.48 pm

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): This order takes a bad idea, gives it a new lease of life and then lets it loose where it can do most damage. It applies the idea of compulsory competitive tendering to an area—the management of local authority sports and leisure facilities—where it is certain to create the maximum disruption and disbenefit for the least possible gain.

The best evidence for that is the somewhat defensive tone adopted by the Minister when seeking the approval of the House for the order. He well knows that, from the outset, this proposal has been profoundly unpopular with all those whom it will affect. He knows that not a single sports or leisure body has approved of or supported this proposal in principle. They well understood how damaging it would be to the availability of these facilities to the wider community, to the principles of Sport for All, which hitherto has enjoyed bipartisan support, and, in many important instances, to the achievement of excellence in sport, as it is to local authority-run facilities that so many top sportsmen and women turn when they need to train at non-commercial hours.

Mr. Gregory *rose*——

Mr. Gould: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do not give way; I know that many of my hon. Friends wish to speak in this short debate.

The other bodies with which the proposal was deeply unpopular were local authorities themselves. I think that the Minister will confirm that all the local authority associations opposed it in principle, and they have expressed their misgivings.

Mr. Gregory *rose*——

Mr. Gould: No, I will not give way. I want to speak very briefly.

The local authorities speak from some experience: after all, they have encountered compulsory competitive tendering in other contexts. We have the benefit of a study of such tendering, commissioned by Manchester city council, which reveals that local authorities' direct service organisations have been 80 per cent. successful in securing contracts for which they have tendered. Often, however, the price of winning those contracts—the title of the report is "The Price of Winning"—has been the necessity for cutting staff, reducing wages, making terms of employment worse and lowering standards, while at the same time incurring largely hidden but nevertheless real costs, estimated at £41 million for the country as a whole. Those have been the costs of preparing and administering the often unnecessary chore of implementing compulsory tendering.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West) *rose*——

Mr. Gould: No, I have already made it clear that I am not giving way.

All those costs have been for the sake of savings that are much lower than forecast. *[Interruption.]* The Minister spoke for nearly half an hour; I do not intend to emulate him.

Some local authorities have already tried putting out to tender the administration and management of their facilities. We have been given some instances: my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) mentioned them when the Minister made his statement in July. Wandsworth came a terrible cropper in the management of its swimming pool; Chelmsford, having entered into a new contract for the management of its pool, found that within three months that contract had come to a sad end. Torbay entered into a ground-maintenance contract that lasted an even shorter time—just 10 days.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North) *rose*——

Mr. Gould: As I have said, I will not give way, because I want to give my hon. Friends a chance to speak. *[Interruption.]* I know that the Minister gave way, but he spoke for half an hour. I do not intend to do that.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Gould: There is no point of order.

Mr. Greenway: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it not part of the spirit of our debates that Front-Bench speakers give way at least once, and sometimes two or three times? The Minister did; why does not the hon. Gentleman?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): That is a matter for the hon. Member who has the Floor.

Mr. Gould: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I know that it is very unpleasant and uncomfortable for Conservative Members to hear a stream of common sense without being able to respond, but they will have their opportunities later.

It is little wonder, in the light of local authorities' experience of being forced to put the administration of their services out to competitive tendering, that they evince so little enthusiasm and support for the proposals; for the proposals concern arrangements that are widely acknowledged to be working very well. How will it help the communities that authorities serve to substitute for that principle of service the search for profit maximisation? How will private profit-takers meet the demands, interests and needs of the disadvantaged groups whom the Minister has mentioned—something that the local authorities have already done very successfully?

I listened carefully to what the Minister said in that regard. He emphasised that pricing, admission policies and opening hours will be fixed by local authorities and included in the tender documents. That is extremely welcome, although it has to be said that the only pricing freedom that local authorities will have will be to fix and pay subsidies in relation to prices set by private contractors.

If the Minister is inviting us to place such reliance on the freedom that he says local authorities will enjoy, why do we have to wait for a circular that has yet to be published? Why has the draft order been introduced before the circular has been published? He has promised that it will be published next year. Much more important, why shall we have to rely on a circular? Why is that provision not in the draft order? I hope that the Minister will answer those questions. If that important provision is so central to the Government's defence of what is otherwise indefensible, why is it not given legislative effect? We demand that it should have legislative effect; otherwise, the provisions of section 7(7) of the Local Government Act 1988 will limit any discretion that local authorities may believe that the Minister's pronouncement gives them.

There are other major concerns. They include health and safety. Why does the order not provide that contractors should be required to adopt staff training programmes so that health and safety standards are met, particularly by managers of swimming baths? Why does the order abandon the original timetable and speed it up very considerably for some local authorities? For many local authorities, the already unnecessary and burdensome expense of preparing for the tendering procedure will be very much exacerbated by having to introduce it much earlier than they had anticipated.

Local authorities will now be required to parcel up their management contracts into neat little groups. That will make it very difficult for them to move their staff from one project to another, particularly if they are engaged in organising large projects. For example, Sheffield is now organising the world student games. Local authorities will be unable to move staff in an emergency to large projects. Why are they to be saddled with a system that will benefit

[Mr. Gould]

and is intended only to benefit private contractors? To parcel up the work means that private contractors will be able to pick and choose and to cream off the bits that they think are the most profitable.

Mr. Colvin: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gould: No. I have already said that I do not intend to give way. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman should even try to intervene.

Does the Minister not understand that the measure means that local authorities will lose control and responsibility, in many instances, for the management of these facilities but that they will still retain the onerous responsibility of repair and maintenance and will still be faced with demands to invest in new facilities? The draft order makes it highly unlikely that local authorities will risk putting their own capital into important facilities over which they will have little control. Has the Minister considered the impact of this ill-thought-out measure on the future provision by local authorities of sports and leisure facilities that he has described as an extremely valuable element in the life of many communities?

This ill-thought-out measure owes its origin to dogma and it has been driven by dogma ever since. It is a triumph of ideology over common sense and practicality. Nobody wants it; it has no friends. The Government reveal by pushing it forward that they are operating at the far reaches of their own dogma.

If the public had ever been asked what a Government enjoying a 100-seat majority and with two and a half years to run should do to improve the state of Britain, not one person in 100,000 would have replied, "Privatise the management of the local swimming pool." This is one more example of a Government who are out of touch with the British people, so we shall oppose the proposal tonight.

10.59 pm

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): The House has been treated to an extraordinary performance by the Opposition tonight. The Labour party has fielded its key Front-Bench spokesman on the environment. I do not know whether it was an attempt to prove to us that he was well versed in all aspects of the environment. He has actually shown us that he knows extraordinarily little about this matter, to the degree of not even accepting any interventions. On future occasions when the Opposition are debating sport, they should perhaps bring out again that old warhorse the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell), who might have taken the odd intervention and might have enlightened us more.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Does my hon. Friend, with his considerable experience of sport and his previous portfolio as Minister with special responsibility for sport, agree that the Government's action is something of an insult to Conservative-controlled authorities that run their sporting facilities extremely efficiently and with a management who are probably second to none? I refer to my own authority of Macclesfield and the chief amenities and recreation officer, Max Hartley, who is an outstanding man. In Macclesfield, the leisure centre has contracted out many services, such as catering. Does my hon. Friend believe that local government is unable to manage efficiently in accordance with the philosophy of the present Government? If he believes that it is incapable, I can say only that I disagree with him.

Mr. Tracey: I was happy to take that intervention. I do not disagree at all with my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton). The point behind the principle of putting local government services out to tender is to bring forward the most cost-effective and efficient method of doing the job. It is conceivable, as has been proved on a number of occasions, that, when asked to look at its own operation and to consider whether it is truly as efficient as it should be, the local authority comes up with the most remarkable methods of improving its efficiency. I look forward to many more examples.

In the past year or so, since tendering was first introduced into the argument by the Government, we have seen the most amazing synthetic indignation from the Opposition parties. I suspect that far more of it has been spurred on by their close affiliation with the National and Local Government Officers Association than by any real regard for the interests of sporting facilities.

There is no reason why this measure should not deeply improve the facilities of sports centres, and there are many examples that already prove that. Pricing policies have been set by the local authority and the prices have not gone through the roof, as the right hon. Member for Small Heath and many of his hon. Friends have so often warned would happen.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Sport gave the example of Westminster, and a very good example it is. The same will happen throughout the country. Far from sportsmen and women and sports clubs opposing the measure, they will welcome it once they realise that professional management—either by private companies or by local authorities that have had their costs driven down —is very much in their interests.

Once again we have had a synthetic show of indignation from the Opposition. It was quite meaningless, however, and once they see the results that the order will have, they too will welcome it.

11.5 pm

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): When the Local Government Act 1988 was first introduced, it was clear that the privatisation of sports and leisure facilities would be omitted. That was due to the strength of opinion against it, and many Opposition Members thought that that was a pretty good idea. Having been obliged to consult the interested parties, the Government have blithely ignored their fears and worries and pressed ahead with the draft order even though the majority of local authorities and sporting organisations are against it.

Despite their objections, local authorities will now be compelled to put the running of their sports and leisure facilities out to tender, regardless of the detrimental effect that that will have on their efforts to involve more local people in sport and recreation. Cheap prices and concessions for the elderly, unemployed and disabled will be disregarded by the private sector in its drive for more profit.

The Government have blatantly ignored the views of those whom they consulted. Nowhere is that more obvious than in the timetable for the implementation of compulsory competitive tendering. Sports associations and local councils urged a cautious approach involving the phasing-in of CCT to allow those involved later to learn from the experience of the councils that first operated the procedure. The new timetable requiring all local authorities in England and Wales to have implemented the CCT procedure 100 per cent. by January 1993 is both impractical and unworkable. It will create intolerable pressure for some local authorities, including my own local authority in Tameside, with the draft order bringing the tender date forward by a whole year.

The contract has also been designed in such a way that escalating costs of administration—in combination with the new timetable—will defeat the very object of the tendering exercise. Pressure of time will adversely affect the safety of sports and leisure facilities such as swimming baths, as health and safety specifications must be comprehensive to protect the consumer.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Pendry: May I continue, because I know that other hon. Members wish to speak. I am sure that my hon. Friend will catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The situation is reaching crisis point, largely because of the legislation that the Government are introducing. I could list many examples of the concerns felt by sports people and sports organisations. Instead, let me give one. I recently attended a forum at which many teachers expressed concern about the way in which physical education is being threatened as a result of the introduction of the national curriculum. It is almost certain that, because of the pressure of time, physical education will lose out to other worthwhile subjects such as maths and science at a time when the situation, especially in primary schools, is becoming critical. It seems ironic that the current disposal rate of so-called surplus playing fields—800 were up for grabs last year—even in inner-city areas so desperately short of open spaces means that soon no fields will be available, even for private management to exploit.

It is therefore clear that the order is yet another half-baked measure of a type that is becoming characteristic of the Department of the Environment. It was a vain hope on the part of many of my colleagues and I that the new Secretary of State would have a clearer understanding of the problems of sport, but no such luck. He should have listened to the views expressed following the Green Paper exercise when 95 per cent. of those consulted rejected the Government's whole approach.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) referred to the third volume of the contractors' audit commissioned by Manchester city council entitled "The Price of Winning" which was published last week. It shows how unlikely it is that hundreds of companies will eagerly queue up to take over the 1,500 sports halls, 1,000 swimming pools, 250,000 soccer pitches, 100,000 cricket pitches, golf courses, tennis courts and parachute centres that are up for grabs.

History tells us that when sports facilities are privatised the outcome can hardly be considered an unqualified success. Reference has been made to Wandsworth. That jewel in the Government's crown, that pioneer of privatisation, tried to put the Latchmere centre pools out to tender in 1983, but not one bid was received. The Sobell centre in Islington was brought into the public sector by the council because, even with subsidies of £250,000, the trust established to run it, involving firms such as Mecca, could not make the centre pay.

Some people in sport have said that within five years we will see little difference between the good management in the public sector and that in the private sector. A more likely scenario would be a repeat of what has happened to other privatised council services. Last week's audit study found that the lower paid suffer. Where CCT has been introduced, 90 per cent. of the 1,400 jobs lost were manual jobs and 70 per cent. of those jobs were filled by women at very low wages.

Given that councils will continue to own the sports centres and retain discretionary powers over pricing, the only possible way to make savings for the new private sector managers—who will undoubtedly arrange higher salaries for themselves because that is what has happened over the past few years—will be through cutting wages, cutting staff numbers and lowering safety standards. As a Member sponsored by the National Union of Public Employees, I deprecate any move that makes lower-paid workers earn even lower wages, and I also deprecate the lowering of safety standards. Even if private sector companies bother to bid, how will the companies that win tenders hope to make a profit without cutting pay rates, staffing levels or corners in safety provision?

Much play has been made by the Government—and the Minister did this again today—that local councils will supposedly be able to continue to determine admission prices and opening hours at sports facilities. When the Minister replies, will he comment on the point made by the former Under-Secretary of State, who said that local authorities will be permitted

> "to delegate their discretionary charging powers . . . to contractors who manage sports facilities". [*Official Report*, 2 March 1989; Vol. 148, c. *283*.]

This order will have a serious effect on sports like swimming which is particularly expensive to operate. It is highly significant that many of the failures of CCT have involved swimming pools. There is particular concern among physical education teachers and the Amateur Swimming Association that in future children will have less opportunity to learn to swim under supervision. Even without this legislation, it is a sad fact that one in five men and one in three women cannot swim, and on average 800 people are drowned every year.

We have already heard about Westminster. The Otter swimming club in Westminster is one of the country's most consistently successful clubs, but it has lost three subsidised hours of swimming a week because prices for pool hire have risen. In my constituency, the Hyde Seal amateur swimming club, which was once the world champion club, is alarmed by the threat that this order poses for the sport. Organisations representing disadvantaged groups such as the disabled have expressed strong fears. Those who need encouragement to pursue sport and leisure activities—that includes the disabled—are certainly not at the forefront of the Government's thinking.

The goal of achieving high quality and widely accessible services will be replaced by the need to meet financial targets. In short, the Government should realise that private contractors cannot compete with local authorities in developing certain management facilities. Local authorities have much more intimate knowledge of local needs and conditions. The private sector, motivated by profit or by cost-effectiveness, is unlikely to have the same

[Mr. Pendry]

positive approach to encouraging mass participation through subsidisation. If the Government genuinely believe in a sport-for-all policy, they must withdraw this nonsensical order. More and more sportsmen and women are asking, "What have the Government got against sport and recreation?"

The Government's sports policy—if that is not a contradiction in terms—is completely bankrupt. The order is just another example of the way in which they are discriminating against sporting activity in this country. It is desperately sad that the Government seem unable to grasp the fact that sport is of immense benefit to our society and an integral factor in improving the quality of life.

11.15 pm

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): I promised the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) that, if he caught your eye tonight, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would say nice things about him because of my savage attack on him during the debate on the Football Spectators Bill. After the nonsense that hon. Members have heard, I must desist from the accolades I was about to pay him. At least we heard some words of knowledge from him about sport, which is rather more than I can say about his hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould).

The hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde said that this is a privatisation matter. That is nonsense. Some Conservative Members almost wish that it were. Many of us would like most sports centres and facilities to be taken out of local authority hands and sold to the private sector, which would be of immense benefit. However, that is not what the order states. It states that the facilities are not for sale. The motion merely asks the House to approve the order, which says to the ratepayers of this country that we believe that sports centres and leisure facilities should be considered in terms of the money that they are spending —taxpayers' money—to make absolutely certain that that money is spent correctly and wisely.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Carlisle: I will not give way because there is not much time left.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) has said, the siren voices among the Opposition have no concern for ratepayers' money. They think that there is a bottomless pit and they will not even consider sports facilities in terms of their management capability and the opportunities that they offer. It is nonsense for the Opposition to say that the order excludes any form of public benefit. Many examples could be given—they can be given if need be, but it would take until tomorrow morning to do so—of facilities that have had private input. They have brought immense benefit to those who genuinely believe in and want to participate in sport. The benefit has been afforded not only to participants but to hard-pressed ratepayers.

Of course, Opposition Members do not worry about ratepayers. They exclude them from the debate. Opposition Members say that the order will exclude the disabled and those in our society who are most disadvantaged. Again that is nonsense. The order gives councils, so beloved by Opposition Members, the opportunity to say to those who manage their facilities —I sincerely hope that many private firms will manage facilities—"We still want an input. We still want to give some subsidy to make sure that those very people are given opportunities."

That is the tragedy of the speech by the hon. Member for Dagenham. He came fresh into the debate, advised as he was at the very last minute by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) for whom Conservative Members have great affection because he knows what he is talking about. Sadly, he may not catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Dagenham did not understand the order, but that is no surprise in one who has so suddenly come on to the scene.

Mr. Colvin *rose*——

Mr. Carlisle: I willingly give way to my hon. Friend.

Hon. Members: "Oh."

Mr. Colvin: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way, because I must spring to the defence of the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould). I thought that he made the case convincingly for greater flexibility in the provision of the services for which local government currently tenders, but surely, the one way to obtain the flexibility that he wants is to put these services out to tender?

Mr. Carlisle: Of course it is. My hon. Friend is absolutely right, but I am afraid that the hon. Member for Dagenham was obviously so new to it tonight that he did not understand the full implications of the two years' discussion.

The order will bring a sharper perspective to the management of leisure and sports facilities. It will also bring vast opportunities to those young people who are training now and attempting to enter sports facility management but who are currently unable to find any opportunities. If the private sector is allowed in, as I believe and hope that it will be—although many town halls will obviously try to frustrate that —it will enable a complete new career structure to emerge. The Audit Commission has said that, in all the other services that have been put out to tender, a saving of 20 per cent. is available, and that will increase the opportunities available to those young people.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): May I take the hon. Gentleman away from the aspects of profits and into the aspects of safety? Does he share my concern about some of the terms of the order? Although local authorities will be able to set the programme for the safety aspects of sports centres, the order does not make clear the influence that the local authority can exercise over the contractors' ability to comply with health and safety legislation. Does he agree that when costs are cut to make greater profits, safety becomes an issue and the public's safety is put at risk?

Mr. Carlisle: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman. He must understand that whoever takes on the management of these facilities must remain within the law and the strictures that the Health and Safety Executive imposes upon those leisure facilities. Just because a facility passes into private hands, that does not mean that it becomes outside the law. Opposition Members seem to feel that those who might tender—indeed, people are queueing up to tender for these facilities—will have to keep within the rules and the legislation that has been laid down by the House.

But what really grates on the Opposition is that that will bring a new professional approach to leisure and sports facilities. Opposition Members must understand —and in their heart of hearts they must agree—that that does not exist in the majority of sports centres today. Of course there are the exceptions which my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) mentioned in the rather Mad Hatter style that he brings to the House —[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] I do not agree with all that he says but in terms of improving the management of those facilities, those in the private sector can bring a breath of fresh air——

Mr. Pike *rose*——

Mr. Carlisle: No, I cannot give way because I have given way twice already.

The order at last brings the ratepayers of this country——

Mr. Madden: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Do you agree that it is outrageous for the hon. Gentleman to attack the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) in his absence in such a way? Is it in order to call into question the sanity of the hon. Member for Macclesfield?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have the impression that the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) is well able to look after himself.

Mr. Carlisle: My hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield and myself are the closest personal friends; we have a deep affection for each other and I know that when he reads the *Official Report* in the morning—*[Interruption.]* Perhaps my hon. Friend has ventured out of the Chamber because he does not want to be embarrassed by the vote at 12 o'clock—I do not know.

In conclusion, Conservative Members find it extraordinary to wonder about exactly what the Opposition are frightened of. They are frightened of another body looking at the facilities that are run by both Labour and Conservative councils and saying to them, "The facility that you are offering your ratepayers could be improved." Of course, "improvement" is not a word that the Opposition like. It is the availability——

Mr. Allen McKay *rose*——

Mr. Carlisle: No, I cannot give way.

The order presents an opportunity for many young people in this country to have new facilities and new opportunities. As has been said, in places such as Basingstoke, which is to privatise, or put into the private sector, its swimming facilities, there will be longer hours and greater variety in the services that are offered. It is that type of variety and opportunity that sticks in the throats of Opposition Members and that is why we support the order.

11.24 pm

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): I should like to take this opportunity to raise a point of particular constituency interest before turning to some more general observations. I shall try to be as brief as possible because many hon. Members wish to speak.

I do not know whether, when the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), attended St. Andrews university, he played golf. If he did not, I hope that he is aware that the golf courses there, particularly Old Course, are managed by trustees appointed under the St. Andrews Links Order Confirmation Act 1974. The local authority owns the golf courses but has no part in their management. Indeed, by legislation the House has provided otherwise.

I understand that the order can apply only to what are described as defined authorities which are defined in section 1 of the principal Act. It seems that the order cannot apply to the golf courses at St. Andrews, particularly to Old Course which is of world renown. I observe from the assenting nods of the Minister for Sport and the hon. Member for Stirling that that is the case. In the light of that silent undertaking, which will undoubtedly be repeated verbally when the Under-Secretary replies, I can pass on to more general observations.

The debate has revealed a sharp division in philosophy about the way in which public facilities should be managed. I am most interested in the anxiety of the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) to ensure that ratepayers get value for money. If he were to conduct an opinion poll among ratepayers in an area with a substantial number of public sporting facilities, he would find that the vast majority are perfectly satisfied with the management of the facilities. They would undoubtedly regard it as doctrinaire and unnecessary that the policy of privatisation should be applied to such facilities.

In his introduction to the order, the Minister did not promise us one more international sportsman as a result of the order passing into law, or a broadening of the base of the pyramid of participation which is the essential feature of the development of sport and recreation.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Campbell: No, I shall not give way because of the lack of time.

The Minister for Sport should have opposed these measures root and branch. He should not be here signifying his acquiescence to them. His job is to be the sports representative in Government, not the Government representative in sport.

All these proposals have been universally condemned by sporting bodies that know something about the management of facilities. The proposals undermine the national strategy which the Scottish Sports Council is endeavouring to implement in its programme Sport 2000. They are opposed by the Central Council of Physical Recreation. Mr. Peter Lawson recently pointed out that the average deficit on running a swimming pool is £200,000 a year. How is a pool to be run profitably unless one makes some concessions in safety and staffing? The curious legal relationship which will exist between the local authority and the management company may well mean that the local authority will continue to have the legal responsibility for safety, but not the means of discharging it because the management company has been interposed between it and the people who use the facility.

These facilities were built with public money and with a public purpose. They were never designed to be run by management companies in any element of their activities. When did we last hear of private enterprise building a

[Mr. Campbell]

track such as the international standard running track at Gateshead which has had such a profound effect on sport and social conditions? How many Olympic swimming pools have been built by private money? Not one.

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): The hon. and learned Gentleman has mentioned Gateshead. I would have done so if there had been time and if I had caught your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Gateshead has been successful because staff of all departments can be used when major events are taking place at the stadium. That flexibility will be lost if the order is agreed to. Flexibility is an extremely important factor, and Conservative Members are ignorant of it.

Mr. Campbell: The hon. Gentleman makes a powerful case, and I do not seek to add to it.

The Minister seems not to understand—I speak of track and field athletics, which I profess to know something about—that the majority of the fine atheletes who represent the United Kingdom in such events as the European cup enjoy their first taste of sport at public facilities which are provided by public funds. Their Olympic aspirations, unlike the Minister's and my own, were not nurtured in the cloisters of universities. The days of Corinthian sportsmen have long since gone. Public facilities make the most significant of all contributions to sport. The order will do nothing for sportsmen of the next generation, and that is why the Government stand condemned. We shall vote against the order.

11.31 pm

Mr. Terence Higgins (Worthing): The House will have noticed the remarkable contrast between my hon. Friend the Minister for Sport, who gave way generously to those who wished to intervene, and the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), who did not give way at all. I am not surprised, because my hon. Friend, like myself, is an ex-Olympic athlete and is not worried about competition.

I wish to make a brief constituency contribition on timing, and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will clarify the matter for me. He will know from the strong representations which I have made on behalf of my constituents that Worthing is to host the world bowls championships and that it is anxious that there should be appropriate preparations to ensure that the greens are of an exceptionally high standard. That being so, the timing of the implementation of the order is important. A change of management ahead of the championships would create a considerable problem. I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that it is important that the facilities at an international event should be of the highest possible standard.

I understand that the order will accommodate the representation that I am making and that the existing management will be able to proceed to prepare facilities for the world bowls championships without interruption.

Mr. Moynihan: I can assure my right hon. Friend that his understanding is correct.

Mr. Higgins: The lady in the crowd used to say, "Whatever happens don't shoot Santa Claus, and don't go on talking." I express my thanks to my hon. Friend and resume my place.

11.33 pm

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): It must be made clear that local authorities in Wales and throughout Britain are appalled by the scale of the task that will face them, and that is what the Minister seems to have disregarded. A heavy burden will be placed on local authorities by the inefficiency and the cost penalty for local services that the Government are introducing. The timescale for the introduction of the measure is worrying when we consider the leisure centres, pools, bowling greens and other facilities that will be involved. The proposals are predictable and contain nothing that is new. The Government have listened to no one and they have learnt nothing.

I can say on behalf of Welsh Members that the measure is rejected wholeheartedly in Wales, where local authorities recognise the manpower burden that is being imposed on them by a political party whose record of providing sports and leisure facilities has been appalling. Why has the Secretary of State for Wales been so silent? Why has he allowed this piece of dogma to be imposed on Wales? I do not wish it to be imposed on England or Scotland either, but in Wales there are many local councils that have spent years trying to provide decent facilities for their communities, and there is no reason for this piece of inefficiency to be imposed upon them.

The Minister tried to say that the order was not about preventing sports and leisure facilities from being provided in future, but that was meaningless in view of the straitjacket that is being placed on local authorities. Cardiff city council has received a 65 per cent. cut in capital money for the coming financial year. Most of the minuscule remainder will have to go to housing, where there is a desperate need. That proves that the Government are determined to undermine sports and leisure facilities as facilities for the communities.

Local authorities in Wales have long sought to provide decent facilities for their communities. Neither the Conservative party nor its masters in the private sector did anything to provide decent facilities. For example, in 1973 Cardiff had no leisure centre. Now we are close to having a pattern which can serve the whole city. Slowed down by occasional aberrations of Tory administrations, Labour has created the pattern, communities have benefited and the centres are generally respected and valued. They should not be messed up by this measure, which introduces another tier of wasteful administration into local government.

Why do this dogmatic and blinkered Government have to interfere and thrust their partisan views down local councillors' throats? If the Government are right and the measure will introduce efficiency, why do they have to dictate to local authorities and force the order down their throats? Local councillors know what their local communities need and want, and have provided it. One Conservative Member who left the debate early said that the order was pure political diktat. The Minister should keep his nose out and leave local authorities to provide what their communities want and need.

11.37 pm

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): What we have heard from Opposition Members tonight makes it abundantly clear that the Labour party is interested only in who runs sports facilities, not what goes on inside them.

It is not interested in how much they are used, how good they are or in seeing them improved. Those interests are held only by Conservative Members, not Opposition Members.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) said that the philosophy of the measure is wrong and the Government should never have conceived it in this way. I do not know what the outcome was when Chelmsford council put its facilities out to private tender. However, that council is run by the hon. and learned Members' party and if the philosophy is wrong and something of which the Government should be ashamed, why did he not at least admit what had been done by councils run by his own party? Perhaps he does not even know about that.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): They were wrong.

Mr. Hughes: Now we are told that those councils were wrong. The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East merely gave a political view which was humbug, as he knows. The measure will lead to the use of more imagination.

Mr. Clelland *rose*——

Mr. Hughes: I certainly shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman. No one would give way to me.

This country's leisure industry is growing in private hands. Imagination and flair are being shown and new opportunities are being brought to young people in many areas.

The Opposition's argument has been dominated by the idea that the measure will put safety standards at risk. Private industries are concerned that their own high standards—including their methodical approach to safety and the way they train their staff are frequently being lowered by local authorities. In some cases, local authorities run facilities without trained staff and operate complicated leisure machinery without ensuring that the people using it know how unsafe it is. There are many incidences of that. Standards are higher in the private sector.

Mr. Allen McKay: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it right for an hon. Member who is protected by the House to slander local authorities and say that their leisure centres are short of staff and dangerous? Does not the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) know that they are run by professional people, not the local authorities?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is a matter for debate.

Mr. Hughes: Opposition Members should listen to this, because any accidents would be on their consciences. *[Interruption.]* I intend to name a local authority to illustrate my point. Leisure facilities at the Glasgow garden festival, run by the Glasgow local authority, were operated by local authority staff who, in the opinion of many people in the private sector, had not been trained to use them. They did not know what they were doing, and it is the opinion of many safety experts that it was only a matter of luck that an accident was avoided.

We heard an important announcement from the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould). He said that councils are unlikely to build new facilities if the order is passed. I believe that he was expressing the Labour party's view which is, "If you do not allow us to manage and operate these facilities, we will take our bat and ball home and we will not build any new ones." That is not our view. Many Conservative authorities will use this opportunity and the money generated to ensure that they increase the number of facilities in their area.

The order is welcome in my local authority. People will recognise it for what it is—an opportunity to provide better facilities for the people who want to use them.

11.41 pm

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): We have just heard an appropriately squalid little speech to match a squalid little measure. Glasgow district council needs no lessons from wee boys from Harrow about how to run its leisure facilities. We will pursue that matter again.

The Minister has attracted an unusual number of soubriquets in his short career. Perhaps after this he will go down in Thatcherite mythology as the man who tried to privatise putting greens. The only argument we have heard in support of the measure is based on the incompetence of Westminster city council, which apparently could not open its leisure facilities before 8 am.

This is a doctrinaire measure which will be supported in the Lobby by people who know nothing of sport and who care even less. they certainly cannot aspire to the vision of the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) who realises that sport can change people's lives. Access to facilities in many areas of the country provides an opportunity for young people to achieve and to aspire to a world outside. All that which has been built up by local authorities in this direction is to be put at risk, in the interest of private profit.

We have nothing against the private sector. There are many opportunities open to the private sector in leisure and recreation. The report "Sport 2000" published by the Scottish Sports Council listed what sports facilities are needed. By the year 2000 we need in Scotland alone 210 new centres, 44 new swimming pools, 25 new ice halls, 400 new tennis courts and 13 new track and field facilities. That would provide plenty of opportunities for the private sector to contribute. However, it will contribute nothing. It is at present closing down ice rinks and private sports centres. All that the private sector has to offer in response to the great need that exists for better sports and leisure facilities throughout the country is to act as a parasite upon that which has already been created by public enterprise.

Conservative Members do not understand; they can think only in terms of bricks and mortar combined with commercial services. The Magnum leisure facility in Irvine, which serves my constituency, is open from 5 am to 3 the following morning and is used by 1 million people a year. It is a wonderful public enterprise, and to separate the bricks and mortar from the management functions and social commitment of the people who run it is a fantasy that only Conservative Members could entertain. The centre is an integrated unit, and as soon as anyone tries to split it, the philosophy that brought it into being in the first place and has sustained it, is destroyed.

Let us see what those who understand and care for the arguments about how facilities are run have to say. The Amateur Swimming Association says:

[Mr. Brian Wilson]

> "we . . . do not relish the prospect of being at the mercy of operators intent on achieving financial targets, at the expense of facilities available to the sport or indeed as a service to the community at large."

It understands. The All England Netball Association:

> "It will be exceedingly difficult to retain the philanthropic aims of the local authority centres with a commercial operator standing to reap the rewards of a more commercial approach."

It understands. These organisations understand that one cannot separate the facility from the service provided in it——

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster) *rose*——

Mr. Wilson: The hon. Gentleman has not been here for most of the debate, and I have little time left.

If the local authority is committed to its social remit and the commercial operator to his profit motive, friction is caused in what should be a big happy family serving the community. The clash of interests leads to a diminution of the purpose for which the centre was created.

The definition of management function in the order poses far more questions than it answers. Instruction and supervision, we are told, are to be part of the management function. Would any parent prefer supervision and instruction to be in the hands of the private operator, not those of the local authority? Taking bookings will also be in the hands of the private operator, not of the local authority. That provides scope for manipulation and the squeezing out of minority interests.

Mr. John Carlisle *rose*——

Mr. Wilson: This management function does not seem to include outreach to the community. Who is to be responsible for the outreach that has brought in so many disadvantaged groups to the sports centres? Will the local authority continue to pick up that tab if that whole edifice is not to collapse?

There is no mention of the training of staff, even of swimming pool staff, in the definition of management function. Is it for the local authority to pick up that tab, or will the training of staff be removed from the responsibilities of those running sports facilities?

We hear so much about privatisation and enterprise from Conservative Members, but it is a pathetic apology for private enterprise when all it can do is to take over existing public enterprises. Conservative Members cannot stomach the fact that so many of the great sports and leisure facilities around Britain, and the vision that underlay them, were provided by the public sector. Meadowbank, the Kelvin hall, Gateshead, and the great municipal golf courses were all provided by public enterprise. When the private sector can match that, it will have something to offer. Instead, it takes over these facilities to commercialise them.

Nothing has worth, according to Conservative Members, unless it has a commercial value. We reject this philosophy. Sport and leisure have much more to offer our society than mere commercial value. This measure is due to take effect in 1992. By then the Government will be out of office, and there will be no more of the sort of squalid rubbish that we are debating tonight.

11.48 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Forsyth): The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) made a somewhat scathing attack on my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) and on his knowledge of the leisure and recreation activities of Glasgow district council. Its most recent publicised activity on the leisure side was to entertain the East German Government to celebrate 40 years in power. Perhaps at least on that occasion it was somewhat misguided. My hon. Friend the Minister for Sport might take note of that.

The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North came up with the astonishing assertion that no parent would want instruction to be in the hands of anybody but the local authority. I know that the hon. Gentleman is not an expert on sport. I do not profess to be one, but at least I am aware, as the hon. Gentleman plainly is not, of the splendid work on instruction carried out by the governing bodies. The hon. Gentleman implied that local authorities would be better at it. It seemed to me that the hon. Gentleman has not read the order and in that sense was sharing the fate of the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), who started by asserting that the order was damaging to sport. He made a lengthy speech and refused to take any interventions. At no point did he mention the customer. His speech was all about facilities and local authorities and not once did he talk about sportsmen and sportswomen.

Mr. Gould: That is quite wrong.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman says that I am quite wrong, but I listened carefully to his speech. I will give way to the hon. Gentleman if he wishes to correct me.

Mr. Gould: I am glad to see that the Minister is prepared to spend the minutes that remain to him in that way. If he looks at *Hansard* tomorrow, he will see that I referred frequently and repeatedly to the importance of making facilities available to the local communities whom local authorities serve. The Minister may not recognise local communities as customers, but we certainly do.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman confirms what I have said. He says he talked about making facilities available. He did not talk about the needs of sportsmen and sportswomen, or about the range of local authority facilities that are run for the convenience of local authority staff with opening hours that are not convenient for members of the public. My hon. Friend the Minister for Sport gave an example of how, in the Queen Mother sports centre, bringing in private enterprise extended opening hours and facilities.

The hon. Member for Dagenham also spoke about the cost of the exercise and completely ignored the Audit Commission's view that savings of 20 per cent. or more could be obtained. He asked how will private profit takers meet the needs of the disadvantaged. The answer is that the needs of the disadvantaged will be determined by local authorities. They will write the contracts and determine the pricing policy and the range of services to be provided. The hon. Gentleman should know that, and should not oppose the measure if he is unaware of it. He also said that local authorities will determine only the subsidy. That is not true. As my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) said, local authorities will determine the pricing policy.

Mr. Gould *rose*——

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman would not give way, but I shall give way to him.

Mr. Gould: Where in the order will local authorities find the power to fix prices, admissions, and opening hours?

Mr. Forsyth: If the hon. Gentleman goes to the Library tomorrow and asks for a copy of the Act, I am sure that the staff will give him one. He will find the power in that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) said that the whole point of this exercise is to find out who provides the best deal for the customer. Opposition Members who made speeches extolling the virtues of local authorities have nothing to fear. If they are so confident that local authorities are providing the services that the customer wants and the best possible value, what on earth do they have to fear from competition and the order? Opposition Members speak not for the customer or for the sportsmen and sportswomen, but for the National and Local Government Officers Association, which is terrified that the customer will get a better deal and the ratepayer will get bette value for money.

The hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) asserted that local authorities would be able to delegate their charging policy as part of the contract. That is untrue. The hon. Gentleman also asserted that consultation had been of no worth. If he had gone into the matter he would know that part of the consultation and part of our response was to ensure that local authorities will not be able to delegate their charging policies. I hope that we can expect the support of the hon. Gentleman on that matter.

The hon. Gentleman also made the remarkable statement that this Government had done nothing for or to encourage sport. Under this Government the number of people participating in sport has increased by some 6 million.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) rightly pointed out that what the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) said in the *Glasgow Herald* on 1 December 1989 was a load of nonsense. The hon. Gentleman was concerned that Old Course should not be affected by this order. He, as Member of Parliament for Fife, North-East, is a trustee of the Links Trust that runs Old Course, which is owned by the local authority. The hon. Gentleman said that there was a difference of philosophy, and there certainly is. He is a member of an organisation running a service for a local authority that is providing a service second to none and that he seeks to defend. It is precisely the kind of measure that this order seeks to introduce.

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business).*

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 205, Noes 159.

Division No. 11] **[11.55 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*

Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Nicholas Baker and
Mr. Stephen Dorrell.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McLeish, Henry
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Mowlam, Marjorie
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George
Rooker, Jeff
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Cook and
Mr. John McFall.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Local Government Act 1988 (Competition in Sports and Leisure Facilities) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 25th October, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(5). (Standing Committees on European Community documents.)

PUBLIC TAKEOVER BIDS

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 5032/89 relating to takeover bids for public companies; and supports the Government's aim of ensuring that a Community regime can be agreed which is compatible with the flexibility and speed necessary for effective regulation of takeovers and with a continuation of the present system of regulation within the United Kingdom.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Question agreed to.

PETITIONS

Broadcasting (Deaf People)

12.7 am

Mrs. Llin Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): I beg leave to present a petition on behalf of 450 of my constituents in Newcastle-under-Lyme. They protest that broadcasters are not providing complete access for deaf television viewers by means of subtitles or sign language. They also say that the more than 4 million deaf viewers are entitled to equal access to television programmes.

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House will ensure that legislation be passed placing an obligation on television channel operators to make their programmes more accessible to deaf people by using Teletext sub-titles, sign language or other means and to reach complete coverage by a fixed date.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie on upon the Table.

12.8 am

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I, too, like the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding), beg leave to present a petition that seeks to allow access for deaf people to the broadcasting of our proceedings and to broadcasting generally. It is signed by 253 of my constituents in Orkney and Shetland. It notes that broadcasters are not at the present time providing complete access for deaf television viewers, that there are at least 4 million viewers affected by this and that deaf viewers are equal citizens with the rest of us and deserve to be treated equally.

The petitioners pray in terms similar to those set out by the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme. They hope that we shall pass legislation that will oblige television channel operators to make their programmes more accessible to deaf people.

To lie upon the Table.

Live Animals (Export)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

12.9 am

Dame Janet Fookes (Plymouth, Drake): I rise this evening to draw the attention of the House to the plight of animals which are exported abroad for slaughter, either immediately or after further fattening. I am sure that I am not the only hon. Member who was deeply angered by the revelations in *The Sunday Times* recently, in which *Sunday Times* reporters, in conjunction with inspectors from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, followed a consignment of sheep. They found that virtually every welfare regulation was flouted and that some of the unfortunate lambs, which had started their journey somewhere in Scotland, ended up in the south of France and some of them in Spain. As one fairly hard-bitten and seasoned RSPCA inspector said: "When you follow them for hour after hour after hour and see the steady deterioration in their condition, it makes your blood boil." It certainly makes my blood boil.

Worse still, I get a sense of frustration because this is not an isolated incident. Incidents such as this have been recorded meticulously by the RSPCA and by other organisations over the years. Some will recall that in the early 1970s, the position was reached where the Government of the day suspended export licences because of the deep worries that were felt about the welfare of animals, which are subject to enough stress in going from fairly quiet farms to markets, to ports, across the Channel and then on to an unknown and probably grim destination, as we all realise.

We still have a long way to go before anything like humane regulations are enforced. It is not enough to have good regulations on paper. They are worth nothing if there is not someone to enforce them and, clearly, that has been sadly lacking over the years.

What is worse is that the export trade of animals on the hoof appears to be booming—worse, that is, from the point of view of welfare. In 1988, well over 750,000 animals were exported in this way. Many of them were young animals, such as lambs and veal calves. If that continues, it is of grave concern to us all. However, the position is unlikely to remain the same. If anything, it could get worse.

I should like to widen my speech to consider 1992, the economic results of which we all speak about in varying ways, and the creation of an area in which there will be no exports, as it were, between member countries because we shall have one single market. Unfortunately, this will also apply to live animals, which are regarded as agricultural goods for this purpose. Many of the safeguards that we have, such as the stipulation that before the animals set out across the Channel they must be rested at a lairage for 10 hours, checked and given food and water, may no longer be able to exist.

That is a matter of grave concern and we shall need to look most carefully at the directive that will then cover the whole of Europe. In theory, that should be a magnificent opportunity to improve the situation for all animals throughout the Community, and therefore we should see a vast improvement. However, when I look at the record to date of how the directives have failed to be implemented, my heart sinks. We may lose what we already have, even if that is not marvellous, and instead

[Dame Janet Fookes]

have safeguards that are there in theory only. I urge the Government to put pressure on their European allies. We seem to be prepared to do it on other matters, so I hope that we will do it in the interests of animal welfare.

I suspect that the public will be outraged at the plight of horses and ponies if they are exported for meat. At the moment, that is not possible because of the minimum value order, which makes it uneconomic for people to export the animals. If that goes, something that was stopped many years ago—the export of animals of precious little value in money terms to the slaughterhouses of Europe—may begin again. I know that many organisations in addition to the RSPCA are especially worried about the matter and I believe that there would be an outcry from members of the public if this trade were to start again. As far as I can gather, we should be on very thin legal ground if we attempted to keep the minimum values order after 1992.

We should try to make the most of the opportunities that are offered. I should like to present to the Government the view of the British Veterinary Association, which has said for many years that animals should be slaughtered as near to the point of production as possible. If that principle, which is practical in the extreme, were introduced throughout Europe, animals would be spared some of the suffering, stress—and, at times, cruelty—that they have to bear as they are transported all over Europe by people who in many instances could not care less. That would be worth having as our goal. Whether our European partners would accept it is a matter for doubt, but it is nevertheless something for which the British Government should ask.

Failing that—as a second best—I suggest that we try to tighten up the draft directive on the welfare of animals in international transit. Above all, we need a proper inspectorate whose job it is to ensure that the rules of welfare are observed. No matter how good the rules are on paper, they will be worth absolutely nothing without that. I do not believe that we should throw away any of our existing legislation until the inspectorate has been set up. I shall not be content with any promises of an inspectorate being set up. I want properly trained inspectors to be there doing the job, especially at transit points—where animals are gathered at ports, where they are moving from one form of transport to another, at the point of disembarkation after a journey and at slaughterhouses.

What is more, we must be very careful about the detailed regulations. We can make a lot of difference by ensuring that the transporters are properly constructed. I am quite sure that we can lay down such rules in detailed directions if the will is there to do it. I hope that Euro-MPs will join hon. Members in Westminster in putting real pressure on the powers that be in Europe to ensure that that is done.

I greatly fear that if we do not ensure that those things are done, the plight of animals will be made worse rather, than better, following 1992. That would be an absolute disaster, and the British people would be outraged. As it is, I frequently receive letters and telephone calls from members of the public, including my constituents, who have seen distressing sights—for example, animals crammed into transporters as they are exported to Europe from my constituency of Plymouth. People write and ask why that is allowed. I cannot give them a satisfactory answer. It should not be allowed. When the Minister negotiates on our behalf in considering the draft directives in detail, I beg him to ensure that they are made watertight, because unfortunately that has not been the case in the past.

We should also consider closely the people who drive the animal transporters. So far as I can see at the moment, anyone can drive a transporter provided that he has a driving licence. I do not believe that anyone should be allowed to drive an animal or cattle transporter unless he has been trained in dealing with animals and has shown that he will treat them humanely. We should be able to remove licences because that would be an incentive to ensure that drivers carry out their duties.

The welfare considerations also make good economic sense—as is often the case. Much work has been carried out by veterinary surgeons into the condition of animals at slaughterhouses. It is clear that there is a great deal of waste meat if animals arrive damaged or bruised. The quality of the meat can also suffer if the animal has been placed under great stress prior to slaughter. My suggestions need not necessarily increase the cost of meat or reduce its quality. On the contrary, they should make good sense from that point of view.

In short, instead of a possible disaster in 1992, I hope that we make real efforts in this country to ensure that animals travelling throughout Europe do so in better conditions. I will want to monitor that very closely. I can assure the Minister and the Government that if we do not see the kind of reforms that we want, we will make the Government's lives a misery.

12.21 am

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Maclean): I would like to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Dame J. Fookes) on choosing to raise a subject which is of constant public concern, but which has not been debated in this House for some four years. It is also most appropriate that my hon. Friend should raise the matter, because she has been a doughty champion of providing proper care and dignity for animals.

The Government regard the welfare of animals in transport as very important. My hon. Friend was right to threaten to make all our lives a misery unless the Government look after the welfare of all animals wherever we can. We regard animal welfare as terribly important and that is why we take considerable steps to ensure that exported farm livestock receive full care and attention while in our jurisdiction. I have in mind here animals for fattening or immediate slaughter, which we describe as "food animals".

Under our law, such animals must be rested for at least 10 hours at an approved export lairage, which must be within a reasonable distance of the port of embarkation. The animals must be inspected by a Government veterinary inspector for fitness to travel and food and water must be provided. In every case, the loading of animals is officially supervised into vehicles which must themselves have been approved for the particular task of carrying animals on roll-on/roll-off ferries. The Ministry offers advice on the conditions for loading and stowing those vehicles.

Once the animals have crossed the Channel, they are, strictly speaking the responsibility of other Governments, but we ask exporters for prior assurances about the onward journey. The main concern here is that arrangements are made for feeding and watering the livestock on the longer journeys. We require staging posts to be declared to us where journeys would take longer than 18 hours from the export lairage.

None of those measures absolves other Governments from checking that animal welfare during transport is in accordance with the existing directive on international transport. Enforcement must be their responsibility when animals are on their territory. My hon. Friend will understand that MAFF officials cannot, of course, follow journeys into other member states, but there has been close liaison with the French authorities. It has included the monitoring of some journeys, either by accompaniment or by other surveillance. On occasions when the RSPCA or others report on journeys, we pass details to the country concerned for its full investigation.

The recent article in *The Sunday Times* of 29 October, which my hon. Friend has mentioned, was a case in point. At this moment we are waiting to hear from the French veterinary services, but we took other prompt action. We are no longer issuing licences for sheep exports to the named premises in the south of France run by the gentleman who was featured in the article, pending French and our inquiries. I should like to make it quite clear that cruelty to animals in transit will not be tolerated. We will act against offenders where necessary and within our jurisdiction.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): Exactly what restrictions are imposed by MAFF on the justification for the export of live animals in the first place? To what extent does the Ministry investigate whether the exportation of live animals is absolutely necessary, or whether it is merely at the whim of the person who is importing animals? What controls do we have over the quality of slaughterhouses in other countries? My hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Dame J. Fookes) made an excellent speech, and I agree with every word of it, but she did not mention the quality of slaughterhouses abroad, which are often awful compared with the conditions which, mercifully, we must endure here.

Mr. Maclean: My hon. Friend has raised two good points. It is not possible for us to try to seek the intention of those who may want to export animals or those who may wish to receive or import animals into the Community. I may be skating on thin ice, but I suspect that it would be contrary to the treaty to try to make such interpretations. It is irrelevant to the means of transport and to the measures on which we insist. It is not relevant to know the end use of the animal, because we want to insist on the highest possible standards of care and transport for that animal, irrespective of the end use. We export pedigree animals—bulls and so on—to France and to other countries. We insist on the highest possible welfare standards, just as we insist on the highest possible welfare standards for sheep which may be exported for slaughter.

My hon. Friend's last point is absolutely right. We do not allow animals to go to Spain and Portugal, simply because they have not come up to the standard for slaughtering animals in slaughterhouses which the EC directive describes and which would satisfy us. There is a check. We do not physically check the slaugherthouses, any more than a Frenchman can check our slaughterhouses, but slaughterhouses in the Community are up to an acceptable standard, except for those in Spain and Portugal.

I shall give the House an example of the prompt action that we have taken to demonstrate that we will not tolerate cruelty to animals during transport. Our inquiries are now complete, following the tragic deaths of the 79 beagles while they were being conveyed to Sweden in September. My hon. Friends will understand that I cannot comment further tonight, in advance of possible proceedings against those concerned.

Returning to the *Sunday Times* article and the RSPCA trail of sheep to France, it was claimed that these were being sent on to Spain for slaughter. As I have just said, we specifically do not license exports of food animals to non-EC countries or to Spain and Portugal which have yet to implement fully the existing EC directives on international transport and pre-slaughter stunning. But we must realise that it is very difficult to police this control where animals are sent to destinations in France for further fattening. Nor are our restrictions related specifically to cruelty in Spanish abattoirs. Once the European Commission is content that the directives are properly implemented, we will be in hot water with the European Court if our exporters continue to be deprived of markets currently met by the EC competitors.

My hon. Friend suggested that we should aim, as an ideal, to have slaughter as near as possible to the point of production. I agree that that is an ideal, but the only practical control that we could effectively have on that would be a complete ban on animals over a long distance.

I fully understand the calls for a complete ban on food animal exports, related to operating a carcase-only trade, but this unfortunately is not a line we can pursue. First and foremost, such a ban would contravene the EC treaty, as my hon. Friend has suggested. There is already an export trade of carcases to EC countries, but a separate demand exists for fresh home-killed meat. The importers concerned need live animals and would simply go elsewhere for their supplies, perhaps even to eastern Europe. So it would be absolutely pointless for us to take a British unilateral stand only for the markets we had refused to supply to be taken up by animals imported from even further away, where welfare standards may be lower. There is no point in our ceasing to supply a market with our higher welfare standards only for that market to be flooded by animals from other countries which might have lower standards.

Compassion in World Farming has also called for animals to be elevated in EC classification from "agricultural products" to "sentient beings". It does no harm whatsoever to emphasise that living animals need special care. Indeed, we applaud this. But the Government take the view that our effort in Brussels is better directed at negotiating and achieving Communitywide safeguards that protect farm animals at all stages. The European Commission has been active recently in proposing direct new animal welfare controls. The proposed regulation on the protection of animals during transport is relevant to the subject under debate. The document would replace and go further than the existing EC directive on the protection of animals during international transport, introduced in

[Mr. Maclean]

1977. As my hon. Friends will probably know, the directive in turn was based on the Council of Europe convention agreed in 1968.

We have circulated the new proposal very widely for comment in this country. The European Parliament is now directing its attention to the document which will be debated in Standing Committee here next month. The objective in the ensuing Brussels negotiations will be to ensure that all countries introduce and police the same high standards of welfare. We are encouraged in this by the proposed involvement of a Commission veterinary inspectorate to ensure uniform application throughout the Community. I hear what my hon. Friend has said, and we are as keen on it working and applying uniformly enforced standards throughout the whole of the EEC as is my hon. Friend. That is an important point.

It would be unwise for me to under-estimate the size of the task which faces us with these new transport proposals. In particular we must make sure that the domestic controls we have built up over many years are not replaced by diminished and unenforceable measures.

I am fully aware of the widespread concern in this country about the prospect of losing British controls, linked to minimum values, designed to prevent the exports of horses and ponies on the hoof for slaughter. My postbag has been bulging on this difficult point.

It may be helpful if I explain briefly what the arrangements are for exporting horses. I am sure that my hon. Friends are fully aware of them, but it may be helpful to put this on the record. The arrangements are immensely complicated, but they include export licensing, pre-export rest and veterinary inspection. The export of ponies and certain types of horse are prohibited if their value is less than that laid down in the Animal Health Act 1981. These categories require official valuation. The values were last fixed in 1978, and we approached horse interests and welfare organisations about two years ago. They were unanimous in agreeing that minimum values should not be increased.

Some people may still claim that horses continue to be exported for slaughter, despite controls. I disagree. We have no substantiated evidence of that. As we issue all the permits for horse exports and inspect certain categories of animal, we would expect to detect any organised trade in them.

I shall conclude that part by stating the minimum values. I shall not go into the detail on ponies, which is far too complicated, and I do not profess fully to understand it. The minimum values for a heavy draft horse is £715, for a vanner mule or jennet £495 and for an ass £220. Such animals must not be more than eight years of age.

The existing controls have been built up over many years following public concern over conditions in which horses were formerly exported. The legislation on horses dates from the 19th century while that on ponies was completed in the Ponies Act 1969, since consolidated in the Animal Health Act 1981. So the minimum values are purely national arrangements. It was therefore inevitable that they would be called into question during the completion of the internal market. It remains to be seen whether we can persuade other member states to take on similar controls throughout the Community. Whatever the precise means of control in future, however, we will insist on measures which fully protect the welfare of animals leaving these shores for slaughter.

My hon. Friend mentioned European Members of Parliament. There is great scope for my hon. Friends and all those who are concerned to lobby European Members on this issue not only to exert pressure on the British Government, who will be campaigning for the toughest measures possible, but to use European contracts and others in Europe who feel as passionately about this as we do.

The new EC transport proposals give an opportunity to negotiate a fresh regime covering the movement of animals throughout the Community. It is an important chance to provide effective safeguards for all animals which are transported, whether for slaughter, exhibition, breeding, pets, circuses or other purposes. My hon. Friend asked us to exert maximum pressure, and I can assure her that we shall do so.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-two minutes to One o'clock.

Mr. Speaker's Ruling (Money Resolutions and Revenue Support Grant)

The following Private Ruling given by Mr. Speaker is published in accordance with Mr. Speaker's statement of 5 November 1981—[Official Report, c. 113.]

In the past when any Bill authorised or required local authorities in Great Britain to undertake new services or otherwise to incur expenditure, in the absence of express provision to the contrary, the expenditure was by statute taken into account by Ministers when levels of rate support grant were determined. Rate support grant was paid out of voted money, and accordingly a money resolution was required to sanction the relevant expenditure provisions in the Bills concerned.

Under the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and the Abolition of Domestic Rates etc (Scotland) Act 1987 as amended by schedule 6 to the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, revenue support grant is to replace rate support grant. Revenue support grant will be paid out of voted money, but Ministers are not statutorily required to have regard to the level of local authority expenditure when they determine the amount of grant to be paid. I am asked to rule whether a money resolution should continue to be required for Bills which imply increases in local authorities' expenditure.

I am satisfied that revenue support grant will in the future in practice, if not by statute, take account of local authorities' expenditure. I therefore rule that a money resolution will continue to be required in respect of such Bills.

House of Commons

Thursday 7 December 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL (NO. 2) BILL

Order for consideration read.

To be considered on Thursday 14 December.

BROMLEY LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL (CRYSTAL PALACE) BILL

Considered; to be read the Third time.

CARDIFF BAY BARRAGE BILL *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Thursday 14 December.

PRIVATE BILLS (PROCEDURE)

Motion made,

That—the Promoters of every Private Bill which originated in this House in the last Session and which is listed in Schedule A to this Order, or which originated in the House of Lords in the last Session and which is listed in Schedule B to this Order may, notwithstanding anything in the Standing Orders or practice of this House, proceed with the Bill in the present Session; and the Petition for the Bill shall be deemed to have been deposited and all Standing Orders applicable thereto shall be deemed to have been complied with;

—every such Bill which originated in this House shall be presented to the House not later than the seventh day after this day;

—there shall be deposited with every Bill so presented a Declaration signed by the Agent for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the last Session;

—every Bill so presented shall be laid by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office upon the Table of the House on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill was presented;

—every Bill listed in Part I of Schedule A shall, after being so laid on the Table, be deemed to have been read the first, second, and third time, and shall pass;

—every Bill listed in Part II of Schedule A shall, after being so laid on the Table, be deemed to have been read the first and second time and reported from Committee and ordered to lie upon the Table;

—when any Bill originating in the Lords, which was brought from the House of Lords in the last Session and to which this Order relates, is brought from the Lords in the present Session, the Agent for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a Declaration, signed by him, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the last Session, and, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office that such a Declaration has been so deposited has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be deemed—

(i) in the case of the Buckinghamshire County Council Bill *[Lords]*, the London Local Authorities Bill *[Lords]*, the South Yorkshire Light Rail Transit Bill *[Lords]* and the United Medical and Dental Schools Bill *[Lords]*, to have been read the first and second time and committed and shall be committed to the Chairman of Ways and Means, who shall make such amendments thereto as have been made by the Committee in the last Session, and shall report the Bill as amended to the House forthwith, and the Bill, so amended, shall be ordered to lie upon the Table;

(ii) in the case of the Nottingham Park Estate Bill *[Lords]*, to have been read the first and second time and committed;

(iii) in the case of the Medway Tunnel Bill *[Lords]* and the Vale of Glamorgan (Barry Harbour) Bill *[Lords]*, to have been read the first time and ordered to be read a second time;

(iv) in the case of the Greater Manchester (Light Rapid Transit System) (No. 3) Bill *[Lords]*, to have been read the first time and referred to the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills;

—in respect of all the Bills listed in Schedules A and B to this Order, the various stages deemed to have been taken shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been taken;

—only such Petitions as were presented against any Bill brought from the Lords in the last Session which stood referred to the Committee on the Bill and which have not been withdrawn shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill with the same title in the present Session;

—in relation to any Bill to which this Order applies Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to Committee of Petitions against Bill)" were omitted;

—in respect of any Bill originating in the House of Lords to which this Order relates and upon which the Examiners have reported in the last Session that no Standing Order not previously inquired into was applicable thereto, the Examiners shall, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the present Session, be deemed to have made the same report in the present Session;

—no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on any of the Bills to which this Order relates so far as Fees were incurred during the last Session;

—this House doth concur with the Lords in their Resolution contained in their Message [22nd November] relating to the River Tees Barrage and Crossing Bill *[Lords]*, the Happisburgh Lighthouse Bill *[Lords]*, the Great Yarmouth Port Authority Bill *[Lords]*, the Southampton Rapid Transit Bill *[Lords]*, the Heathrow Express Railway Bill *[Lords]*, the London Local Authorities (No. 2) Bill *[Lords]* and the Greater Manchester (Light Rapid Transit System) Bill *[Lords]*.

Schedule A

Part I

1. City of London (Spitalfields Market) Bill
2. Hythe Marina Village (Southampton) Wavescreen Bill
3. Isle of Wight Bill
4. New Southgate Cemetery and Crematorium Limited Bill
5. St. George's Hill, Weybridge, Estate Bill
6. Penzance Albert Pier Extension Bill

Part II

1. British Film Institute Southbank Bill
2. British Railways Bill
3. City of London (Various Powers) Bill
4. Redbridge London Borough Council Bill

Schedule B

1. Buckinghamshire County Council Bill *[Lords]*
2. London Local Authorities Bill *[Lords]*
3. South Yorkshire Light Rail Transit Bill *[Lords]*
4. United Medical and Dental Schools Bill *[Lords]*
5. Nottingham Park Estate Bill *[Lords]*
6. Medway Tunnel Bill *[Lords]*
7. Vale of Glamorgan (Barry Harbour) Bill *[Lords]*
8. Greater Manchester (Light Rapid Transit System) (No. 3) Bill *[Lords]*—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

To be considered on Tuesday 12 December at 7 o'clock.

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

Concessionary Television Licences

1. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning concessionary television licences for retirement pensioners living in sheltered housing.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Mellor): Since the change in the regulations in May 1988, we have received deputations from four hon. Members, and received 373 letters, 191 of those from hon. Members, about aspects of the concessionary television licensing system. The nature of each representation is not separately recorded, but the main points raised were whether the scheme should be extended to ordinary housing, the treatment of new residents of schemes which no longer qualified and whether the circumstances of individual housing schemes fitted the new regulations.

Mr. Janner: Will the Minister look urgently into the case of 10 old-age pensioners in Leicester, five of whom live in Braunstone in my constituency? Their preserved right to a concessionary television licence has been lost entirely as a result of bureaucratic delays in the television licence office. Leicester city council was not informed or asked to produce a list of renewals until August 1988, four months after the cut-off date. Does he agree that it is cruel and wrong that those elderly people should lose that right? Will the Minister do his best to cut through the bureaucratic tangle which should never have existed?

Mr. Mellor: If the hon. and learned Gentleman will let me have details of the case, I will join him in writing to the national television licence records office to sort the matter out.

Mr. Devlin: Will my hon. and learned Friend look into the interesting and anomalous case of the sheltered housing at Willey Flatts in Yarm in my constituency? It is an establishment of segregated and sheltered bungalows for which there is an extra charge because there is a warden service. In the past, the residents enjoyed a concessionary television licence because they were old-age pensioners. The national television licence records office wrote recently to say that in future the concession will not be available. Having realised that the bungalows are separate and have been so for 20 years, it is seeking to change the previous ruling. Will my hon. and learned Friend intervene in that completely ridiculous situation?

Mr. Mellor: Once again, all that I can say is that while the interpretation of the regulations is not a matter for me, if I am provided with the full details and if I can be helpful, I shall try to do so.

Mr. Corbett: Does the Minister understand that the arbitrary system under which most pensioners have to pay for a licence but some do not causes friction and resentment? Now that only seven in every 100 homes has a black and white set and as pensioners own most of those, will the Minister give them a Christmas present by exempting all black and white sets from the licence fee? If the Government could do away with the licence for 7 million dog owners, why cannot he do the same for the far fewer pensioners who own black and white television sets?

Mr. Mellor: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree that since its introduction in 1969 the scheme has caused a wholly disproportionate amount of grief to every Government who have had to deal with it. We have tried to tidy up the arrangements so that the scheme genuinely benefits those whom it was intended to benefit. Later on the Order Paper we may reach directly some of the proposals to expand the scheme. The schemes have a cost which would have to be borne by the average licence payer, many of whom, as the hon. Gentleman knows, are not particularly well off and would not thank us for adding to their burden in order to benefit others.

Mr. Latham: I was one of the 191 Members who wrote to the Minister. Is my hon. and learned Friend satisfied that local authorities now understand the regulations? I am still getting questions from constituents about the scheme and, obviously, in some cases there are serious anomalies.

Mr. Mellor: I repeat that a serious effort was made to clear out the anomalies in last year's regulations, but I am only too willing to look at any evidence from my hon. Friend that we have not succeeded in that brave endeavour.

Safer Cities Project

2. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on progress in setting up the safer cities project.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Waddington): Excellent progress has been made in setting up safer cities projects. Twelve are now operating and four more should be in place early in the new year. The multi-agency approach is the best way to reduce crime —and fear of crime. It encourages local authorities, voluntary bodies, local industry and concerned individuals to work in partnership in implementing imaginative measures, such as improving lighting in car parks and streets, and increasing home and office security.

Mr. Rooker: I agree with everything that the Home Secretary said, but may I put to him one particular problem about the budgetary arrangments for the safer cities projects? For all the projects the budget is the same. Without disparaging Hartlepool, there is no comparison between it and Birmingham, yet both receive £250,000. Birmingham is 12 times the size. The budgets for the safer cities programmes should be related to the needs of the area. This is new money, not existing money. By definition, the bigger the area, the greater are the crime rates. That should be recognised in the budgets, particularly for places as large as Birmingham.

Mr. Waddington: Yes, but the hon. Gentleman will recognise that when the scheme was first launched it was on the basis that there would be a set sum for each project, so there is no question about it. Birmingham knew perfectly well how much it would cost and decided that it was right to go ahead on that budget. I must stress, because it is important, that Birmingham has received some extra funding this year. What is much more important is that it was never intended that the whole cost of crime prevention should be borne by this particular scheme. This is pump priming and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree that, for all the limits on the funds, these are excellent projects.

Mr. Wheeler: My right hon. and learned Friend will be aware that the Select Committee on Home Affairs has today published a report on drug trafficking and related serious crime. Is he aware that some of the recommendations have a direct bearing on the safer cities initiatives? Would he care to comment on how drugs aspects might be further strengthened under the scheme?

Mr. Mellor: We are indebted to the Select Committee for having produced such a useful report and we shall give a full reply in due course. It may be worth reminding my hon. Friend that in April 1990 we shall launch a new initiative which involves setting up schemes in nine city centres where there are particular drugs problems. I am sure that my hon. Friend will give us all possible support in that endeavour.

Mr. Hattersley: Will the Home Secretary confirm that while this year's total expenditure on safer cities projects nationwide is more than £4 million, the reduction in annual grants to local authorities is running at £20 billion? As a quarter of that could be used for exactly the initiatives that he has described—lighting and other safety initiatives—is it not a poor deal for the Government to take away 1,200 times as much as they have given?

Mr. Waddington: The right hon. Gentleman is not comparing like with like. The object of the exercise is to have a multi-agency approach to crime prevention, which does not rely solely on the efforts of the local authorities. I might argue that if relying on local authorities were sufficient to crack the problems we would not have had to set up the safer city projects. The object of those projects is to have a multi-agency approach and draw in central Government agencies, local authorities, local industry, voluntary bodies and concerned individuals. I believe that that is the right way to go about it.

Sunday Trading

3. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the judgment of the European Court of Justice on Torfaen borough council against B & Q concerning Sunday trading.

Mr. Mellor: The judgment of the European Court indicates that the existence of the Sunday trading laws as such is not in breach of the treaty of Rome. It also indicates that the restrictive effect of the legislation on Community trade should not go beyond what is necessary to achieve its underlying economic and social policy. The judgment regarded the question whether the effect of the legislation meets this requirement as a matter of fact to be determined by courts in this country. The Government are considering the implications of the judgment.

Mr. Coombs: I thank my hon. and learned Friend for that answer. Does he agree that the ruling of the European Court of Justice on Sunday trading makes the law of this country a shambles? Does he recognise that every court and every local authority now has a free licence to make up its mind on this issue? Does he not regard that situation as wholly unsatisfactory? Notwithstanding the excellent efforts of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary to bring legislation on this matter to Parliament when he previously held office in the Home Office, such legislation is still needed. When will my hon. and learned Friend bring it forward?

Mr. Mellor: I continue to regret that, in 1986, when the opportunity was accorded to the House to make alterations to what many believed to be an increasingly archaic piece of legislation, that opportunity was not taken. We are still looking at the judgment of the European Court, but on the face of it, it appears to ask British courts to make a difficult judgment. That judgment will not make the Shops Act 1950 any easier for the courts to interpret or, I suspect, for an increasing number of our people to accept.

Mr. Murphy: Will the Minister welcome the initiative taken by my local authority, Torfaen council, in bringing B & Q before the European Court on the issue of Sunday trading? Will he condemn B & Q for openly flouting the law of the land? Will the Minister and his right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General give as much practical, moral and financial help as possible to local authorities, which have to bear the burden in this matter?

Mr. Mellor: I must leave it to the people of Torfaen to judge whether it was a proper matter. All I can say is that the law is the law and its enforcement requires no commendation from me.

Mr. Stanbrook: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that, now that the European Court has had its say, it is imperative that the law should be applied and enforced and that those people who are calling for breaches of the law and condoning and encouraging such breaches in their organisations should be proceeded against for the common law offence of incitement to commit a crime?

Mr. Mellor: Traditionally the question whether to prosecute has been left to local authorities. It is not for me to intervene in that process. I repeat that, whether some hon. Members like it or not, the fact is that the restrictions imposed by the Shops Act 1950 seem outmoded to an increasing number of people. Down the years, an increasing number of local authorities, rightly or wrongly, have refused to enforce it. Parliament has left a vacuum by its repeated failure to address this matter. I continue to hope that it will be possible to find some sensible way forward.

Mr. Maclennan: When the Minister is considering the implications of Sunday trading, will he take the view that the same position must necessarily prevail throughout the country? Is there not a strong case to be made for a local option and for allowing local authorities to decide whether they wish the law in their area to be the same as in others?

Mr. Mellor: Additional difficulties are certainly created when there are different prosecution arrangements, not least for traders who are only a short distance apart when some are left to trade freely on Sundays and others are not. For many years, a minority of authorities have decided to prosecute and others have not. I cannot help returning to this point: the problem is the continued attempt by the criminal law to enforce an outmoded view of what should or should not be sold on Sunday. That is the nub of it. One day, the House will have to address that issue.

Mr. Malins: Will my hon. and learned Friend take this opportunity to pay tribute to the work of his predecessor, our right hon. Friend the Chief Whip, for his attempts to find a consensus on the way forward on the difficult issue of Sunday trading? Does he agree that while opinion in the House is so divided and while it is difficult to achieve a consensus, it would be wrong in principle to move forward to any legislation on the subject?

Mr. Mellor: That is certainly the Government's position—one forced upon them by what happened in 1986. I have participated in debates on this matter for a number of years. I have yet to hear any hon. Member say that the Shops Act 1950 is right, although we may disagree about what should replace it. On that basis, the House will need to try before too much longer to reach a consensus, on which we can then make some progress.

Mr. Hattersley: The Minister of State has been palpably ambivalent about the enforcement of the law. May I ask him directly whether it is his wish or, indeed, his instruction that local authorities should enforce the law as it now stands?

Mr. Mellor: The right hon. Gentleman knows only too well that, thank goodness, in this free society it is not for me—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question."] I am answering the question in precisely the form in which it was put to me. It was put—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Minister cannot answer the question if he is not given the chance.

Mr. Mellor: It is not my fault if the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) chooses to formulate his question in a way that is not acceptable to those sitting alongside him. He asked whether I would instruct prosecution authorities to prosecute. It is not the function of a Home Office Minister in a free society to do that.

Neighbourhood Watch

4. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many neighbourhood watch schemes now exist in England and Wales.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): At the end of September 1989 there were estimated to be about 75,300 residential neighbourhood watch schemes in England and Wales. That is almost 16,000 more than the number recorded 12 months ago.

Mr. Colvin: That is good news. Will my hon. Friend acknowledge that one of the keys to the success of neighbourhood watch schemes is awareness by the criminal element in the areas covered that a scheme is in operation? Will he therefore take this opportunity to name and condemn those local authorities which still forbid neighbourhood watch signs on their streets?

Mr. Patten: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. It is a great shame when local authorities do not co-operate with local communities to help neighbourhood watch schemes. I should be happy if the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) would join me in writing a letter to councils such as Cleveland and Haringey asking them to change their policy.

Mr. Sheerman: Given the appalling levels of crime, which have risen steadily every year since the Conservative party has been in office, we wholeheartedly endorse the citizens' response to joining neighbourhood watch campaigns. We must ask, however, that those neighbourhood watch schemes do not just go on and on. They depend upon volunteers, but they must be managed. The police and local authorities are asking for some kind of structure to make them more effective. If the Minister wants a joint letter to local authorities to encourage local councils to participate, he will get it from Labour Members, but if he can get local authorities to collaborate on this, will he ask them about the Shops Act as well?

Mr. Patten: If the hon. Gentleman will come with me to a Labour-controlled borough such as Islington to see the Highbury Quadrant neighbourhood watch scheme, which includes about 800 households—largely council houses, but some in private ownership—he will find that that scheme, like many others in inner cities, is getting along extremely well with a bit of help and encouragement from the police, and is helping with crime prevention and with rebuilding the community, through concern for environmental and other issues.

Sir Ian Lloyd: The whole House supports the admirable development of neighbourhood watch schemes which do not offend civil liberties, but will my right hon. and hon. Friends pay attention to what might be described as the recent development of neighbourhood spying schemes in which a few chief constables have decided to offer the public freephones so that friends, neighbours and relations can report each other anonymously? That has not been authorised by Parliament and it is thoroughly offensive —more reminiscent of the KGB, the Cheka and the Gestapo than of British justice.

Mr. Patten: My right hon. and learned Friend and I will certainly look into that in response to my hon. Friend's important question.

Birmingham Six

5. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met Lord Denning to discuss the case of the Birmingham Six.

Mr. Waddington: I have not met Lord Denning to discuss this case.

Mr. Michie: In the event of the current investigation of police officers of the West Midlands force who were also involved in the investigations of the Birmingham Six finding those officers guilty of misconduct, will the Secretary of State confirm that he will again look into the case of the Birmingham Six?

Mr. Waddington: As the hon. Gentleman knows, this matter was investigated by the Devon and Cornwall police some years ago, leading to a reference to the Court of Appeal by my right hon. Friend the present Foreign Secretary. The case was looked at by the Court of Appeal over a very long period and the confessions were examined with great care. I am always ready to consider whether there is new evidence in a case or any consideration of substance that was not looked into by the trial court, but I see no circumstances now that would warrant my intervention in the Birmingham case.

Mr. Lawrence: Is not the often heard argument that, because there was a patent miscarriage of justice at one place at one time with one police force, that is evidence that there was another miscarriage of justice at another time and place with a different police force, wholly insane?

Mr. Waddington: My hon. and learned Friend is entirely right; there is certainly no direct link between the Guildford case and the Birmingham case.

Mr. Benn: Is the Home Secretary aware that the House Library contains reference to 157 answers on the Guildford case like the one that he has just given, that this matter is being examined by the European Parliament and the American Senate, and that the Prime Minister of the Republic and the primate in the North have raised it? Is he aware that in the light of what emerged in the Guildord case there is no doubt that there is new evidence now because at the time of the Birmingham Six appeal it had not been established that the police had lied? Now that that has been established that is the new evidence justifying a fresh examination.

Mr. Waddington: That is the most ridiculous proposition that I have ever heard. The fact that there was misconduct in one case in one part of the country is hardly evidence of misconduct in another case in an entirely different part of the country. The right hon. Gentleman should know better than to talk such nonsense.

Passports

6. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average processing time for a non-urgent passport application at the London passport office; and what was the comparable period six months ago.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Peter Lloyd): The London passport office is processing straightforward non-urgent applications in a maximum of nine working days, compared with 32 working days six months ago.

Mr. Arnold: I am sure that the holiday-making constituents of most hon. Members will be encouraged by that response, but is there not a danger of backsliding in the run-up to the next holiday season? What steps have been taken to ensure adequate staffing?

Mr. Lloyd: We are determined to avoid the difficulties that we had last year and we have increased computer capacity at Glasgow and Liverpool. We have taken on 220 additional permanent staff and the Belfast office is being expanded. Work will be transferred between offices next summer to ensure a balanced load between them.

Mr. Randall: How can the public be confident that the Minister's statement will not result in the chaos that we have had in recent years? Growth figures have been predictable and now we understand that the computer has gone wrong. Will the Minister implement the proposals in the Coopers and Lybrand report? Will he give us an assurance that at Easter, next summer and at future peak periods we will not have the mess and chaos that we have experienced in recent years?

Mr. Lloyd: I can give the hon. Gentleman the assurance that we have taken the steps that I have described. We have the situation very much in mind and have every reason to believe that the performance of the passport department will be excellent next year—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) should stop shouting across the Chamber. If he looks at the Order Paper he will see that it contains another question on the Birmingham Six.

Gun Clubs

7. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further steps are proposed, in the light of recent incidents in Greater Manchester and elsewhere, to impose tighter controls on gun clubs.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Subject to the advice given to my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary by the firearms consultative committee, he proposes to withhold his approval from clubs that operate day or temporary membership schemes. Probationary members would also have to be sponsored by two existing members of the club, both of whom hold firearms certificates. They would have to be constantly supervised while on the range and would need to receive instruction in the safe handling of firearms. The number of probationary members of a club would not be permitted to exceed the number of full members.

Mr. Shepherd: I thank my hon. Friend for that response. Does he agree that while the public are justifiably concerned about the use of firearms, gun clubs are valuable places in which this reasonable sport can be conducted with safety? I am glad that he agrees that gun clubs must be circumspect about the credentials of probationary members. Does he accept that when considering the granting of a firearms certificate for probationary members there is no substitute for an in-depth investigation by the police and that the relevant chief constable should pronounce himself satisfied?

Mr. Lloyd: I can reassure my hon. Friend on that. Anyone seeking a firearms certificate will be subject to a full police investigation and there is most definitely no question of a certificate being granted simply because a person is a club member.

Mr. Tony Banks: In view of the great damage to wild life will the Minister consider further extending restrictions on the use of air pistols and air rifles?

Mr. Lloyd: I do not think that there is any need to change the law on this subject but if the hon. Gentleman has any reasons to suggest that that should be done, I shall be glad to hear them.

Mr. John Browne: Can my hon. Friend confirm that all gun clubs need the Home Secretary's approval?

Mr. Lloyd: Virtually all gun clubs need approval. The only ones that do not are those in which all the members already hold a certificate. In most cases those certificates will stipulate that the people holding them can shoot only on a range issued with a safety certificate and, therefore, almost invariably clubs will decide that they need one.

Birmingham Pub Bombings

9. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has copies of the alleged confessions of the men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings.

Mr. John Patten: Yes, Sir. Copies of the confession statements made by those convicted of the Birmingham public house bombings were provided to the Home Office as part of the inquiry into the case carried out by the Devon and Cornwall police in 1987.

Mr. Corbyn: Does the Minister accept that those confessions were obtained after beatings of the six prisoners concerned and that serious inquiries are now going on into the conduct of the West Midlands police who obtained those confessions in the first place? Does he agree that six men have been wrongfully imprisoned for 15 years for crimes that they did not commit, that they were abominably treated at the beginning, and that the important thing is for him to take the simple decision to refer the whole case back to the Court of Appeal so that the men's innocence can be declared and at last they can be set free?

Mr. Patten: All these matters have been before the courts on more than one occasion. They have been fully investigated and they are being further examined now. If the hon. Gentleman or any of his right hon. and hon. Friends comes forward with new evidence, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary will consider it again. Until that time, I try to remember as much as I can —care though I do for the quality of justice and ensuring that no one is wrongfully imprisoned—the Birmingham 21 who were murdered and the Birmingham 162 who were injured.

Mrs. Currie: I thank my hon. Friend for his remarks about remembering the devastation in Birmingham that was caused by the atrocious bombing. Will he accept that many of my right hon. and hon. Friends and I are thoroughly fed up with sniping attacks on the police? We have the best police force in the world, and it is about time that somebody said so.

Mr. Patten: It is entirely right that if any policeman or woman does anything wrong, an investigation should take place and the individual should be brought to justice. On the other hand, I hope that all right hon. and hon. Members will agree that, as my hon. Friend says, we owe a great deal to the police who conduct themselves in difficult circumstances and often face violent attacks.

Mr. Mallon: However one describes them, surely the Minister will agree that there are new factors that are common to both the Guildford case and the Birmingham case, and that many in this country and elsewhere believe that these factors are a good reason for the Home Secretary again to consider the matter. Does the Minister accept that there are compelling reasons to question the validity and the justice of the original trial verdicts?

Mr. Patten: I can give an undertaking to the hon. Gentleman, who I know cares passionately about these matters—I respect that care—that if he writes to us and presents new evidence, we shall consider it most carefully. I appeal to all right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House to come forward with their evidence. I only wish that the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin), who is not in his place, but who persistently tells the House that he knows the names of the people who really carried out the bombing, would write to my right hon. and learned Friend and give us the names.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: I am most obliged to you, Mr. Speaker.

Does my hon. Friend accept that I was the first elected official to visit the scene of the Birmingham pub bombing? I was there within an hour of that dreadful experience having taken place. No one is soft upon this dreadful offence, but the Birmingham people are concerned with justice, not with vengeance. If it is true that four members of the serious crimes squad were involved—we all accept that two trials were held, one in the Court of Appeal and one at the Crown court—would it not be good if the assistant chief constable of the West Yorkshire police, who is involved with the serious crimes squad, at least investigated the four to clear up the problem? Justice is what this place is about, and justice is what everybody should be satisfied we have had.

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend speaks with great power about the important balance between justice and retribution, and justice for those who might be wrongfully convicted. I can reassure my hon. Friend that there is nothing to prevent Mr. Shaw, the assistant chief constable of the West Yorkshire force, from conducting an investigation with the oversight of the Police Complaints Authority. There is nothing to prevent him from examining any matter of an earlier date if he has grounds for suspicion.

Television Licences

10. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will now introduce free television licences for all pensioners and disabled; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: No, Sir. The cost of so doing for all pensioners would be £400 million, and would increase the price of the licence fee for the rest of us to over £100. Since many pensioners are not poor and most other television licence payers are not rich, that would not be equitable.

Mr. Skinner: If the Government can find sweeteners for British Aerospace and are able to make handouts to their friends in the City, why cannot they find £400 million to ensure that pensioners on one side of the street who have to pay for their television licences are in the same position as those on the other side of the street who do not? Why should the Prime Minister have 13 television sets and not have to pay for a licence? She has one in every room. Even Boris has one free. Now that this place is televised, some pensioners are having to pay to watch the proceedings in the palace of varieties while some get it for nowt. Surely that is the utmost degradation. Why do the Government not make everyone equal in this respect?

Mr. Mellor: Without being ungentlemanly, I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman was right to quote the example of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister? He is suggesting that she should have an additional concession by having a free licence as a lady of pensionable age. That identifies precisely why he is advancing a bad idea. There are plenty of pensioners who are well off and do not require a state subsidy for their television licences. There are plenty of other non-pensioner, non-disabled licence payers who would resent, and rightly so, having to pay £100 instead of £66 to provide for a concession that is merely an electoral bribe for some and a fine for others.

Mr. Andrew MacKay: Does my hon. and learned Friend accept that most reasonable people would say that there is no justification whatever in giving free television licences to every pensioner, including many who are extremely well off, while at the same time a large number of young families on limited incomes have to pay for a full and increased licence, which is hardly fair?

Mr. Mellor: My hon. Friend is right. It is interesting that, notwithstanding the stridency of Opposition Members, when they come to formulate their policy proposals they do so with great care, simply saying that it is their

> "intention to move towards a funding system which will permit"—

presumably an open-ended commitment that could well be ignored in any Parliament that so chose. Those are weasel words, but if any right hon. or hon. Member on the Opposition Front Bench wished to toughen them up a bit and give a categorical assurance that would delight the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), I am sure that he will catch your eye, Mr. Speaker.

Police National Computer

11. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what decision he has made regarding the privatisation of the police national computer and the passing of control of the police national computer into the hands of an executive agency.

Mr. Waddington: The police national computer organisation is engaged in work to replace the existing computer with a new system-PNC2. This is planned to become operational by the end of 1990. I have not yet considered the longer-term role of the organisation. That will depend on a number of factors, including the programme of work on the provision of further information systems for the police. Plans for those systems are presently being developed.

Mr. McFall: Does the Secretary of State realise that the Police Federation is passionately opposed to the privatisation proposal on the ground that private security firms will now have access to information which they have historically been denied, destroying the relationship between the police and the public on confidentiality? Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman realise that programmes such as "Crimewatch" would no longer be able to carry the message that the police will keep confidential any information that they receive, which in effect will increase crime? If the right hon. and learned Gentleman hands over the police national computer to the executive agency, will he state unequivocally why?

Mr. Waddington: Obviously, we want effective and efficient management and the best value for the taxpayer. We must consider all the options, including contracting out, executive agency status, or a combination of the two. I fully agree that two matter that we must consider are security and confidentiality, but executive agency status is not incompatible with the security that the hon. Gentleman wants.

Mr. Sayeed: Will the terminals to the computer be connected by fibre optics or through the general telephone lines? If it is the latter, how shall we ensure the security of the system?

Mr. Waddington: I shall have to write to my hon. Friend about that. Proposals have not yet been put to me, but I shall study them anxiously when they are.

Mr. Darling: The Home Secretary seems to be telling the House that he will spend public money on improving the police computer before deciding whether it should be privatised. What benefits could possibly accrue to the detection or prevention of crime from privatising the police national computer? Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman accept that if it were privatised, confidentiality and security would be prejudiced? How on earth does the privatisation proposal assist us in the fight against crime?

Mr. Waddington: I do not see the logic of the argument that executive agency status need necessarily prejudice security and confidentiality. I agree that we must look into all the relevant matters, but at the end of the day we want an efficient system which represents good value for money.

Knives

12. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions have been brought under the Crminal Justice Act 1988 provisions banning the public carrying of knives.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Section 139 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988, which makes it an offence to be in possession of a knife in a public place without good reason, came into force on 29 September 1988. In the remainder of 1988 in England and Wales, 150 people were prosecuted under this section, of whom 130 were found guilty.

Mr. Tredinnick: Given the low number of prosecutions, is my hon. Friend satisfied that the Act is working effectively? What was the number of prosecutions and convictions in Leicestershire during 1988? Is he aware of the great popularity of the legislation that bans stars and other martial arts weapons?

Mr. Lloyd: The figure for Leicestershire last year was only one, but provisional figures for this year show that the Act is increasingly being used. I expect it to be used even more as the police become more familiar with it and realise the ways open to them to use it.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Buchan:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 December.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. I shall depart for Strasbourg later today to attend the European Council.

Mr. Buchan: When the right hon. Lady met her fellow Ministers this morning, did she discuss with the Secretary of State for Scotland his astonishing statement yesterday about homelessness in Scotland, when he said that there was no need for money to be included in the public expenditure statement for homelessness in Scotland because additional money was being made available for London and many of the homeless in London were young Scots? Would the right hon. Lady be prepared to spend Christmas in a cardboard box? Does she agree that the Secretary of State made an appalling statement, both about the position in London and that in Scotland?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. and learned Friend will answer the hon. Gentleman as he did very effectively with regard to Scotland. Many bed spaces in London are not used in the evening, especially those available for the homeless. People are sometimes sent to such places but do not receive any attention for their personal problems, which we think is necessary. The amount that is being spent on homelessness will continue to increase. In general, the number of houses has risen. The amount available to the Housing Corporation over the next two years will rise from about £817 million to about £1,500 million.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: My right hon. Friend will be aware of the overwhelming support on both sides of the House and in the country for the cause of the pre-1973 war widows. Will she review the Government's policy as a matter of urgency and place those deserving women, without exception, on a par with their post-1973 colleagues?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend knows, most of the advances in war widows' pensions—whether on tax matters or the additional amounts given from the age of 65, again at 70 and again at 80—have been made by Conservative Governments. It is an excellent record that we are anxious to keep. We are therefore considering the matter further and hope to be in position to make a further statement before Christmas.

Mr. Hattersley: When the permanent secretary to the Department of Trade and Industry said on Monday that the terms of the Rover deal were hidden to avoid severely damaging our relations with the European Community, what did he mean?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has answered to the House. I firmly agree with the view that the sale of Rover to British Aerospace was greatly in the interests of the British taxpayer, who had already lost about £3 billion, with another £1·6 billion at risk. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, we were in danger of losing the deal. It was an extremely good deal for the British taxpayer and it remains an extremely good deal.

Mr. Hattersley: As that answer bears not the slightest relationship to the question that the Prime Minister was asked, let me return to the statement made by the permanent secretary to a Committee of the House this week. When he spoke of severe damage to our relations with the European Community, was he not saying in terms that to have revealed the truth would have done so much damage that the Government entered into a calculated deception, and is that view not reinforced by today's revelation that the Government assessed the consequences of such a deception? If there was no deception, why did Lord Young circulate colleagues asking what the price of deception would be?

The Prime Minister: I do not accept the right hon. Gentleman's interpretation of letters which I understand are now being discussed. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry answered questions on the other matters in the House, and answered them satisfactorily.

Mr. Hattersley: Is the Prime Minister aware that, although she may not accept that interpretation, Parliament, the country and the European Community do? That is why she will go to Strasbourg with a tarnished reputation.

The Prime Minister: Parliament, the European Community and, above all, the country, know full well that this was an excellent deal for the British taxpayer, as well as for all who work at Rover and who previously worked at British Leyland. It was good for both workers and taxpayers to privatise both the lorry and the car sectors. Of course the right hon. Gentleman does not like that; he would much prefer the British taxpayer to have to pay over and over again, as long as the thing stayed nationalised—and that was bad.

Q2. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Brazier: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the decision by the EEC Transport Ministers to deregulate air fares is a triumph for British diplomacy, and that it is the kind of concrete measure to help ordinary citizens that she called for at Bruges? Will she take it from me that the majority of the British people wish her well on her way to the Strasbourg summit, and would like to hear more in the same vein?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Britain has been pressing very hard to secure cheaper air fares in Europe: we were paying far more per mile to go there than we have ever paid to go to the United States. The agreement is indeed a triumph for British diplomacy, and also a triumph for our kind of Europe. We believe in a much freer and more open Europe, which will break down trade barriers and be of great benefit to the people of Britain. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. There is a great deal of noise today.

Mr. Hume: Given the agenda of the Strasbourg summit, will the Prime Minister reflct on some realities on her way there—for instance, the fact that West Germany's interest rate is 5 per cent., Holland's 6 per cent., Denmark's 7 per cent. and Belgium's and France's 9 per cent., while the United Kingdom's is 15 per cent? Moreover, the inflation rates of all those countries are less than half that of the United Kingdom. Given her attitude to the European monetary system, why does the Prime Minister think that all those countries are out of step?

The Prime Minister: Let me point out—citing some of the countries that the hon. Gentleman mentioned—that Belgium's unemployment rate is 10 per cent., Denmark's and Spain's is 16·8 per cent., France's 10 per cent., Ireland's 17·3 per cent., Italy's 10·7 per cent. and the United Kingdom's 6 per cent.

Q3. **Sir Richard Body:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Sir Richard Body: As my right hon. Friend will have an opportunity to express her views on the European social charter this weekend in Strasbourg, will she make it plain that—far from being some document of woolly principles—the charter contains some 43 action points, including 17 directives to the House to change the law? According to an independent study by Liverpool university, one of those directives is in danger of causing the loss of no fewer than half a million jobs in this country.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is absolutely right: the social charter was accompanied by an action programme embodying 43 proposals and 17 directives, most of which were entirely inappropriate for the Commission. If any action is to be taken, it should be a matter for national Parliaments.

Furthermore, the social charter would cause a great increase in unemployment in this country—and, I believe, in others—and would probably mean a fortress Europe in the end. It is utterly right that the House rejected it decisively in a vote, and we shall do the same at Strasbourg.

Mr. Pike: Does the Prime Minister recognise that millions of people in this country have been losers as a result of her Government's policies during the last 10 years and that increasingly millions of people recognise that they will lose even more next April when the poll tax is introduced, because of its basic unfairness and its failure to take into account ability to pay? Will she do something urgently to rectify that, or does she intend to allow the losers to ensure that she and her party lose the next general election?

The Prime Minister: The overwhelming majority of people in this country have been gainers during the lifetime of this Government. Their standard of living is higher than they have ever known before. The standard of social services is also higher than they have ever known before.

As for the community charge, I imagine that the hon. Gentleman believes that people should bear a fair share of the cost of local authority public expenditure. In England, only 25 per cent. of local authority expenditure is borne by the community charge. About 9 million or 10 million people will get a community charge rebate, at a cost of £2·5 billion to £3 billion, every penny piece of which will be paid by the taxpayer. I hope that the hon. Gentleman does not wish people to get out of paying their legitimate dues to the local authority.

Q4. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 December 1988.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Sumberg: Given the economic revival of the north-west of England as a result of the policies of my right hon. Friend and her Government, would it not be a really good advertisement for Britain if Manchester were to host the 1996 Olympic games? If my right hon. Friend agrees with me, will she join me in supporting the campaign to achieve the objective?

The Prime Minister: I agree entirely that to hold the 1996 Olympic games in Manchester would be a very good way of celebrating the revival of the north-west under this Government. I wish the Manchester Olympic bid team well. I wrote on, I believe, 10 November to the International Olympic committee supporting Manchester's claim for the Olympic games in 1996 to be held in Manchester.

Mr. Shore: Now that Chancellor Kohl has provided a welcome respite from the headlong rush into European union—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Shore: —does not the Prime Minister agree that it would make very good sense for Britain now to organise a serious study of the constitutional and economic consequences of economic and monetary union—a study not confined to the governors of the European central banks—and at the same time to ensure that placed at the very top of the European agenda is the future relationship between the European Communities and the emerging independent and democratic countries of eastern Europe? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, when the House debated these matters it took precisely the same view as that which he has expressed so clearly on Delors stages 2 and 3: that it was not right to take away from the House of Commons fundamental rights that are central to our duties. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, we have already produced an alternative paper on monetary union which will be considered along with the Delors paper. It goes just a little beyond stage 1, but it would not require any central bank or any common currency. However, it would result in more consistent monetary policies.

As for the relationship between the Community and eastern European countries, we shall be considering that matter at Strasbourg. We put a paper to the Commission, following questions that I raised at the Paris summit just a few days ago, about the varying kinds of relationships that we could have with eastern European countries. The matter will, therefore, be discussed at the Strasbourg meeting, and I shall duly report upon it to the House on my return.

Q5. **Mr Dunn:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Dunn: Is the Prime Minister aware that all right hon. and hon. Members welcome the destruction of the

Berlin wall? Does she agree with me that remnants of the wall ought to be kept standing to remind us, and those who follow us, that the wall was built by Socialists, not to keep people out but to keep them in?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes his point effectively in his own inimitable way. After 40 years of that sort of system, people in eastern Europe are making their views very clear indeed. Socialism does not work and they want to have no more of it.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): Will the Leader of the House tell us the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Sir Geoffrey Howe): Yes, Sir. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 11 DECEMBER—Second Reading of the National Health Service and Community Care Bill (2nd Day).

Motion to take note of EC documents relating to the 1990 EC Budget. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

Motion to take note of EC documents relating to Community research and development. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

TUESDAY 12 DECEMBER—Until about seven o'clock, there will be a debate on a motion on war crimes.

Motion on the Electricity Supply (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order.

Motion on the Ministerial and Other Salaries Order.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

WEDNESDAY 13 DECEMBER—Opposition day (1st Allotted Day). Until about seven o'clock there will be a debate entitled "Government policy and its Effects on Mortgage Costs and Housing". Afterwards there will be a debate entitled "Famine in Ethiopia", both debates will arise on Opposition motions.

Motion on the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order.

THURSDAY 14 DECEMBER—Until about seven o'clock, a debate on a motion to take note of EC documents relating to fisheries arrangements for 1990.

Second Reading of the Landlord and Tenant (Licensed Premises) Bill

Motions on the Supply of Beer (Tied Estate) Order and the Supply of Beer (Loan Ties, Licensed Premises and Wholesale Prices) Order.

FRIDAY 15 DECEMBER—Private Members' motions.

MONDAY 18 DECEMBER—Second Reading of the Broadcasting Bill

Mr. Speaker, the House will wish to know that, subject to the progress of business, it will be proposed that the House should rise for the Christmas Adjournment on Thursday 21 December until Monday 8 January, and it is not intended to take questions on Thursday 21 December.

[Monday 11 December 1989

(1) Relevant European Community Documents

(a) COM (89)175	*Preliminary Draft Budget of the European Communities for 1990*
(b) 8271/89	*The Draft Budget of the European Communities for 1990*
(c) 9704/89	*Draft Budget of the European Communities for 1990: changes proposed by the European Parliament*
(d) 8848/89	*Letter of Amendment No. 1 to the Preliminary Draft Budget of the European Communities for 1990*
(e) 9627/89	*Letter of Amendment No. 2 to the Preliminary Draft Budget of the European Communities for 1990*

Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee

(a) HC 15–xxxii (1988-89), para 3
(b) HC 15–xxxvii (1988-89), para 3
(c) HC 11–iii (1989-90), para 4
(d) HC 15–xxxvi (1988-89), para 8
(e) HC 15–xxxviii (1988-89), para 8

(2) Relevant European Community Document
8375/89 Community Research Framework
Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee
HC 15–xxxvii (1988-89), para 1 and HC 11–ii (1989-90), para 2

Dr. Cunningham: I am grateful to the right hon. and learned Gentleman. Will the Leader of the House assure us that his right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will make a full statement to the House on her return from the Strasbourg summit?

Has the attention of the Leader of the House been drawn to the report on drug trafficking from the Select Committee on Home Affairs published today? Does he recognise that people in Britain will be astonished and horrified to learn that some £2 billion is currently calculated by that Committee to be in British banks as a result of criminal activities by drug traffickers? Since it is unreasonable to expect the Government to be able to respond to that report in tomorrow's debate, will he assure us that the Government will respond to it with urgency and that the House will soon have an opportunity to debate the Government's response?

May I ask in the interests, I believe, of right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House, whether the Leader of the House will ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to expedite publication of the ombudsman's report into the Barlow Clowes affair? Does he accept that it would be unreasonable and, indeed, unacceptable for that important report, which affects many thousands of our constituents, to be unduly delayed by the Department of Trade and Industry?

With that Department in mind, and given the recent exchanges in Prime Minister's questions and the disclosures by my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) today, does the Leader of the House accept that being economical with the truth seems to have been elevated to a principle of government, particularly by the Department of Trade and Industry? Is it not now more urgent than ever to have a proper debate about that Department's handling of the British Aerospace purchase of Rover and the Department's rather unhappy, to say the least, involvement in it?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: On the hon. Gentleman's first point, about the suggestion that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister should make a statement following her return from the Strasbourg summit, he is aware of the custom in that respect, and I shall convey his remarks to my right hon. Friend.

As for the hon. Gentleman's second point, about the Home Affairs Select Committee's report on drugs, I have, sadly, to say that it is almost impossible to surprise me about the scale of the accumulation or handling of money in relation to drugs, which is always more substantial than one expects or fears. That is why the Government have taken the action that they have to trace and confiscate the proceeds which accrue to convicted drug offenders. We

[Sir Geoffrey Howe]

will continue to take effective and energetic action in so far as we can. There is, of course, a debate tomorrow. There will be a response to the Select Committee's report in due course. The fact that these matters pile upon us almost week after week underlines the seriousness with which the House views this important subject.

As to the hon. Gentleman's third point, the Government are conscious of the distress and hardship that has been caused to many hon. Members' constituents, including, no doubt, some of the hon. Member's and mine, by the collapse of Barlow Clowes. We are all aware of the understandable desire of everyone concerned to get the matter resolved as quickly as possible. At the moment, the Parliamentary Commissioner's draft report is with the Department of Trade and Industry and he will receive from that Department its considered response as quickly as possible. I do not believe that it will be possible for the House to debate the matter until the report has been finalised, but everybody is well aware of the need to press ahead with it.

Finally, I come to the point which was raised more tendentiously by the hon. Member. It seems that prejudging issues before they have been fully studied is becoming a principle of opposition. The sale of the Government's shareholding in the Rover Group is, as the House well knows, still under investigation by the Public Accounts Committee, which will report in due course. I think that the House should await its report.

Mr. Edward Heath (Old Bexley and Sidcup): Will my right hon. and learned Friend reconsider his proposal to allocate only half a day to the debate on alleged war crimes on Tuesday? He especially will appreciate that this matter is of the utmost importance, and that many right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House want to take part in the debate. If the proposals which have been discussed and which apparently will govern the Government's actions were put into effect, they would involve basic changes in our constitutional practice and our legislative and judicial system. The shortage of time will be even greater if our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister decides to make a statement on Tuesday about the Strasbourg meeting. That will take up the first three quarters of an hour, or an hour. I ask my right hon. and learned Friend to reconsider and to give us a day's debate on a matter which is vital to the House and to those who are alleged to be involved.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I do not, of course, under-estimate the importance of this matter, but when deciding the length of time that should be available, we had also to consider the need to get ahead with the matter, in accordance with earlier undertakings, before Christmas. I can assure my right hon. Friend that the debate will last for the full three hours. It will not be curtailed by any time taken up by any statement that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister might make. Moreover, the commencement of private business will be deferred to allow the debate to continue, although private business will also have its full three hours.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): In relation to another debate next week, the Leader of the House may not be aware that our last annual fisheries debate was truncated to just over an hour and a half because of business questions and a statement. Given that it is accepted on both sides of the House that fishing is in an acute state of crisis, will he give a clear undertaking, similar to the one that he just gave, that at least three hours will be given to the debate?

Secondly, the Leader of the House will have heard at Question Time about homelessness and that this week Shelter Scotland reported a 76 per cent. increase in homelessness in the past six years. Within a mile of this place people are living rough in the streets. Can we have another debate on homelessness before Christmas?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am afraid that I cannot give any undertaking in response to the hon. Gentleman's last point. On his point about the debate on fisheries, it is the intention that the debate should last for the full three hours.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancaster, West): My right hon. and learned Friend will be aware that, after the Strasbourg summit, there will be a great deal of anxiety about the future of Europe, particularly in view of the discussions on the social charter and the effect that Germany's changed policy towards stages 1, 2 and 3 of Delors will have on thinking. Today it was announced in a Liverpool university study that the jobs of 500,000 people will be lost should the Government agree to the social charter in its present form. Given that, post-Strasbourg, there will be an entirely different attitude to Europe and that Governments' positions will have changed, will he give time in the near future for a debate on this most important matter?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend is right to remind the House of the importance of the events taking place in eastern Europe and about the importance of the European summit, which takes its place in a long line of such regular events. As my hon. Friend knows, we had a debate within the past seven days on East-West matters. It is interesting to note how much time in the programme for next week is taken up by debating various aspects of the Community. I cannot promise any additional separate debate on Europe in general, but I have the impression that European issues will not long be far from the agenda of the House.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): Will there be a ministerial statement of any kind on war widows' pensions next week? If not, will there be one before Christmas?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said, the matter is being considered in the hope that a statement can be made at an early stage. I hope that that will meet the right hon. Gentleman's point for the moment.

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): Will my right hon. and learned Friend reconsider the proposition of my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath)? The matter of war crimes has reached the stage where it attracts considerable public attention and it should be given time for fuller debate.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It is for the reason given by my hon. Friend that we have arranged that the time allotted for the debate will not be curtailed by other business.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Is the Leader of the House aware that there is considerable feeling in Wales about the need for a new Welsh language Act? Is he further aware that the Welsh Language Board set up by the Welsh Office has reported back with a draft Act? Even if he cannot give a commitment to bring forward legislation, will there be a debate in the immediate future?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Even if I am not immediately aware of that matter, the Secretary of State for Wales is. There is, no doubt, the prospect of the regular St. David's day debate, which is coming up soon.

Dame Peggy Fenner (Medway): Given that I cannot put this question to the Chairman of Ways and Means, what action can be taken on the Floor of the House to ensure that the private Bills objected to by one Opposition Member or another throughout the last weeks of the previous Session——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Including one of yours.

Dame Peggy Fenner: Including one of mine, and the vital Medway Tunnel Bill—can proceed?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As my hon. Friend is aware, the supervision of private Bills is under the surveillance of the Chairman of Ways and Means. Many hon. Members on both sides are rightly anxious about the question that she raised. The revival motion, which includes all the Bills which the Chairman of Ways and Means has set down for debate on Thursday 9 November, is on the Order Paper for debate on Tuesday 12 December. It must be hoped that that motion will help to carry forward the mass resurrection of private Bills, to which many hon. Members look forward.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Does the Leader of the House accept that, in next Thursday's debate, it would not be acceptable for the Government simply to reject the preposterous proposals by Commmission Marin, the Fisheries Commissioner, and to say that they have succeeded in reaching agreement on the two low levels proposed by the Commission, and that he will table a motion in better terms which will allow the House to decide how fisheries should be managed in future?

Recently, reports have been published by a man called Williams on agricultural education in Scotland. Since Scots Members are denied the opportunity to discuss the report in the Scottish Affairs Select Committee, because we have none—it is an ideal subject, as there are profound changes—will the Leader of the House assure us that there will be an opportunity to debate the issue before the Minister takes his decision, which I believe is expected to be before Christmas?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am afraid that I cannot give any undertaking in respect of the hon. Gentleman's second point. All I can do is draw the matter to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. The Commission's proposals are the background to the debate, and are expected to be available on Friday 8 December. I cannot offer any undertaking about the response that my right hon. Friends may make in their discussion on these matters.

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxstowe): In view of the considerable concern still felt in all parts of the House about the progress of negotiations towards the involuntary repatriation of Vietnamese boat people, will the House have an opportunity to consider that important question before Christmas and before any final policy statement is made?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I know of my hon. Friend's continuing interest in this matter and of the interest expressed in all parts of the House. I hope that there will be an opportunity for the House to debate the matter before long.

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): May I call the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 153?

[That this House notes with concern the results of a gallup poll conducted by Channel 4 Television showing that every year over eight million obscene telephone calls are received by women in Britain and that every day more than two thousand of these calls also threaten violence, that a number of women terrorised by such repeated calls move house or have mental breakdowns, that nevertheless telephone companies and the police rarely give this matter priority or attempt to trace the offenders, that the penalty for sending obscene letters through the post, Malicious Communications Act 1988, is higher than for making obscene calls, Telecommunications Act 1984, that fifteen per cent. of the callers know the woman they call, though the woman may not know them, and that some rapists also make obscene calls which are themselves a form of violence and an invasion of privacy; and therefore asks the Home Secretary to set up an inquiry into the extent of this problem to examine the work of the special department of Bell Telephone Incorporated of New Jersey, United States of America which helps victims trap offending callers, to take measures to improve the rate of detection and conviction of offenders and to take steps leading to the amendment of the said Telecommunications Act 1984, section 43 increasing the penalty; and calls upon the Director General of Telecommunications to make a condition of granting licences to British Telecom and Mercury that they each set up a department at their own expense to trace obscene phone calls when requested to do so in writing by victims.]

A similar motion tabled in October was supported by 185 Members from all parties. There are 8 million obscene telephone calls a year, of which 3,000 every day threaten sexual attack, murder or other forms of violence. The crime is committed more frequently than any other in the British crime survey. Effective measures are taken in the United States of America, but little is done to track offenders in the United Kingdom.

There is mounting anger and anxiety about this form of violence against women which is socially unacceptable. Will the Leader of the House arrange a debate so that the House may consider the matter thoroughly and see what can be done both for offenders and for victims?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Without intending to be discourteous to the hon. Lady, her question was of sufficient length to amount almost to a debate in itself. Obviously she is right to attach importance to dealing with this obnoxious practice, and it is right that we should do all we can to stop it. I shall bring the matter to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary as quickly as possible.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Can my right hon. and learned Friend do anything to expedite the Kings Cross Railways Bill, which is extremely important to the north-west of England, ahead of the Channel tunnel, and which is stuck because Labour Members are not attending the Committee?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I do not think that I can do anything directly about that matter, but my hon. Friend is right to draw attention to it. The anxiety she expresses underlines the importance that we all should attach to ensuring the continued effective operation of the present procedure for private Bills. I say that without prejudice to the need to re-examine that procedure in the long term.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): May I return the Leader of the House to the fisheries debate next Thursday? Given that the opportunities since the summer to debate this vital industry have been in minority party time forced by me and my Scottish National party colleagues and by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), is it not now incumbent on the Government to allow at least a full day's debate on the crisis enveloping this vital industry in Scotland?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It would not doubt be desirable to allow a full day's debate on almost everything—I do not mean any unkindness when I say that. It is simply not possible to fit matters in on that basis. We have made three hours available, however, for the important debate on fisheries, to which the hon. Gentleman has drawn attention. Again, in response to requests from both sides of the House, we are devoting two days and not one to the National Health Service and Community Care Bill. One cannot respond to every request by expanding time.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): However unusual, even unprecedented, it may be, may I ask the Leader of the House to reconsider the request put to him by my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath)? The assurance that my right hon. and learned Friend gave is wholly inadequate. If we are to debate this matter for three hours only, will that not mean that only one and a half hours will be available for Beck Banchers? Surely the proposal will involve retrospective legislation should the Government decide to proceed. My right hon. and learned Friend is a former Law Officer. Does he not agree that one and a half hours for Back Benchers to discuss a matter of such importance is wholly inadequate?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand, of course, the point raised by my hon. Friend. The debate is not likely to take place on the basis of speeches from Front Bench spokesmen with concluding speeches of comparable length from those spokesmen. The debate will take place on a motion already on the Order Paper tabled by my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) and the interventions from the Front Bench will be more modest in length, because, essentially, this is a matter for the House to express a view. On that basis, the full assurance of time for which we have made arrangements has been seen as sufficient. Given all my respect for my hon. Friend, he is making a suggestion that is almost without precedent.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Does not the Leader of the House recognise that, despite what he has just said, it is farcical that such an important issue of whether the law should be changed on alleged war criminals should have only three hours allocated for its discussion? As I understand it, you, Mr. Speaker, will have no authority under the appropriate Standing Orders to impose a time limit on speeches. Therefore, a number of Back Benchers who want to express a view will have absolutely no chance of doing so, especially those who are not Privy Councillors. Is it not possible, even at this late stage, for the Leader of the House to understand the strength of feeling on both sides of the House? If we are to have such a debate, at least five or six hours should be allocated to it. Has the Leader of the House so firmly made up his mind that there is no room for flexibility?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I do not wish to appear insensitive or inflexible, but I am trying to fit a great deal of the work into the time available for it. The decision taken to recommend the time currently proposed came after wide consultation. It should not be necessary for the House to have an order imposed upon it from the Chair to limit contributions on such a subject. I hope that hon. Members will be able to make the best use of the time we currently propose.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): My right hon. and learned Friend will be aware that the overwhelming majority of my constituents still resent the fact that they are no longer able to call themselves Yorkshiremen because of the creation of the county of Cleveland. Because of that quirk and line on the map, brought about by bureaucracy, all my constituents will be paying approximately £100 a head more under the community charge than they would if they were still in North Yorkshire. Given that anomaly, is it not time that the Government reconsidered local government boundaries and restored my constituents to their natural heritage?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand the instinct that prompts my hon. Friend's question. I shall be visiting what I still call Yorkshire tomorrow. I cannot undertake, least of all retrospectively, to effect the change for which he understandably presses.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Given his previous responsibility as Foreign Secretary, the Leader of the House will agree that the Strasbourg meeting this weekend, to which the Prime Minister has gone, is not just a routine Council of Ministers meeting, but is, potentially, one of historic and crucial importance to all Europe. Given that the Prime Minister may be alone at that meeting, unless she takes the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) with her, and if that summit goes wrong, surely we should have a debate rather than just a statement on it before Christmas.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand the importance that the right hon. Gentleman attaches to this, as to every summit of this kind. The House has a well established procedure in these matters. The Opposition Front Bench has asked me to request a statement following such a meeting. It is not impossible for a debate to be arranged subsequently in special cases on special topics, but I do not have that in mind at this stage.

Sir Richard Body (Holland with Boston): As we do not wish to waste our time in the House, as we did in the last Session, by passing legislation which the European Commission subsequently tells us we should not have passed—it said that we were naughty boys and girls—will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that the legislation which he has in mind has been cleared by the European Commission? In that way, we will not have our time wasted as it was with the Merchant Shipping Act 1988.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend will understand that the Government seek always to propose legislation that is compatible with our treaty obligations, including our obligations under the European Communities Act 1972 and its associated treaties. This is always subject to any rulings that may be made in accordance with those treaties by the European Court of Justice. That has been the position since the House passed the European Communities Bill.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Will the Leader of the House look at early-day motion 120 on the future of the Export Credits Guarantee Department?

[That this House notes that the future of the Export Credits Guarantee Department is under consideration by the Government; recalls that the Kemp Report recommended: (a) that there was no alternative to a Government scheme for long-term and project business if British exports were to remain competitive and (b) that the Insurance Services Group should become a Government-owned company with a view to the eventual introduction of private capital; is concerned that the Treasury Memorandum to the Trade and Industry Select Committee shows the maximum possible short-term loss, if Government support for the Project Group is withdrawn, would be £1,500 million or 2 per cent. of annual exports; insists that the Export Credits Guarantee Department's interest rate stabilisation function be maintained; and believes that any withdrawal of Government support for long-term and project export business would be gravely damaging to the United Kingdom's trade position.]

The right hon. and learned Gentleman will see that, if support for the project group is withdrawn, that will affect £1·5 billion, or 2 per cent. of our exports. That is causing great concern to industry. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to make an early statement on the Kemp report and thereby remove this cloud which is hanging over British industry and affecting our export drive?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman draws attention to an important matter. The interdepartmental working group which has been formed to consult interested parties and offer advice to Ministers on the Kemp review has recently submitted its report to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. The recommendations are being considered by Ministers. Obviously, we are aware of the wish of all parties for us to come to an early conclusion.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that, in July this year, the Government announced the calculation for the Government contribution towards the community charge, which is known by the acronym GREA, meaning grant-related expenditure assessment? More recently, a new figure, the SSA—standard spending assessment—has been announced, with Tuesday given as the time limit for consultation. Will my right hon. and learned Friend please find time between now and Christmas for a debate on the crucial shortfall which has affected many local authorities—including mine, which has been affected by a 13·5 per cent. reduction in Government support?

This means that between, now and April, my local authority, Torbay will have to find about £2 million in savings. It is impossible for the authority to achieve that in this short time. As my area is just the sixth largest net loser in this exercise, will my right hon. and learned Friend find time to debate this important matter?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am afraid that I cannot offer the prospect of time to debate the matter in the way suggested by my hon. Friend. I shall bring his point to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. In due course there will be an opportunity for a debate on this subject, but not in the way suggested by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Can the Leader of the House explain why another week has gone by without a statement or a debate in Government time on the three-month-old ambulance dispute, which now involves a lockout in London and many other areas? Is he aware that yesterday, many thousands of workers took solidaritary strike action in support of the caring women and men of the ambulance service?

Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that there is a growing demand among trade unionists for a recalled Trades Union Congress to set a date for a national day of action to support the ambulance crews and events in the National Health Service? If he insists on prolonging this dispute through Christmas and if a life is lost, responsibility for that action will lie with the Secretary of State for Health, the Prime Minister and the Government. If half a million people can be brought into Wenceslas square, there are a million people who are prepared to come down to Trafalgar square in defence of the ambulance workers.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I do not believe that the point made by the hon. Gentleman is made any more impressive by the volume with which he chooses to deliver it. The facts are well known. The Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel is balloting its members individually on an improved offer made by the management side on 5 December. That improved offer is based on a proposal put forward on 17 November by Duncan Nichol, the National Health Service chief executive, but the other unions—this is the important point—have been unwilling to return to negotiations. The offer has been extended to all staff. The other trade unions should let their members decide on the offer, instead of continuing action against the patients.

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest): Does my right hon. and learned Friend recall that on this occasion last week I asked him for an urgent debate on the licensing procedures established under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986? Will he note that since then I have received an answer to a number of parliamentary questions to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department? All those responses have been cloaked in secrecy.

Will my right hon. and learned Friend further note that the hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther), who was Chairman of the Standing Committee when the Bill in question was before the House, has independently confirmed that at no time during debate on the Bill was it

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ever suggested that licensing reports under the subsequent Act would be made secret? Will my right hon. and learned Friend now reconsider his decision and call for an early debate on this important topic so that we can find out what is going on under the licensing arrangements made under the Act?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I clearly need to find out more about the background to my hon. Friend's point before giving a confident answer. I congratulate him on the tenacity with which he raises it, and I shall make sure that it is looked into.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): May I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 159 on the subject of dangerous microwave ovens?

[That this House notes the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food's recent tests on microwave ovens; notes that 32 of the 102 ovens tested failed to heat properly; further notes that these ovens are potentially dangerous and further notes the Minister's refusal to publish the names of the dangerous ovens; and calls upon him to place this information in the Library in the interests of public health and safety.]

Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware of the enormous public disquiet occasioned, first, by the evident reluctance of Ministers to bring forward important information about dangerous ovens until pressed to do so by the public and by Labour party Front Bench spokesmen? It has been occasioned, secondly, by the fact that the Minister seems to have undertaken testing on condition that he would not let the results be known. Thirdly, disquiet has been caused——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady must ask for a debate, not go into detail.

Ms. Abbott: Given the disquiet about the fact that in the end information about a food safety issue had to be put out by the manufacturers rather than by the Ministry, will the Leader——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady is going through the arguments that were raised yesterday at some length. She must ask for a debate.

Ms. Abbott: Can we have an urgent debate on food safety matters, because the Government have yet to persuade the public that they put the interests of the public above those of manufacturers?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: This is one of the more fanciful requests made to me since I have been doing this job——

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Stick around.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The fact is that, on Monday 4 December, a report published by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food drew attention to tests on microwave ovens of this kind, and within three days of that, it was the subject of a statement to the House yesterday by my right hon. Friend, who answered all the questions effectively. We have therefore taken action with extreme promptitude to meet the hon. Lady's point.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): May I support the request by the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) for a debate on the subject of Rover and British Aerospace, so that we can find out from the superannuated student leader who speaks for the Opposition on this subject what it is that the Opposition really want? Do they want to renationalise Rover, thereby spending thousands of millions of pounds of public money on policies acceptable to their trade union paymasters, or do they want to sell it off to foreigners on the basis that Rover can be closed down, we shall have no car manufacturing left in this country and thousands of jobs will be lost?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend gives some reasons why he might be expected to take a prominent part in any debate of that kind. Such a debate should await the report of the Select Committee that is investigating.

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): In view of the right hon. and learned Gentleman's suggestion that the House should await the report from the Public Accounts Committee about the acquisition of the Rover Group by British Aerospace before debating the issue, will he assure us that in due course there will be a specific debate on that report, especially as it is now crystal clear that the Government's contribution of £9·5 million towards the acquisition of the minority shareholding was deliberately fixed at that level to avoid the need for a debate in the House?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: On this matter, as I have said already, it would not be appropriate to come to a decision until we have the report of the Select Committee before us.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Regarding next Tuesday's Adjournment debate on the desperate state of the Leicestershire knitwear industry—in which, subject to your permission Mr. Speaker, I shall ask all Leicestershire Members to take part if they so wish—will my right hon. and learned Friend do his best to stress to the Minister responsible for trade that he should come to the House and give a positive response to concerns about the desperate state that the industry is facing?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I know the importance that my hon. Friend rightly attaches to the subject of that debate and I shall certainly underline that to the Minister who will reply to the debate.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): Could we have a ministerial statement on the present operation of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board? Is the Leader of the House aware that currently there is a backlog of 85,000 cases and that three quarters of those people have been waiting for over a year? Does he agree that it is a tremendously onerous burden on those who have been waiting for compensation, some of whom have suffered from crimes of violence, that they should have to wait for over a year to get compensation from the board? Will he ask the Home Secretary to make a statement to the House on this important matter?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Since I think that I can claim that the board was established following the passage of a resolution at the Conservative party conference in Brighton in 1962 that I had the honour to propose, I certainly do not need to be reminded about the importance of the work of the board. I shall bring the matter to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

Mr. David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): On the highly contentious matter of the war crimes debate, may we take it that one of the Front-Bench speakers will be the Attorney-General who can give us his opinion as a Law Officer of the Crown about whether we should proceed? Secondly, may we also take it that Ministers will give us information about this matter additional to what has already been published?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot give any undertaking of that kind on behalf of my right hon. and learned Friend. I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary will speak if he catches your eye, Mr. Speaker, in that debate. I shall draw my hon. Friend's point to his attention.

Mr. Allen Adams (Paisley, North): I am sure that the Leader of the House is familiar with yesterday's edition of the Glasgow *Evening Times*, in which it is alleged by a Dr. Matthew Dunnigan that some patients in a psychiatric hospital in Glasgow have starved to death because there was not enough staff to feed them. If that has happened in Glasgow, I am sure that it happens in Manchester, London and Birmingham. Is that not important enough to initiate an emergency debate next week on the treatment of patients in psychiatric hospitals?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot claim to be immediately familiar with the important organ to which the hon. Gentleman draws attention, nor, therefore, with the facts or allegations contained in the report. However, I shall draw the matter to the attention of my right hon. Friends.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): May we have a debate before Christmas on the conduct of local government in Bradford, which is characterised by extreme Right-wing political prejudice and administrative incompetence, the latest examples of which are highlighted in early-day motions 139 and 165?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Only one early-day motion may be mentioned. The hon. Gentleman may remember that.

Mr. Madden: One will do, Mr. Speaker, and I will refer to early-day motion 139.

[That this House calls upon Conservative-controlled Bradford Metropolitan District Council to fund the following voluntary organisations: Bradford Council for Voluntary Service, Bradford Law Centre, Bradford Resource Centre; Bradford Community Arts Association, Acorn Video, Playspace, Community Health Project, Relate, Keighley Local Enterprise Agency, Asian Family Counselling, Afro Caribbean Women's Association and the Federation of Voluntary Management Committees, and believes it vital that Bradford's Voluntary Sector is maintained so that it may give support, help and advice and confidence to the poorest and weakest people in the district.]

Is it not extraordinary that the hard-faced and hard-hearted Conservative leaders of Bradford city council are much less prepared to consider the social implications of their policies than was the Prince of Wales on his welcome visit to the city today? He listened to protesters against cuts in council services, accepted a letter explaining the reasons for their protest, and clearly showed much more compassion and concern than the Conservative leaders who caused all the trouble in the first place.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman can put his own gloss on the facts as he pleases. It is those Conservative leaders who have listened to the voices and the advice of the electorate of Bradford who have been elected to run the council there, and who are doing so with considerable success.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): At the risk of being misunderstood, I wish to make it known that I agree with one of the comments of the hon. Member for Coventry, South-east (Mr. Nellist). I believe that the House should have a chance to debate the ambulance dispute. I ask my right hon. and learned Friend to find time to allow a debate on early-day motion 152.

[That this House agrees the urgent need to solve the ambulancemen's dispute; notes the differing levels of skill deployed; and believes that while paramedics should be rewarded for their special training, most ambulance journeys are routine transport functions which could be carried out by taxis or otherwise sub-contracted at great saving, which could be used to pay better wages to those who merit it.]

The motion observes that those with paramedical skills deserve more money and could be paid more money if those who provide the taxi service were subjected to competitive tender. The money saved could be paid to those with extra skills.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The House has already had an opportunity to discuss the ambulance dispute on more than one occasion. The Opposition have not taken advantage of the day available to them next week to discuss it. I shall draw the point made by my hon. Friend to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

Mr. Tony Banks: Is the Leader of the House aware that, this week, a Japanese whaling fleet will set about the slaughter of about 200 minke whales in the Antartic? Will he please arrange for an urgent debate on this subject so that the detestation of the House can be conveyed in a direct form to the Japanese Government? The slaughter will be carried out in the name of scientific whaling. It is rather surprising that whale meat turns up in Tokyo restaurants and costs about £70 per pound. The actions of the Japanese are disgraceful and disgusting, and the House must have an opportunity to say so.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman has had the opportunity to make an important point on an important subject. He is right to say that Her Majesty's Government and the House are concerned about the general issue to which he draws attention. I cannot comment on the particular point which he has raised, but I shall bring it to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that it is disgraceful that he should have allocated only three hours for discussion of a war crimes motion? Is his political judgment so poor—[HON. MEMBERS: "Shame."]—that he thinks it possible to deal with a subject that is so fundamentally important to our criminal justice system so briefly? Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware also that the other place debated the matter for a whole day and that most of those who contributed to the debate were against the proposals set out in the report of the war crimes inquiry, yet they were not called upon to come to a decision?

[Mr. Ivor Stanbrook]

My right hon. and learned Friend is asking this place to come to a decision when an inadequate time has been provided for a debate. Surely we must have a much longer period to discuss a matter of fundamental importance to our criminal justice system.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I do not accept my hon. Friend's judgment upon my judgment. It must be said that the debate which took place in another place did not take up the whole parliamentary day. The recommended time available for the debate has been arranged after quite wide discussion and consideration.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I thank the Leader of the House for finding two and a half hours to discuss the Census Order 1989. As it has been decided to discuss it in Committee, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman consider the problems of voting that will arise? Many people are concerned that census information is to be published on the basis of postal codes, with the implications that we shall get far more junk mail and that there will be redlining by building societies and insurance companies. The voting procedure will be extremely complicated if there has been a debate in Committee. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman ensure that the amendments to the order can be voted on by the whole House?

Sir Geofrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman made so many points in such a short time that I cannot undertake to accept any of them. I have no doubt that he will have the opportunity of advancing them in the Committee to which the order has been referred.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): When will the Leader of the House arrange for a statement to be made on the erection of gates outside No. 10 Downing street? When are we to know exactly why the Prime Minister is building a Berlin wall-type monument? Why do we not open up No. 10 Downing street like Wenceslas square? Let the ambulance workers come and protest. Let those who are living in the cardboard society protest outside No. 10. If it is good enough for those in east Europe, it should be good enough here.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: If a statement is calculated to provoke that sort of observation from the hon. Gentleman, that seems to be a good reason for not making such a statement.

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): Will my right hon. and learned Friend consider having an early debate on the subject of salmonella in eggs? He will recall that a year ago it was a crisis issue. British farmers have to comply with stringent regulations to ensure that no salmonella gets to the consumer, yet imported eggs, despite the common agricultural policy, are not subject to such regulations. I feel that we should have an early debate on the matter.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot offer the prospect of a debate, although there is always an opportunity for my hon. Friend to seek to raise the matter on the Adjournment.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): While we are most grateful to the Leader of the House for his positive response to a request to extend the debate on the National Health Service reforms, may I ask him to apply the same standards to the Scottish fishing industry? Does he accept that the three hours per year allocated by the Government are not adequate to consider an industry that is responsible for 30,000 jobs in Scotland? Is it possible to have a full day's debate on that matter?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for her opening remark, and I am sorry that I cannot respond with similar generosity to her main point. It is necessary to discuss the matter on the basis of the documents that underlie the debate, and it is the right procedure to conduct matters in this way.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): May we have a debate next week on local government expenditure, so that I can put the worries of my constituents before the House? Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the Ealing Labour council has doubled the rates in two years and cut expenditure on education by £2·5 million this year, with reductions also in street cleaning and refuse collection? Is he further aware that, at the same time, the council has made provision for an annual expenditure of £3,000 for the removal of unwanted body hair from women?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend is another example of an hon. Member whose ingenuity makes it almost unnecessary to have the debate for which he asks.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Can we have a debate on Northern Ireland in prime time? It appears that Northern Ireland is dealt with badly in this House. There should be a debate about its social and economic development. Appropriations were discussed earlier this week and hon. Members from the four Northern Ireland parties and the Labour party suggested that more money should be spent on social welfare. Can we debate that matter when the House is full so that other hon. Members can be involved in the debate, not just those from Northern Ireland and Opposition Front Bench spokesmen?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot promise an affirmative answer, but the hon. Gentleman will recall that more than half the parliamentary representatives of Northern Ireland had the opportunity to speak during the debate in response to the Gracious Speech.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): During Home Office questions this afternoon, it was announced that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary would introduce regulations to tighten the law on gun clubs following two incidents in Greater Manchester, and in particular the murder of two people in Stockport by a temporary member of a gun club.

Can my right hon. and learned Friend say whether there will be a debate on the Floor of the House, especially in view of the fact that since that incident, a journalist has managed to get into that gun centre and use a ·22 pistol without holding a firearms certificate?

Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that there is widespread aversion to the use by many gun clubs of targets that depict human beings? That is forbidden in Germany and Belgium and, quite honestly, my constituents and I consider it to be a sick practice for people to shoot at human-shaped targets for sport.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The point raised by my hon. Friend is obviously one to which he attaches understandable importance, but I cannot at this stage do more than promise to bring it to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the Leader of the House arrange for the Home Secretary to make a statement next week on the treatment by police of the Guildford Four, who were released by the Court of Appeal last month? Is he aware that, four days after being released, Gerard Conlan was harassed and held in a police car by the Royal Ulster Constabulary in Belfast, and that, two days ago, Paul Hill, while on his way to Dublin by Aer Lingus, was stopped at Heathrow airport, held for 25 minutes and questioned by officers of the Metropolitan police?

Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that many people believe that that amounts to the harassment of four innocent people? From the tenor of the conversation between the police and Paul Hill during his interrogation at Heathrow airport, it is apparent that they are under police surveillance at all times.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have no means of corroborating, one way or the other, the hon. Gentleman's allegations. All that I can do is to draw them to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Boyes, to ask a business question.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): I thank the Leader of the House for his letter of 28 November 1989, in which he disappointingly rejected the opportunity for a still photographer to work in the House. It is incredible that eight television cameras can be beaming what is happening in the House all around the world, but we cannot have a proper historical record of what happens here through the use of a still photographer. Will the Leader of the House make a statement on this, so that hon. Members can express an opinion about it? We are losing a great and important historical opportunity by turning this suggestion down.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I know that the hon. Member takes an enthusiastic interest in photography, and I am glad that he was able to make this point to me. The matter has been considered by the broadcasting Select Committee. As a result of modern technology, it is possible for the feed going out on the television cameras to be used to produce still photographs by means of freezing frames. It is possible for any others who have access to that feed to do the same on the equipment that they use, so potentially a number of people are in a position to take still photographs from that source. The Select Committee has concluded that that is the right way at the moment.

Points of Order

4.21 pm

Several Hon. Members On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will take the points of order, but they must be matters for me, because we have an important debate today.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): I rise to ask about a point arising out of the answers from the Prime Minister and the Leader of the House on the privatisation of the Rover group. Mr. Speaker, are you now prepared to accept a motion for the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 for an emergency debate on the letters from 6 to 12 July 1988 between Lord Young and the chairman of British Aerospace over the graft, sleaze and corruption that were involved in that privatisation deal?

Mr. Speaker: I cannot accept a motion on that subject. The matter is under investigation by the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. During business questions, my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) asked a question that involved him mentioning two early-day motions, and you ruled that he could mention only one. Is that the practice? My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), in earlier business questions, reeled off several early-day motions attacking the Prime Minister. Is it all right to quote several early-day motions to attack the Prime Minister, but not to use several in relation to Bradford?

Mr. Speaker: Obviously, the hon. Gentleman was not in the House when I made a statement, following that incident, about the number of early-day motions to be mentioned at business questions. If he will come to me later, I will give him the reference and he will be able to look at it himself.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Last night, in the debate, I drew attention to the allegations that the Government were in breach of European Community directives in respect of contracts given by the Crown Suppliers to its contractors. These contracts covered tens of millions of pounds-worth of business. In the debate, the Secretary of State gave an undertaking to the House that those allegations would be dealt with "comprehensively" in the reply from the Under-Secretary. Despite being pressed, the Under-Secretary refused to comment on those matters in his wind-up speech. Will you deprecate the actions of the Secretary of State, who gave solemn undertakings that replies would be given but, when the chance came and the Under-Secretary gave his reply, no reference was made to those matters because the Government wish to hide them under the carpet?

Mr. Speaker: That is a very old complaint. The answers that hon. Members receive are frequently not to their liking, but that is not a matter for me.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: There was no reply at all.

Mr. Speaker: It is not a matter for me what answers are given.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Each day, four tonnes of waste paper are taken away from the House. Will you tell those who compile the vote each afternoon that it is only necessary to list, say, the first 20 questions on each subject? There is no need to tell me that my question to the Prime Minister is No. 156.

Mr. Speaker: The Select Committee on Procedure is looking at that very matter.

CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY (BORROWING POWERS) BILL

Ordered,

That the Civil Aviation Authority (Borrowing Powers) Bill be referred to a Second Reading Committee.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

Orders of the Day

National Health Service and Community Care Bill

1st Allotted Day

Order for Second Reading read.

[Relevant documents: Eighth Report from the Social Services Committee, Session 1988-89, Resourcing the National Health Service: the Government's plans for the future of the National Health Service, (House of Commons Paper No. 214-III, 1988-89), the Government's reply to that Report (Cm. 851), the Second Report from the Social Services Committee, Session 1984-85, "Community Care with special reference to adult mentally ill and mentally handicapped people" (House of Commons Paper No. 13-I 1984-85), the Government's reply to that Report (Cmnd. 9674), "Community Care: Agenda for Action" (1988 HMSO), and the White Paper "Caring for People: Community Care in the next decade and beyond" (Cm. 849).]

Mr. Speaker: Before I call upon the Secretary of State, I must tell the House that the instruction in the name of the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) and other hon. Members is not in order. However, it will be in order to advocate the specific grants referred to in the instruction in the course of the debate.

There is great demand to speak in this debate and on Monday, so I propose to limit speeches to 10 minutes this evening between 7 o'clock and 9 o'clock.

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In addition to the instruction on the Order Paper to which you have referred, there is also a motion in the name of the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) and other hon. Members. My name appears as a signatory to that motion. I am not a signatory to that motion. I do not in any way approve of it, and I would ask you to rule it to be invalid because the House has been misled.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let me deal with one thing at a time. I understand that the hon. Lady's name was included with a number of others when the motion was handed in to the Table Office. It was accepted in good faith, but if it was included by mistake, I shall have the matter looked into.

Mr. Gerry Hayes (Harlow): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am a member of the Select Committee on Social Services and I was present at the meeting when the decision was made. I support what my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) said. There was no malice or dishonesty on the part of the Select Committee, but it may be a matter for the Select Committee on Procedure to consider. It cannot be right for hon. Members to have their names included because a course of action has been decided upon. I was able to have my name removed yesterday because I could prove that it should not have been included, but because my hon. Friend could not be present, she was unable to do so. That cannot be a satisfactory practice.

Mr. David Sumberg (Berwick, South) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: If the point of order refers to the same matter, I will take it, but it will delay matters.

Mr. Sumberg: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. This is a serious matter for my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe). She is an assiduous Member of the House and attends regularly, but if she had not seen today's Order Paper she would have been put in an embarrassing position. Will you look at this serious matter to prevent it happening again?

Mr. Speaker: This has been going on for many years. When the motion was submitted by the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) it included the names now on the Order Paper. The disagreement should be taken up with the hon. Gentleman, not with the Table Office, which accepted it in good faith.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I think that I have got to the bottom of this. Select Committees tend to be consensus-minded and there is a tendency for whoever is in charge to say, "Well, I will stick all the names in because we agree on everything else." The nods and the winks took place, all the names went down and then the Tory Members, realising that they would embarrass the Government, tried to run away from their responsibilities. That is the top and bottom of it. One had the nous to get his name off in time and the other did not turn up to get it off.

Mr. Speaker: We had better get on with the debate.

4.28 pm

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

This debate is an important stage in the bold reforms of the National Health Service on which the Government have embarked. Those reforms were inspired by a vision of what a good public service ought to be like in the 1990s, and I believe that when we pass the Bill we shall indeed have produced a better Health Service for the next generation.

There is, I think, a broad measure of agreement between us, and certainly among the public, about the kind of NHS that we want for the 1990s. Such a service should, in our view, be based on the fundamental principle —adhered to by all parties in the House—that free medical treatment should be provided regardless of means and financed largely by general taxation. The service should be well funded, which is why we have been putting such substantial additional resources into it: the two most recent public spending round settlements have increased the cash available to it by more than 20 per cent., or over £5 billion. At the same time, it is important for a modern public service to be efficient, and to avoid waste wherever that is practicable. No one can really be committed to a caring service without being committed also to raising efficiency levels whenever possible.

We believe that the service should be well led locally by people who are respected in their own communities—and led in a way that enables people to make clear decisions about priorities that reflect the wishes and choices of the local population. We want staff to be well motivated, knowing what their respective clinical units are expected to deliver to the NHS and what resources are available for the purpose. Much of the low morale of recent years has arisen because many staff are frustrated by the muddle that often features in NHS decision-making and objectives.

Above all, we want a service that will be responsive to the patients that it serves, delivering high-quality, caring and friendly personal service.

I trust that we all hope and believe that we can create that kind of first-class public service by building on the foundations of our present National Health Service. Nevertheless, we believe that there is much room for improvement in the way in which the service is run, and in the quality of the care that it delivers. We all respect the NHS as one of the great British institutions—indeed, we probably all love it for being an old, traditional, national institution—but, if it is to remain a great public service in the forefront of the world's health care systems, we must raise standards everywhere to the highest level; and we must be prepared to contemplate change when that change is for the better. Certainly, when we are devoting ever more huge sums of public money to the service, we have a duty to ensure that that money is spent in the most effective way possible.

All hon. Members are constantly reminded by their constituents of the highest-quality care that is often—indeed, usually—received by patients seeking treatment of all kinds. We need not look far, however, to see wide variations in performance between different parts of the service, leading to equally wide variations in the quality of care that patients can expect. I sometimes think that patients do not complain enough about the chance factors that can determine whether the locality in which they live can provide a good standard of family practitioner service, for instance. Such services are much better in the prosperous rural and suburban parts of the country than in many of our poorer inner-city areas.

Patients also tolerate variations in the times for which they must wait for treatment, and in the standards of care or even facilities available in different areas. Most people are familiar with the variations in the effectiveness of prescribing practice, and in the extent to which it is prudent and careful, avoiding waste of money or even risk to patients. I have already mentioned in previous speeches the 2·5 tonnes of drugs that were handed in in Yorkshire during our three-week campaign, and 1 million tablets were handed in in the space of two weeks in the counties of Avon and Somerset. My private office was recently sent 22 vials of a drug costing £9·50 per vial, which had been returned to a pharmacist in Newton-le-Willows. They had been prescribed on a twice-monthly basis, but the patient had not got around to taking the drug or opening the vials.

Prescribing costs vary considerably. One practice with a list of 7,000 patients, only an average proportion of whom are elderly, is currently spending about £800,000 a year on drugs: that is 185 per cent. above the average for its family practitioner committee area. The phrase "above the average" is a little misleading. That practice is so out of line with all its neighbours that every other practice in the family practitioner committee is at least 5 per cent. below the average for the FPC because that practice is spending so much more than the others.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): Is it not important that drugs that are prescribed for elderly people in particular should be taken? Drugs that are prescribed are often not taken because there is no adequate supervision at home.

Mr. Clarke: I accept that there is a wide variety of reasons for drugs not being taken. There are repeat prescriptions for many patients who have not seen their doctor for a long time. Drugs can be prescribed automatically and the doctor does not know whether the patient is taking them. No one should defend the wasteful prescription of drugs. The National Health Service needs to introduce effective methods to ensure that variations in the prescription of drugs do not occur.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way on that point?

Mr. Clarke: No. I shall return to prescribing costs when I deal with indicative drug budgets.

There are also wide variations in the performance of the hospital services. That is most apparent in the time that people have to wait for particular services. It is all too easy with waiting times, as with everything else, to put it all down to lack of money. For years and years the Opposition and far too many people in the National Health Service have said that whenever there is a variation in performance it is due to lack of resources. Variations in performance can never be attributable to resources. Variations reflect local efficiency and effectiveness in [illegible] aximum use of all the resources, including cash, at their disposal.

There is a variation in performance when one considers theatre sessions cancelled in different district health authorities. The worst districts cancel one in six theatre sessions. The best districts cancel only 1·3 per cent. of their theatre sessions—in other words, one in 77 theatre sessions. Far more work is done in a district where only one in 77 of the theatre sessions is cancelled than in another district where the performance is so poor that one in six of the theatre sessions has to be cancelled.

To give similar statistics about the number of operations per scheduled session, in the worst 10 per cent. of districts, according to the best measure of performance that we have, the average is 3·29 cases per session. In the best 10 per cent. of districts, there are 5·19 cases per session. In the best districts, therefore, half as much again is done per session compared with the worst 10 per cent. In a statement that was issued in the summer, the previous Minister for Health said that, if all our districts could raise the efficiency of their management of theatre sessions and waiting lists to the level of the best, we should be very near to eliminating most of the waiting time.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): The Secretary of State will be aware that quite recently the Public Accounts Committee closely examined operating theatre use. The Committee found that operating theatres are used as a financial regulator by local hospitals and that, were they to be run at full efficiency, they would come up against financial constraints that the Secretary of State has imposed.

Mr. Clarke: If the PAC said that—I think that was a bit of a paraphrase—I do not agree with all of it. I agree that one of the weaknesses of the present system is that if an efficient district increases its throughput of patients and raises its work load it finds, in the unreformed National Health Service, that it comes up against financial constraints. The districts that do not increase their throughput do not get into such difficulties. It is no good saying that the only reason for variations is lack of resources.

To take the Sheffield district health authority as an example, great variations are to be found in different parts of the service. There are some examples of excellence, but there are others where a great deal could be done to improve the service.

Let us consider what is good about the Health Service in Sheffield. The authority has a new department to give stereotactic radio surgery at Weston Park hospital. It is an advanced form of radiotherapy, which makes the hospital a world leader. Heart transplantations are about to start at the Northern General hospital from 1 April next year. There is a lithotripter at the Royal Hallamshire hospital, which is at the forefront of treatment for gallstones, and clinical services for patients with diabetes there are amongst the best in the country. Pioneering work is being done. The spinal injuries unit in Sheffield is one of the two biggest centres in Britain. However, Sheffield combines those good points with the huge waiting list for trauma and orthopaedic surgery and one of the longest waiting lists for routine orthopaedic surgery in the country.

In the course of the waiting list initiative, we are subjecting such districts to studies. We have studied 22 with the longest waiting lists. The main cause for long waiting lists that emerged in Sheffield was the under-use of theatre sessions and the low level of work by surgeons in relation to a high level of surgical manpower—higher levels than those in 80 per cent. of other district health authorities.

Even though the Sheffield district has teaching responsibilities, there are few provincial teaching authorities with such consistently low output per surgeon and per theatre. It has low activity per surgeon and a lower number of cases per theatre session than one would expect, with huge variations between individual surgeons. Other districts had a better case for resources from the waiting lists initiative when we were deciding how to put the money to best effect to increase the number of cases treated.

In Sheffield we have had co-operation, and an agreement to tackle the management and work load problems, and given some extra money to set new work load targets, to increase the throughput and to improve waiting list management.

All that can be done when the cause of deficiencies is tackled and when the argument that they are all due to the Government's underfunding of the Health Service is not simply accepted, and when the co-operation of local doctors is forthcoming. As the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) pointed out, further reforms are needed because we have to ensure that money is distributed in the service so that, when the work load increases, patients can be dealt with more effectively, GPs will be attracted to refer more patients to a unit and the resources will be there to back up that improved performance.

At the moment, efficiency tends to be penalised due to the way in which the Health Service is run. In the future, we will ensure that those authorities that are efficient or that raise their efficiency thrive by attracting more work.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): My right hon. and learned Friend must be aware that a very expensive lithotripter was installed at Withington hospital to serve the whole of the north-west two years ago—it cost almost £1 million. In the first year it was allowed 400 cases fully funded, but unfortunately Withington hospital has now run out of its budget and has done 400. It is trying to persuade hospitals like mine to pay £500 to take people there to have their gallstones removed. The alternative is to have to spend between seven and 10 days in hospital for an operation. Can my right hon. and learned Friend persuade the regional health authority to fund more of those operations to remove gallstones?

Mr. Clarke: A lithotripter lends itself to doctors arranging to have a given quantity of work done for their patients, because they believe that that method of treating gallstones is preferable to intervention by surgery and they can give the resources to the particular unit that they want to deliver the service. At the moment, because we do not have the ability to enter into contracts that the Bill will give the Health Service, my hon. Friend is reduced to lobbying the regional health authority and, in Withington, great confusion occurs about where money is going, and how much it may be able to divert into the lithotripter.

When the Bill becomes law, we will have clearer, better ways to organise the distribution of money—for example, in this case to the Lancaster district health authority, if it wishes to use its resources to provide a particular system of care.

So far, I have described the objectives for the Health Service and the problems that need to be tackled. We seem to be a long way from the attitude in many of the debates in which I took part in the summer, and a long way away from the initial reaction from too many people in the National Health Service. I shall not go back over that old ground, because the atmosphere seems to be improving. Unfortunately, there have been attempts to frighten patients by inventing a series of claims that had nothing to do with the White Paper, the Bill or any of the reforms that someone like me, who is committed to the National Health Service, is likely to put forward. I have been accused of sending people 60 miles to hospitals that they do not want to go to. People have said that doctors are running out of money that they need for drugs. The other day, it was hinted that expectant mothers may lose local obstetric services because of our proposals. That is nonsense. No right hon. or hon. Member would suggest any of that rubbish.

Now that the proposals are being discussed on the Floor of the House, and we have left the posters and the postcards behind, we can move to a serious discussion of what the reforms are about. The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) promised me hundreds of thousands of postcards but he could find only 50,000—obviously membership of the Labour party is falling to a greater degree than even I would have expected. Now the debate will have to move from fantasy to reality.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): The Secretary of State says that we have been spreading scare stories about the problem of patients going 60 miles to hospitals that they do not want to go to. If he confers with the right hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker), he will find out that a hospital in my constituency has been working on a proposal since 1 December that will involve patients being sent 160 miles for surgery. Previously they would have had surgery at a local hospital. Will the Secretary of State tell his colleague that it is not a scare story, but reality? The same thing could happen in several other hospitals in Wales, and instead of people being able to have surgery locally, they will be taken long distances.

Mr. Clarke: There will be Welsh wind-up speeches tonight, and hon. Members from both sides of the House will have an opportunity to comment on that, so I shall not intervene in the affairs of South Glamorgan. The Health Service in Wales has benefited from expansion and increased expenditure that at least matches that in England, for which I am responsible.

Of course, people may choose to travel some distance for better service. That possibility will be more available in the future. It is not true that the White Paper reforms will lead to people having to go miles down the road to have cheaper services.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside) *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I shall not give way on the subject of south Glamorgan.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It could be argued that this is the most important Bill of the Session. So far, a series of hon. Members have got up and abused the procedures of the House, because it is stuffed full of television cameras, by raising constituency points. I wonder whether you could help the House to keep to issues of principle rather than allow pettifogging matters, aimed at gaining support from constituents, to be raised.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. We had better get on.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) is winding up tonight on behalf of the Opposition. Some hon. Members wish to intervene about South Glamorgan. I am not responsible for that. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales is responsible for South Glamorgan, which is an extremely successful district health authority.

Mr. Barry Jones *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Clarke: With the greatest respect, I would not normally refuse to give way to the hon. Gentleman but I cannot be expected to diverge into discussions about the work of a health authority for which I have no departmental responsibility. When my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Wales replies, I am sure that he will be delighted to talk about the arrangements for care there.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it not intolerable that the Secretary of State should spend two thirds of his speech so far dealing with detailed matters in specific health authorities, but refuses to give way to Opposition Members who wish to raise issues relevant to other specific health authorities?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Secretary of State must be allowed to make his own speech in his own way.

Mr. Clarke: I quoted the example of Sheffield, with which nobody quarrelled, so it was an excellent example of a national point. I cannot be expected to trot around the House dealing with district health authority after district

[Mr. Clarke]

health authority. Many Adjournment debates are held in which such issues are dealt with by my hon. Friend the Minister.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Secretary of State said that he does not have a certain responsibility. I assume that the right hon. and learned Gentleman has responsibility for the whole of the Bill as he is presenting it, so he should answer questions about the whole country, including Wales.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the House that, as Mr. Speaker said at the beginning, a very large number of right hon. and hon. Members wish to speak in the debate. I think that we should get on with it.

Mr. Clarke: I knew that it was a mistake to say that the debate was moving on to more sensible ground than it has been on for most of the summer, but I believe that to be the case. We should build on what is accepted by everyone in the service.

Hon. Members will have seen a press statement put out by the professions last week that still contained many criticisms of proposals in the Bill, which had then just been published. The press release included the following passage, which I commend to the House:

> "We wish to work with the Government, not against it, because like the Government we are committed to the principle of a National Health Service financed out of public funds and free at the point of delivery. We welcome the Prime Minister's statement that her sole aim is to develop a better Health Service, and we share this aim. We wish to co-operate in the improvement of standards through professional audit, through proper resource management, through research into disease prevention and treatment, including the most cost effective methods of care, and through the introduction of better information technology to enable informed management decisions to be taken."

The professions then made general criticisms which I have rebuffed. Some of the wilder ones that caught the headlines seem to have no sensible or factual basis. The Bill accepts that common ground, which is the widely accepted need to improve resource management and for quality control and the provision of a good basis for education and research, and enables us to put into effect the benefits of better resource management, which will be more effective patient care.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): As the right hon. and learned Gentleman has thought it worth while to quote to the House the representations made by people in the service, why did the Prime Minister refuse to receive a delegation of them so that they could put their case directly?

Mr. Clarke: Because she referred the leaders concerned, as she would in any other similar case, to me and my colleagues as the Ministers responsible. Indeed, I had met all those people frequently during the previous few months. We recently answered a parliamentary question which showed that my ministerial colleagues and the chief medical officer could easily produce a list of well over 100 meetings with leaders of the medical and nursing professions during the past six months. I have no doubt that we shall have more. There have been constructive meetings designed to ensure that we implement the changes and get the benefits of better information technology and quality control, which will be welcomed as we go along.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: If my right hon. and learned Friend is so determined—rightly—to press ahead with resource management, which is so important for the efficient management of the Health Service, why was he not prepared to analyse and properly assess the resource management initiative in six hospitals, most of which the Social Services Select Committee visited during its recent inquiry, before rushing forward into the dark with unproven proposals which could do so much damage to the Health Service? I might add that those resource management initiatives were fully supported by everyone in the Health Service.

Mr. Clarke: We shall evaluate those six initiatives. Everybody accepts the need for better resource management in the Health Service. Change cannot be made conditional on a protracted academic appraisal of six particular experiments. Of course, we shall build on the experience of those experiments——

Mr. Winterton: My right hon. and learned Friend set them up.

Mr. Clarke: And, of course, we set them up. We shall evaluate them. We did not set them up, however, on the basis that nothing would be done anywhere else in any other hospital until Brunel university had finished the evaluation. The crying need for resource management is obvious. The pace at which we proceed must, with respect, be somewhat more purposeful.

I always tell the business men whom I introduce to give advice on better management in the Health Service that, when they go into the public service, they must expect the clock to go rather more slowly than they have experienced in any other organisation. Sometimes, however, people in the Health Service want to make the clock crawl. They contemplate years of discussion before getting on with implementing such obvious improvements as a better system of financial management.

The Bill will enable us to build on the progress being made in resource management. It will enable money to be spent more sensibly and effectively. The key theme of the proposals is to have more real responsibility for decision making at the local level. We are putting it in the hands of the managers, doctors and nurses who are delivering care in hospitals and units. It has been the common experience for years that most people in the Health Service have, until I proposed the reforms, suffered from the feeling that there are far too many layers of authority above them and far too many constraints on running units better. The Bill will give much more automony within the Health Service to the people who are delivering care.

We need better decision making, which depends on better local leadership. Clauses 1 and 2 reconstitute district health authorities and the bodies who are responsible for decision making. The aim is to make them smaller and more effective. In my opinion, health authorities have never been able to make up their minds whether they are a kind of local government committee or a decision-making executive body for the health authority. We obviously want smaller, more effective decision-making bodies.

We are bringing executives in for the first time. We are building on all we have achieved with the introduction of general managers. It is absurd that there have been no executives on the boards. They have had to sit and watch. Others debate an agenda which, in the opinion of some executives, sometimes bears little relation to the real decisions and problems that face the authority. There will be a combination of chairman, non-executive members —local people appointed for the individual contribution and skills that they can bring—and executives. That will create a fuss because we are removing the arrangement by which local authority members are put on as of right.

I quite expect many non-executive members to combine their public service on a health body with service as local councillors, but the system under which local authority representatives go directly on to the health authority does not always produce desirable results. Recently, there has been a growing tendency, sometimes by supporters of my party and frequently by supporters of the Labour party, to put on local authority members who are mandated to pursue local political aims, and then to remove them when changes of political control or nuances in the local Labour group determine that a new political input must be made.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. and learned Friend make it clear whether family practitioner services authorities will employ medical advisers to examine the effectiveness of prescribing? If so, will they consider quality as well as expense?

Mr. Clarke: Yes, surely. FPSAs will certainly need professional advice when deciding on prescribing practices. The judgments that may in some cases have to be made about the prescribing practices of individual general practitioners or partnerships will be made by people who have professional qualifications and are therefore able to do so. Nobody will evaluate prescribing habits solely on the ground of cost. That is not my point. The quality of prescribing and the necessity for it in such quantity will also be considered in each case.

The Bill also introduces the possibility of a quite new method of distributing taxpayers' money. In future, it will be distributed according to a method which is loosely called contracts, but I should make it clear that it is certainly not my intention that any of the agreements about what service a unit should provide in exchange for a given level of resources should be made the subject of litigation between different parts of the Health Service, or be subject to over-legalistic interpretations.

The Bill allows NHS bodies to make administrative arrangements with each other for the provision of services as they have not been able to do previously. Those administrative arrangements will be a network of agreements whereby a district health authority or a general practitioner, using the funds he holds in his budget, will decide which unit they want to provide a given level of service and, when they have stipulated what they want and the quality that should be achieved in exchange, an agreed sum of resources will be accepted by the unit to deliver it.

It greatly alters the responsibility of people in the NHS. District health authorities will find their role considerably changed. They will have a vital responsibility to act on behalf of all the residents in their catchment area. They will need to assess the health needs of their districts and identify where the local service is not as good as it might be and could be improved. They will have to determine what is required to provide a reasonably accessible comprehensive service in each locality. The money will be placed in their hands to finance the best pattern of service for patients.

District health authorities will enter into agreements with hospital units to specify what is required in terms of both quality and quantity. I expect that at first they will be broad-brush agreements. Nevertheless, authorities will stipulate a level of service in exchange for an agreed level of resources. As we develop the concept of resource management, both sides of the bargain will wish to include more sophisticated terms and details.

To go back to the jargon, we have stressed in the Bill and in the working papers that support it that district health authorities must respond to the wishes of general practitioners in placing contracts. In putting agreements in place, they will have to find out about GPs' referral patterns and reflect them wherever practicable and sensible. In their turn, GPs as well as the district health authorities will reflect the wishes of their patients both in terms of convenience of locality and expectations of service and allow for a reasonable degree of patient choice, which we on this side wish to reinforce in every case.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington) *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way in a moment. The system will allow for individual referrals to be made and financed properly within the contractual system that we propose.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Does the Secretary of State understand that many of us find it difficult to accept his reassurances because it was he who came to the House only just over a year ago to give us reassurances about the sale of Rover to British Aerospace? He was the Minister responsible for misleading the Commons on issues which are now being unravelled in the midst of a row. How can he expect Parliament and the British people to believe a word he says on the basis of his track record?

Mr. Clarke: If it were in order to do so, I should give way to the desire that I have had for the past few weeks to join in the exchanges on the sale of the Rover Group to British Aerospace. I have listened to a great deal of rubbish from the Opposition about the sale, under which a company was transferred into the hands of an extremely successful British engineering company and taxpayers were relieved of the risk of losing millions of pounds on the scale previously incurred under public ownership. I think that if I digressed further, you might call me to order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I look forward to answering on that matter when I have the chance.

To return to contracts, I realise that it is difficult for those who work in the service to become familiar with the concept. It is a concept that is easy to attack. It is worth while bearing in mind the fact that the network of agreements will involve people making considerable choices about where best to place a service and how best to allow for patient referrals and make sure that the service provided is properly integrated and not broken up. The first key point that I would emphasise is that we intend and shall insist that all decisions about placing contracts will have as much regard to the quality of service that the district health authority and GPs seek as to cost.

Some critics have attacked the system on the basis that doctors will be made to obtain the service from wherever it is cheapest. That is nonsense. Every hon. Member in the

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House makes the same judgment when he or she is ill as GPs and people outside the House make. The first thing that one wishes to know is where one will be best treated. Judgments about quality are as important as judgments about cost.

As I have already said, one great benefit of the system will be that where a unit is efficient, it will no longer have to cut back towards the end of the year, perhaps by closing wards, because it has outstripped its budget, however fast that budget has grown. In future, it will be possible to stimulate good performance in the Service. People are committed to their own units, hospitals and clinical units. In future, units will thrive and attract more patients to the extent that they succeed in cutting waiting times and demonstrating a high quality of care. By providing a friendly personal service they will be more likely to attract referrals and contracts from their district health authority and surrounding authorities and thereby increase their resources.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey) *rose*——

Mr. Robert Hughes *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: That will be the opposite of the present position. I do not wish to attribute ill will to anyone in the Health Service, but no one has an incentive to reduce waiting lists. People strive to do so because they want to keep up with the work, but no reputable consultant would be without a waiting list, because it is a badge of status. District health authorities are not anxious to reduce waiting lists, because they are used by Members of Parliament to reinforce authorities, claims for more resources. We shall have to take care that our waiting list initiative does not reward units for having a long waiting list.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Cheek.

Mr. Clarke: It is no use the hon. Gentleman saying, "Cheek." No doubt if he were making his speech he would say that waiting lists were good for private practice. I would not allege that that plays too great a part in keeping waiting lists high.

In future, units which succeed in reducing waiting times will have more prospect of attracting patients, and NHS resources will flow in with the patients. That is one of the main ways in which the Bill will reduce waiting times, when it is fully implemented.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The precondition for what the Secretary of State says about the relationship between districts and hospitals is NHS trusts, for which the Bill provides. The Secretary of State will be aware that people have an honest fear that, because the contract will be placed by the district with the best hospital, it will not necessarily be given to the local hospital. If the Bill is all about choice, why does the Secretary of State not amend his plans in this respect, as some of his colleagues did in other legislation last year, to allow people who work in or use local NHS hospitals to choose by voting whether the hospital should become an NHS trust instead of a decision being imposed on them by the Secretary of State? That happens in schools and in housing action trusts, so why not in hospitals?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman is mistaken in one of his premises. It is not the case that the so-called contract system that I have just described will apply only where there is a self-governing NHS trust. What I described is a key element of our NHS reforms and will apply to the whole National Health Service, both to hospitals and community units. It will apply to hospitals run by the district and to those which are self-governing NHS trusts. The difference with a trust is that it will play its part within the system with a local board to manage it and make the day-to-day decisions. Hospitals run by the district will continue to be managed directly. I shall come to NHS trusts later—they are dealt with in the next part of the Bill.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Why not let them decide?

Mr. Clarke: On the matter of who decides, we have always said that we shall consult on applications from hospitals to become self-governing trusts. I cannot receive such applications until the Bill has Royal Assent. People contemplate, "What if one has a self-governing trust?" Propositions will not even be worked out until next summer, and they will include plans for the development of services. We can have proper consultations then. I suspect that that is one of the many strange leaflets kicking around the Health Service on the subject of self-governing hospitals.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I am happy to talk about the creation of NHSTs, if hon. Members wish to return to that point, but first I should like to stress the main point of the Bill.

These self-governing hospitals—that is what people want to call them—or NHSTs will be firmly anchored in the NHS. The clause provided for that. They set out the procedure for establishing the new bodies, their specific powers and freedoms, my reserve powers, which will ensure that they continue to meet their NHS obligations, and the basis of their funding. On establishment, the trusts will have boards of directors with substantial health, professional and outside expertise to provide the necessary range of skills and strong leadership on the ground. There will be special provision for medical school or university representation on boards should it be needed.

Schedules 2 and 6 set out the freedoms of the NHSTs which we have been expounding since we produced the White Paper. They include the freedom to employ their own staff, to conduct research and to provide facilities for medical education and other forms of training. NHSTs will have the same income-generation powers as other health authorities. The schedules also contain safeguards in the form of specific powers of direction which the Secretary of State will have over the trusts. These powers will allow me and my successors to direct all trusts on matters of safety or ethics where a common policy will be pursued throughout the Health Service and, in exceptional circumstances, to direct an individual trust where there is justified cause for concern.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson), who told me that he had to leave to catch a train to his constituency, whispered to me about educational research. I referred him to the powers which cover the provision of education and research and the powers of the Secretary of State to insist that proper arrangements are made in the unlikely event that any self-governing trust would wish to cease to play its part. The Government are certainly committed to high quality medical research and education in the Health Service and we propose to ensure that self-governing trusts play their part.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): The Secretary of State mentioned his discussions with the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson). Earlier he seemed to deny that health authorities had been spending taxpayers' money on working up proposals for hospital trusts. Where in the Leeds Western health authority does money come from to employ the consultant, Professor Bosanquet, and to produce and publish a report which advocates that Leeds general infirmary should become a hospital trust? Where is the legal power to spend that money, particularly bearing in mind that at a formal meeting the health authority voted against the proposal for the infirmary to become a hospital trust? Where is the power, or is taxpayers' money being used without legal authority?

Mr. Clarke: I know from my information that nobody is exceeding his legal powers in the Health Service or my Department. For as long as I can remember when a Government announce policy changes, a White Paper or an intention to legislate, it has been the obvious sensible practice for preparatory work to be done and for people to exchange ideas with the Government on how the concepts might work out in practice when they are introduced. The hon. Gentleman will know that that is the subject of litigation. Professor Harry Keen at Guys has been passing the hat round to employ lawyers to argue this for him. I would not dream of intruding on the litigation that will ensue. I am satisfied that we are acting within our legal powers and that what we have done is not out of line with previous practice. No doubt in due course that will be determined by the courts.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Clarke: With the greatest of respect, I am sure that the courts will be seized of this and I do not think that the House should spend more time on it. What we are doing is not out of line with usual practice. It is most certainly not an unlawful use of money. Professor Harry Keen and his colleagues think otherwise, so the whole matter is sub judice and will be determined by the courts.

Mr. Taylor: Will the Secretary of State give way on a different point?

Mr. Clarke: No; first, I should like to make a little more progress on NHSTs. I do not think that at the moment there is a proposal coming from Cornwall.

Throughout the country, partly as a result of this preparatory work, I detect mounting enthusiasm among many people in the service and among units and hospitals of all kinds about the possibilities that may arise from the establishment of NHSTs. It is not true, as some commentators have claimed, that interest is confined to the giant hospitals. Some small units have expressed interest. Indeed, interest has been expressed from outside the hospital service altogether. In some places, community services are being put forward and two ambulance services are contemplating self-governing status inside the Health Service. They see the possibility for new freedoms for local people and new opportunities to develop their services.

Many doctors and nurses have for years been frustrated by the constraints which in the olds days the bureaucracy of the NHS, through my Department, RHAs and DHAs, undoubtedly used to impose on their ability to work as they wished. All those who work in the NHS have a great sense of pride and it is strongest when it is attached to a particular hospital or unit. That can be used for the benefit of all by developing the NHST concept.

Success will depend above all on the strength of local leadership that emerges and the quality of the plans for the future of the unit which are produced. Sensible local discussion and the eventual decision must wait for the production of those plans so that their quality can be evaluated.

For some reason, the Labour party has latched on to self-governing hospitals as a focus for opposition. The enthusiasm of the Labour party and trade union movement for bureaucracy and red tape knows no limit. The most amazing nonsense is being canvassed in support of votes. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) is the latest to impress that on me. People have been told that these units are opting out of the NHS, a point which I have dealt with; that this is a step towards privatisation, which nobody believes any longer; that it is the end of job security for the staff; and that vital local services will be closed in the interest of seeking profitable areas. I look forward to any hon. Member describing in Committee how that nonsense is to be put together. In places such as Redditch, the local council has spent a fortune of ratepayers' money to put out tendentious leaflets, with the result that people write back to say that they are against the curious nature of the proposals described.

Given that plans are beginning to develop in parts of the Service, next summer proper plans will be proposed by the Secretary of State in the normal way and consultations will take place. I am sure that in Committee we shall have many Divisions. Nobody has explained to me who on earth the electorate would be in those decisions, because hospitals do not belong to any particular section of the public. Even the Labour Government in their more foolish moments when they were responsible for these matters never held a referendum on local management structures for the Health Service, so far as I am aware. That is not a sensible way to run any service.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): The Secretary of State will recall that he has been on his feet for almost exactly 50 minutes.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: There were many interventions.

Mr. Tom Clarke: I accept that there were interventions. In that time the Secretary of State has not said one word about community care, which appears in the short title of the Bill. Is that consistent with the low profile of the Griffiths report, the publication of the White Paper the day after the House adjourned and the Government's low priority for the whole issue?

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I apologise for the length of time that I am taking. I believe that the television cameras stopped transmitting at 5 o'clock and I thought that that might reduce the number of interventions that I would be

[Mr. Kenneth Clarke]

obliged to take during my speech. I am talking faster than usual, because I share the hon. Gentleman's concern for the community care part of the Bill, which is vital and must be subjected to debate over the next two days. I shall anticipate what I intended to say later, which is that my hon. Friend the Minister for Health will reply to the debate on Monday. She has particular responsibility for community care and will put heavier emphasis on it in her speech than it seems I am likely to have time for in mine. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that it is an equally important subject.

The Bill paves the way for GPs' fund holdings. As everybody, knows, I frequently state my enthusiasm for the family doctor service in the British NHS. It must play a key part in any service which is truly patient-oriented. The new contract will raise the quality and boost the service to the public. The system will also give GPs much more influence over what resources are spent on and much more contact with their DHAs than ever before.

The proposals for fund-holding general practitioners will give those who choose to develop it the opportunity to provide the patients in their practices with high-quality care. It will give GPs much greater control over the resources they deploy in any event in their referral patterns and much more influence that they have ever had over the development of the local services used by their patients.

The Bill provides the framework for the scheme to get under way, and I trust that it will be welcomed as it gets better understood. I never understood why the British Medical Association opposed the proposal, as I felt it was on the wrong side of the barricade. The BMA represents GPs in particular and it should have recommended to the Government a system that placed funds in the hands of GPs and gave them more influence over how resources are deployed.

If I said that doctors would abuse that power, refuse the treatment needed by their patients or seek to make a surreptitious profit out of it, the BBC—sorry, I mean the BMA,in fact—the BBC and the BMA—would get extremely excited about my disgraceful slur on the medical profession. The BMA has occasionally argued that it does not believe that all its members would use those powers properly. I hope that, eventually, the BMA is on the right side of the barricade as fund-holding for general practice is an exciting concept for family doctors of which many will want to take advantage.

During the discussion of the Bill, we shall issue the programme needed for GP practice budgets in the near future.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: What level of budget?

Mr. Sedgemore: What level of budget?

Mr. Skinner: What level of budget?

Mr. Clarke: When three of the noisiest Members of the House make a sedentary intervention, I feel obliged to respond to it, but I do not believe that two of them understand the matter. In reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), in the first place the budget will be negotiated by the practice contemplating having that fund-holding budget with the regional health authority as the Bill provides. Eventually we hope to devolve the negotiating responsibilities to the family practitioner service authorities, which will replace the FPCs.

I have dealt already in passing with prescribing budgets, but I shall do so again now. Clauses 17 and 31 contain the proposals for indicative prescribing budgets. "Indicative" is the key word. Those budgets will be targets that will be assessed as a reasonable expectation of what the prescribing costs should be for a practice. If a practice goes above that expectation it may well be obliged to answer to a professionally qualified group and to give an explanation as to why its prescribing costs are out of line.

The indicative prescribing budgets will be the machinery whereby the regional health authorities and the FPCs can manage prescribing costs more effectively than they have in the past. In that way, money will be targeted on effective patient care.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): If it is true that GPs will be able to prescribe whatever drugs they believe necessary and that that will not be a limiting factor on their drug budget, will the same be true of hospitals when a wonder drug is created? What will happen if a hospital wants to prescribe such a drug to its patients, but its existing budget is inadequate?

Mr. Clarke: Hospitals have always had to provide for their drug costs within the cash-limited provision. When a wonder drug is created, it has an inevitable impact on cash limits and, inevitably, it forms part of the claims that the Department of Health makes year in, year out, on the Treasury. In health care, when deciding what one must spend, one must pay regard to advances in the pharmaceutical industry. It is our intention that hospital and community service budgets and the GP indicative budget should reflect such expensive advances. Such advances are often counterbalanced by other medical advances that produce lower-cost alternatives to expensive hospital care for which GPs may opt. We must manage the budgets with common sense to ensure that essential needs are met and the best value obtained throughout the Health Service.

Clause 19 and schedule 4 allow the Audit Commission to take over the statutory audit of Health Service bodies from the Department of Health and the Welsh Office. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will introduce an amendment in Committee to permit a similar transfer of responsibility to the Commission for Local Authority Accounts in Scotland. My right hon. and learned Friend has taken no decision on whether to transfer his responsibilities, but he wishes to remove the statutory bar to the Scottish body taking on that role. He will make a final decision in the light of his review of the current arrangements for NHS statutory audit in Scotland.

The hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) has already said that the Bill covers the legislation needed to implement the White Paper "Caring for People". Fortunately, we have a two-day Second Reading debate so that we can cover the NHS reforms and the future of care in the community. The policy aim of the Government is to give a better deal for people who need care in or near their own homes and a better deal for the relatives and friends who make considerable sacrifice to care for them. We announced our proposals first in the House and then in the

White Paper. The Bill builds on the existing powers of local authorities—they have many existing statutory powers—and gives them new supplementary powers.

The key policy changes mean that we shall move to a system where local authorities clearly have the overall role in community care. They will provide services based on a proper assessment of the needs of individuals. They will use that assessment to make a more suitable provision for services than has sometimes been made in the past when there was an undesirable bias towards social security support for patients in private nursing homes. That was done without first exploring the possibility of the provision of better services in or near the patient's home. We shall also require local authorities to produce community care plans and added powers will be given to my inspectorate to check on their performance.

I have largely concerned myself with the NHS. I believe that the Bill paves the way for fairly rapid progress towards big improvements to the NHS. Some critics say that the pace is too fast, and I do not know how long they will want to take debating the Bill in this House. The talk is always about the need for pilot schemes and experiments to test our proposals. So far, the critics who have advocated pilots to me do not appear to know what they mean. Some people have asked me why we do not try out part of the reforms in a certain area of the country, but, in my discussions with them, no sensible explanation has been produced as to exactly how such an experiment would be made. One cannot pilot any of the things we are proposing without the legislation to enable the health authorities to establish a network of agreements under the new arrangements that we contemplate.

There is plenty of experiment built into what we are doing. The ideas on the NHS trusts and GP fund holding will be developed by people inside the Health Service who have chosen to come forward to volunteer to work out the details with the Government. The whole process of reform will be based on working with people in the Health Service who want to see us make a success of our proposals. We shall learn from experience as we go along. I am sure that, at first, most parts of the country will use the contracts to put in place the existing pattern of care with which they are familiar. Once it is established what service is delivered with what resources, everyone will take advantage of the opportunity for choice offered by the new arrangements.

I trust that the debates in this House will enable us to reassure and appease the fears expressed by the professions. I hope that we explain to them that we shall learn from experience. Above all, we will be able to explain what we are doing for the patients. Patients are looking for shorter waiting times, a better appointments system and a much more personalised and friendly service. They want to know that everyone in the Health Service is striving for higher standards of care.

The critics of the reforms are trying to scare the life out of patients by suggesting that basic services will be lost. Those criticisms are not in the public interest. We are aiming for a better NHS for all, free for the patients regardless of need, financed out of taxation. We are looking for a great public service.

When we give the Bill a Second Reading, we shall give the NHS a new lease of life. We shall put it in good shape to provide an even better service in the next 40 years than it has provided for our people in the past 40 years.

5.28 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): For the avoidance of doubt, it may be helpful to the House if I say at this stage that the Opposition do not propose to table a reasoned amendment before Monday. We are fundamentally opposed to the principle of the Bill and shall vote against it on Second Reading. We believe that it will destroy the public sector ethos of the National Health Service, and that it is designed to do so. Should the House be so illadvised as to pass this measure, it will prove in the future as unworkable as it has already proved unpopular in the present.

The Secretary of State and I have frequently jousted over the past 18 months since he returned to his office at the Department of Health. This is only the second time that he has appeared at the Dispatch Box with legislation since his return. The last time that he appeared before the House with legislation was a year ago, when he appeared in order to defend the abolition of the free eye test. I hope that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will forgive me if I begin by reminding him of the terms in which he recommended that measure to the House. He told the House that he did not believe the optometrists when they warned that abolition would result in what he described as an eye charge of "anything up to £10". The right hon. and learned Gentleman went on to ask the House this question: even if there were a charge of anything up to £10 for an eye test, how many people would be deterred by it?

Earlier this week, fortunately, we had the latest return of the quarterly survey of the Association of Optometrists. It shows that the Secretary of State was right to advise the House that we should not believe that the charge for an eye test would be anything up to £10. In fact, the average has been between £11·50 and £12 per eye test.

We are able to see from that survey the answer to the question put by the Secretary of State when he recommended that legislation to the House and asked how many people would be deterred by it. On the present trends revealed by that survey for the first six months of this year, we are on course for 2·5 million fewer eye tests than in the year before. That is the result of the measure that the Secretary of State last recommended to the House. By commercialising the eye test, he has removed a public service and has seriously damaged a vital screening service. It is against that record that we must measure his promises on this Bill.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I promise that I will not intervene often, but the hon. Gentleman has specifically raised this point. He knows perfectly well that the figures which he uses reflect the inevitable fall in the number of eye tests. There was a terrific increase in the number of eye tests taken out before April last year. People have the test once every two years. Everyone in the profession will tell the hon. Gentleman that it is nonsense to suggest that the number will not return to normal in due course. If the hon. Gentleman wants to have a free eye test, I can refer him to an optician service on Walworth road which is only one of many offering such free eye tests.

Mr. Cook: I am glad that the Secretary of State gave me that opening. I have heard him make that point before. The facts, as confirmed by his Department in parliamentary answers to me, show that in 1988, in the period after the announcement that a charge would be introduced for eye tests, the number of eye tests increased

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by 400,000. That is less than the increase in 1987, before the announcement, when the number increased by 600,000. In 1988, the increase was less than the year before.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North) *rose*——

Mr. Cook: The Secretary of State chose to intervene and I think that he can claim precedence even over the hon. Member for Tayside, North.

The increase last year was 400,000, less than the average for the previous two years. Because of the introduction of the charges, there has been a reduction not of 400,000 but of 2·5 million. That dramatic drop plainly shows that many people now find that the eye test is priced beyond their reach, although their sight may be fading and an eye test may well reveal much more serious medical problems than the mere failing of their eyesight.

Mr. Bill Walker *rose*——

Mr. Cook: I shall not give way at this point.

It is against that record of the promises of the Secretary of State—that there would not be charges of anything up to £10 and that they would not deter people—and the record of what happened when he put the eye test on a commercial footing that we must measure his proposals in the Bill to put the whole NHS on a commercial footing. Once again, the Secretary of State is doing this on the basis that he does not believe the warnings of the professions that care for the patients. Once again, the House is being presented with a measure on the now familiar basis that this Secretary of State knows better than any of the people who care for the patients.

The Secretary of State had the temerity to refer to a changing atmosphere among professionals and hospitals towards his Bill. It took brass neck to make that claim the day after the case for a judicial review was won on an application by over 3,000 consultants—10 times the number of doctors that the right hon. and learned Gentleman has been able to recruit for his own entryist front to support the White Paper.

The Secretary of State is fond of claiming that 80 per cent. agree with the objectives of the Bill. At the beginning of his speech, he claimed that the whole House agreed with the Bill's general objectives. That is hardly surprising, given the bland nature of those objectives as frequently stated by the right hon. and learned Gentleman. Those objectives are to increase patient choice, devolve more decisions to local level and improve value for money.

The argument turns not on whether we all agree with those platitudes but on whether the Bill is any more likely to achieve any of them than it is to promote warmer winters. The Secretary of State uses the language of contract. As a barrister, he will know that the sensible thing to do with a contract is to study the fine print. I therefore warmly commend to the House the idea that it examine the fine print of the Bill to see whether it matches the rhetoric that we are promised by the Secretary of State.

Mr. Hayes: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: I am happy to get my weekly intervention from the hon. Gentleman over as quickly as possible.

Mr. Hayes: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I have listened closely to every speech that he has made on this subject. It is clearly time that he came clean and told the House whether he is committing his party to reject money travelling with the patients. For the first time, this will mean giving hospitals the financial incentive to treat more people. Is the hon. Gentleman committing his party to rejecting the idea of doctors and consultants finding out their basic unit costs so that they can treat more people more effectively? Is he going to commit his party to rejecting medical audit resource management? The hon. Gentleman should tell us the answers. We have a right to know, and so do the electorate.

Mr. Cook: I am sorry to disappoint the hon. Gentleman. There is nothing in the Bill about a medical audit. If he is thinking of voting for the Bill because he supports the idea of a medical audit, I would strongly recommend that the hon. Gentleman—I would warmly welcome his joining me in the Division Lobby—think again about where he will cast his vote. Of course we do not oppose the idea of money following the patient. The question is whether the Bill does anything to provide for money following the patient, rather than providing for a situation in which the patient follows the money and the contract. I shall explain that point when I reach that passage in my speech.

Let us begin with the patient. The Secretary of State has frequently said—as he said again this afternoon—that his Bill will increase patient choice. The phrase which was in vogue in January when the White Paper was unveiled was that it would "put the patient in the driving seat". There is not much for the patient in the Bill. I have had the Bill read from cover to cover, and we could find only one reference to the word "patient" in the Bill. It is found in clause 14 where, characteristically, the word "patient" arises solely as a basis on which the money to be paid to the doctors is counted.

How little choice will be given to patients by the Bill is graphically revealed by the fact that there is to be no consultation with the patients. In February, the Secretary of State made a speech in which he said that his proposal would encourage

"local pride in our hospitals"

and would give local people

"more ability to take the big decisions in their own part of the service."

What could be a bigger decision than whether one's local hospital goes into one of the NHS trusts and out of the local district health authority? Yet that big decision is to be taken without the by-your-leave of the patients of that hospital service. The person who takes it is the Secretary of State; clause 5 simply states:

"The Secretary of State may by order establish . . . NHS trusts."

I must draw the attention of the House to the fact that, ironically, schedule 2 stipulates that there must be consultation before such a trust is wound up. In other words, there will be more consultation before such a trust can opt back into the NHS than before it can opt out in the first place.

Any doubt about whether there will be greater choice for local people in what happens to their local service is removed by the advice on self-governing trusts that the Secretary of State has sent to health authorities:

"It would not be sensible to organise ballots of staff or any other groups with an interest."

This Bill does not extend choice to patients. The Secretary of State is terrified to offer them the choice, because he knows that they would give these plans the thumbs down. I had not intended to refer to this, but since the Secretary of State mentioned it, I shall. The ballot in Redditch was held in a borough in which 57 per cent. of the electorate voted—a commendable turnout for a local vote. It is not a Labour stronghold; it is represented by one of the right hon. and learned Gentleman's colleagues in Government. In a large turnout in an area that is not in our Labour heartland, 81 per cent. of those responding declared themselves not in favour of the Alexander hospital opting out.

It will not do to dismiss this result by saying that the wrong type of leaflets were given out. This type of result is known as democracy. It would be flagrantly undemocratic if, as well as ignoring the views of those who work in hospitals, the Secretary of State were now to ignore the choice of the patients they serve.

There is another collision between all the promises of choice and local decision-making. That collision is to be found in the composition of the new district health authorities which exclude anyone who might choose to do something different from what the Secretary of State wanted. Out go the representatives of local authorities, who are the only people in the health authorities who are elected by patients. Out go the representatives of the professions that treat the patients. Instead, everyone on every district health authority will be appointed by the regional health authority, and everyone on every regional health authority will be appointed by the Secretary of State.

Just in case someone with an independent mind slips through this process, out goes the tradition of voluntary services on health authorities. All the non-executive directors are to draw a salary, at a total cost of £10·5 million, which is more than the entire budget for all the community health councils in England and Wales to represent the views of patients.

The Secretary of State has not come up with a system in which health authorities will be staffed by people who are respected in their local communities, as he put it. He has come up with health authorities that will have no pretence of representing local choices or interpreting local preferences. He has come up with a board of management that will exist to implement central policy—exactly the sort of machinery of the clapped-out centralised state which is being dismantled all over eastern Europe.

I know that the Secretary of State will say that this is not the sort of choice he meant, that he meant more choice for individual patients. So let us look at what will happen to them. This brings me also to the point made by the hon. Member for Harlow. There will be less choice for individual patients: less choice over which hospital to go to, for instance. The patient will go where the district health authority has placed a contract. It is curious to claim that that means money following the patient. I invite the hon. Member for Harlow or any of his constituents, once this Bill is law, to turn up at any hospital of their choice at which the district health authority does not have a contract and to tell that hospital, "It is all right—the money will follow me afterwards." Anyone who did that would be lucky to get past the reception desk.

Mr. Hayes: The hon. Gentleman is not quite accurate; indeed, he is wholly inaccurate. He should look at the Department's guidance to district health authorities which, at this very moment, are exercising their right to speak to doctors on their referral practices.

The hon. Gentleman should be honest enough to tell the House that the referral practices of general practitioners will remain the same.

Mr. Cook: That is not so. Under this Bill, the GP will not have the opportunity to send his patients to hospitals at which the district health authority does not have a contract. Nowhere in the Bill is that right of the GP defended.

If the hon. Member for Harlow turns up at a hospital in these circumstances, he will be asked where the money is coming from, and that is a question that the House should ask in a more general context. I have, as the Secretary of State knows, just completed a survey of the financial state of health authorities. It showed that three our of four——

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): At House of Commons' expense.

Mr. Cook: I am delighted to tell the hon. Gentleman that two out of three general managers were content to reply to me, not to him. Three out of four of those responding reported that they were under-funded for present levels of service. All those three quarters are now taking emergency measures to avoid a deficit. Many of them are closing beds and freezing vacancies. Some of them are cancelling operating sessions and will no doubt feature in a future league table drawn up by the Secretary of State as people who are under-managing and under-performing.

In a rare passing moment, I shall seek some common ground with the Secretary of State. I agree that some of the variations in performance are not related to resources. Having looked at the figures, I agree that that is manifestly true, but as I have acknowledged that, I invite the right hon. and learned Gentleman to acknowledge that most of the frozen vacancies and cancelled operation sessions revealed in my survey are due to a shortage of resources. The financial pressures do not vary; the picture of financial pressure is the same in every region in Britain.

In the north, Newcastle district health authority reports under-funding by £2 million—a gap that it cannot fill without redundancies. In the midlands, Rugby reports that next year looks particularly grim. In the south, East Hertfordshire reports that the short-term outlook is extremely bleak. And Barnet district health authority, covering the constituency of the Prime Minister, reports that it is closing 10 paediatric beds and 14 gynaecological beds. That is the state of the Health Service after 10 years of her stewardship—*[Interruption.]* I am sure that the hon. Member for Harlow will return to the Chamber to intervene before I can finish.

There is a desperately worrying message for the hon. Member for Harlow, before he departs, and for all other Conservative Back Benchers in the results of my survey. I have been interrupted by enough Back Benchers in the past few months to know that every single one of them believes that it is his hospital that has a problem of success and a financial problem because it is treating more than its fair share of patients. They all believe that, when money follows the patient, the financial pressures will be magicked away.

I have never yet been interrupted by a Conservative Back Bencher anxious to tell me that the staff at his or her hospital are pretty useless and treat fewer than their fair share of patients, and that the sooner the Bill is passed the

[Mr. Cook]

better because then the money from the hospitals in their constituencies can be transferred to the over-performing hospitals in the constituencies of their neighbours. I can understand why they do not make that point. It is not that they do not relish the thought of the local paper holding its front page to capture their remarkable statements. It is because, as this survey shows, across Britain——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Statistics prove that we take in 29 per cent. from outside our district.

Mr. Cook: All Conservative Members share the hon. Lady's view—that is precisely my point. Everyone's hospital has the same desperate problem of trying to make ends meet, and most hospitals cannot do that without a deficit. Conservative Members deceive no one but themselves by believing that the under-funding of the hospitals that they represent will disappear under this monumental and monumentally irrelevant upheaval in the administration of the NHS.

The Secretary of State assures us that, if this upheaval does not produce more choice, it will at least result in value for money. He will apply the magic potion of competition, as a result of which we will apparently achieve more output for the same input. The right hon. and learned Gentleman has certainly mastered the language of competition. I read with fascination last night the circular that his Department has issued to health authorities on the pricing of contracts. *[Interruption.]* My hon. Friends elected me to carry out these distasteful tasks on their behalf.

The circular contains a section headed, "Competition and the invisible hand". Someone from the Adam Smith Institute obviously slipped into Richmond terrace by the back door. I shall quote two sentences from the section. The circular says:

"it may be desirable, to have a 'spot' market as well as a long-term market. It may also be desirable to cater for peak and off-peak demand by differential pricing."

Even more remarkable than reading through such circulars, I have waded through the submissions sent to the Secretary of State by hospitals that seek to be self-governing. I know that such language is also catching on with district general managers. Basildon and Thurrock say that they want to set up a self-governing hospital to prevent what they describe as "predatory hospitals" picking out their patients. The use of such language shows how quickly the new market discipline leads to the end of other hospitals being regarded as colleagues in the same service and the start of their being seen as competitors in the same market.

South Yorkshire set up a task force to advise on the change in management that was necessary to make self-governing hospitals work. One of the major injunctions that came back to the management of that hospital was the wonderful advice that, in order to maintain its market share, it should "keep changing the product lines."

Mr. Bill Walker: The hon. Gentleman declined to give way before. He is speaking about competition. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman is usually polite; the fact that he did not give way must mean that he was on a weak spot. He is aware that competition in Scotland resulted in extensive advertising for free eye tests. That has been going on for some time in Scotland.

Mr. Cook: Plainly, the hon. Gentleman had only one matter to raise in an intervention, and when he was allowed to make it it was the only point that he could raise. I am aware of the company that is advertising free eye tests and have had some correspondence with it. The company is Duncan and Todd. Before it issued the advertisements for free eye tests, it got in touch with me to seek my assurance that the next Labour Government would abolish the charges for eye tests, because only on that basis could it carry the two-year loss of providing free eye tests. That is the reality of the advertisements to which the hon. Gentleman refers.

Conservative Members are so besotted with the market that it is an article of faith with them that haggling in the marketplace is the best way to achieve efficiency, even in health care. I view with profound distaste the allocation of health care discussed in the patter of a salesman. I do not want a health service of spot markets, predatory hospitals and product lines. I want it run as a public service to meet the need for health care and not the need to cater for market demand.

Thousands of consultants and sisters and even district general managers will take the deepest offence at the Secretary of State's remark that no one has any motive to cut waiting lists. That remark betrays the fact that the Secretary of State does not understand what motivates professional commitment to a service to patients. Of course he meant that no one has any financial incentive to get rid of waiting lists. That confirms that Ministers are incapable of recognising any motivation that is not financial. I shall be happy to be disabused of that view if the Secretary of State can do so.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am used to the hon. Gentleman giving dark paraphrases of what he says I have said, and I am used to some of my critics outside leaping on to those paraphrases. I said that the present system gives no incentive to anybody to reduce waiting lists, and that is true. I described how the new system would give rewards and incentives in terms of resources for the unit if waiting lists were brought down. The hon. Gentleman is extracting curious phrases from the thousands of pages that he has read. As a would-be Secretary of State for Health, is he talking about the prospect of handling £28 billion of public money without any regard to elementary financial management and with a disdain for any system of matching resources to the work load?

Mr. Cook: The Secretary of State confirms exactly the interpretation that I put on his remarks. He sees only a financial incentive and does not recognise the clear motivation of the staff in the Health Service to tackle waiting lists. He is perfectly right to anticipate the next Labour Government; I am pleased to hear that from his own lips. He is concerned about what we will do. I assure him that I do not believe that spot markets are the best way to allocate £20 billion within the Health Service.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: No. I have given way twice to the Secretary of State, who must take precedence over the Back Benchers. The more he intervenes, the more difficult it is to give way to Back Benchers, much as I should like to give way to the hon. Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson).

We are being offered an eccentric market, in which there will be no consumers. It is not the patients who will strike the bargain about where they go and what is to be done to them. Health authorities will bargain with one or other, and the vast majority of those health authorities are already in deficit. They will not bargain about quality, because, as a result of the financial pressures on them, they will be obliged to go where care is cheapest.

There are some missing commitments in the Bill. It contains no commitment to ensuring that quality is reflected in the contract; nor is there a commitment to the core services that are promised to self-governing trusts. In the absence of legal protection for those core services, we know what will happen. We can predict now which services the hospitals are most likely to shed. They will be chemotherapy, renal dialysis, geriatric care and community psychiatry—all the specialties which require a long-term commitment to high expenditure, with a low expectation that the patient can be finally cured and taken off the books. We can predict what will happen, because those are precisely the procedures that the private sector will not touch because they cannot be delivered at a mark-up. Whether the end result of all this is value for money is a matter of taste.

I noted the candid evidence of Dr. Ken Grant, who is the district general manager of City and Hackney. He has been one of the star turns at the conferences trying to make sense of the White Paper for the last nine months. My hon. Friends will know about Dr. Grant. Last week, he made the candid statement that at the moment, when St. Bartholomew's accepts an emergency admission from another district, it has an incentive to keep down the costs because it will be left with the bill. He said that, under the new scheme, St. Bartholomew's would have the incentive to do as much as possible to that patient in order to generate income from the health authority that will pick up the bill.

That is a perfectly rational response to the market opportunity with which Dr. Grant has been presented, and it would be wrong to criticise him for it. As a manager, he had a predictable solution to the problem that he had identified: his solution was more managers to comb through the bills to make sure that they were not being rooked.

There is one stark consequence of the Bill, and that is more administrative staff to try to make it work. The memorandum to the Bill states that we shall require 3,800 additional staff. I thought that it was a piece of unusual impertinence by the Secretary of State to accuse Opposition Members of being in favour of bureaucracy. The additional bureaucracy will cost him £200 million. Whether that is desirable expenditure is, I suppose, a matter of taste. I find it an odd priority in a Bill that is supposed to be about value for money, when health authorities throughout Britain are freezing vacancies because they cannot afford to pay the nurses and doctors to fill them.

I cannot see that the nation has received value for money from the White Paper entitled "Community Care". It was published on the Thursday of one week and the clauses of the Bill that is now before us fell fully formed on the Wednesday of the following week. I know of the Government's perfunctory commitment to consultation, but I believe that this time they have set an all-time record. As the White Paper was published only as a collector's item, the Secretary of State might have been advised to spare the taxpayer the expense of footing the bill.

There is nothing in the Bill on community care to show that the Secretary of State has heard the criticism that broke out on the publication of the White Paper. I found it regrettable that, in a speech which lasted a full hour, the right hon. and learned Gentleman was able to find only one minute to discuss community care.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: My right hon. and learned Friend explained why.

Mr. Cook: The Secretary of State said that the Minister for Health will refer to community care when she replies to the debate late on Monday night. This is a two-day Second Reading debate, and the Secretary of State might legitimately be expected to set out the priorities for debate and the ground to be covered, and at least one of the priorities is the future of community care.

We find that even the rhetoric of competition parts company with sections of the Bill. There is no perfect competition to be found. Roy Griffiths proposed that there should be a level playing field for fair competition between the public and private sectors, and the Opposition are prepared to go snap on that. We are happy to accept the challenge of competing with the private sector at level weight. I believe that, without a partnership between public and private provision, we have no hope of meeting the explosion of need of the very elderly in the next 10 years.

Instead, the Bill offers us a rigged market. Perversely, someone retains his right to public benefits, income support and housing benefit only if he goes into a private residential home. If he goes into public residential care, he will have no right to public benefits. It would be difficult to produce a more flagrant example of unfair competition.

What happened to choice? Why should those who go into residential care not have a free and fair choice whether they go into public or private care? The purpose of the rigged market is clear: it is intended to reduce available choice by obliging local authorities to privatise their homes so that they may qualify for subsidy from public benefits. It is not only local authorities that are worried. The Spastics Society stated:

> "We are deeply concerned about any assumptions that the public provision of care for disabled people can be in the main shifted to the private and not for profit sector without devastating consequences for disabled people."

What about the choice of those who live in residential care homes that are provided by local authorities? Should not they be able to choose whether their home stays in the public sector or is sold to the private sector? There is no such right in the Bill. The Government are fond of talking about individual choice, but they have produced a Bill that is curiously silent on the rights of the user of the service. Not once in the Bill is the user of community care services mentioned. Nor are carers mentioned.

The National Carers Association responded to the White Paper on care by saying:

> "The White Paper contains all the right rhetoric about helping carers, yet in spite of a 106 page document the practical reality of how this will happen is still unclear."

It is even more unclear after the printing of the Bill. The Bill does not once mention carers, does not give them one new right, does not place on local authorities one new duty in respect of care, and does not place upon them an

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obligation to assess the needs of carers, or even to consult carers about the community care services that they provide.

In the clauses on community care, we find the widest chasm between the promise of local decision making and the reality of central control. This is not a Bill that gives power to local authorities. Instead, the Bill gives all the powers to the Secretary of State. I have been through the Bill and I have counted the number of times that the Secretary of State is mentioned; the total is 127 times. That does not include the references to the Secretary of State for Scotland. The Secretary of State for Health is the one who will make the regulations. It is he who will lay orders and give directions.

I understand that it is fashionable to describe this arrangement as enabling legislation. That is a misuse of our language. This is not an enabling Bill. It is a Bill for arbitrary government by whomever happens to be Secretary of State at the time. We know who the present Secretary of State is. I have no doubt that in his own way he is lovable. We have certainly grown to know his face. He has been in his present post since July 1988, and the Bill will not become law until April 1991. That is a long time for anyone in this Government to hold office. We all know that by April 1991, the Secretary of State will want to be at Victoria street, Marsham street or the Paris embassy at rue du Faubourg St. Honoré. He wants to be anywhere but on the bed of nails at Richmond terrace.

What if, in April 1991, the Secretary of State for Health is the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley)? What use would he make of the powers that he would then hold? What powers will he inherit? Clause 44 sets out the Secretary of State's duties in respect of community care:

> "every local authority shall exercise their social service functions in accordance with such directions as may be given to them under this section by the Secretary of State."

That is all we are told. We are not given any guidance on what the directions might be.

I must be fair and candid to the House and say that there is a limitation of the directions. There is one qualification of what the direction must be. Clause 44 (2)(a) states that the directions

> "shall be given in writing".

That is the sole restriction on what direction the Secretary of State may give to local authorities in their use of community care powers. Even Erich Honecker would not have imagined that he could give directions that were not in writing. Clause 44 gives whomever is the Secretary of State the power to use directions without even the process of scrutiny of parliamentary approval, in so far as I can describe the rubber stamps on the Benches behind the Secretary of State as a process of scrutiny.

We are talking of directions to health authorities that have not been appointed by the Secretary of State. I ask my hon. Friends to mark this well: they are directions to local authorities elected by local people and accountable to local people. That brings us to the greatest reason of all for suspecting that rhetoric is running ahead of reality in the Bill.

The Government and the Bill are loading local authorities with responsibilities without disclosing what they will do to increase resources for local authorities. Here is another major departure from the Griffiths report. There is no ring-fenced grant for community care for local authorities. Any money that is provided for community care will disappear in revenue support grant.

There are two critical problems, the first of which has been mentioned by the president of the Association of Directors of Social Services, John Rea Price. He asked, "What will happen to my authority?". His authority is Islington, which receives no revenue support grant. In other words, there is no grant for the money to disappear into. There are not many such authorities in Britain, but they are almost all inner-city areas with massive social problems. Their populations all need community care. It would be ludicrous if they were to have the liabilities under the Bill but, thanks to the funding arrangements, not a penny in grant to meet them.

The second problem is that already the revenue support grant bears no relation to the revenue that it is supposed to support. One Conservative Member referred to overspending authorities as Labour authorities. I must tell him that nine of the 11 authorities in England and Wales are overspending under the official definition, whether Labour or Conservative. In those circumstances, any additional money provided through the revenue support grant will be barely noticeable against the growing gap between the grant received and the services that authorities are supposed to maintain.

We know that the Secretary of State knows that. We know that he understands full well just how stretched on the rack those local authorities are. We know that he understands how difficult it will be for them to shape up to the new responsibilities without new resources. We know all that because the obligation in the Bill is limited to an obligation to assess people for the community care service; it is not an obligation to deliver that service once there has been an assessment. As the National Council for Voluntary Organisations observed:

> "Assessment without action, or a place on a waiting list is of little value to someone in need of care and support."

We also know what will happen when those waiting lists for community care services develop. From the Secretary of State's past performance, we can predict that the moment that those waiting lists of people who have been assessed but for whom there are no resources available appear, the Secretary of State will put the blame on poor management by directors of social services.

I shall conclude by trying to seek the common ground, desperate though that search is. On one point I will commend the Secretary of State; on one point I will pay tribute to him in recognition of what he has done this day. The Bill that he has presented to the House is, without question, the most fundamental change to the National Health Service in its 40 years. The Bill will change a public service into a business enterprise, in which the motivation will no longer be which treatment is most needed by the patient, but which treatment yields the highest mark-up for the hospital. It will change an integrated service of primary care, hospital care and community service into a fragmented service in which the new relationship between the divided units no longer will be co-operation with one another but competition against one another. It will change a service in which the objective is to give the patients the treatment they need at the hospitals of their choice into one in which they get the treatment for which their health authority has taken out a contract or which their general practitioners can afford at the hospitals that offer it most cheaply.

I do not deny that the Secretary of State has the power to do these things. I am confident that the Whips will deliver a majority on Monday evening and give him a Bill that gives him even more power. However, I deny that he has the mandate to use those powers for a Bill so unpopular that its passage through this House will be as much an affront to democracy as a threat to the NHS.

The Secretary of State tonight spoke for the Conservative party; he did not speak for a Government who represent the people of this country. In this debate, it is the Opposition who speak for the people outside. At the end of the debate, we will vote the way they would vote if they were admitted to this Chamber—we will vote to throw out this prescription for a commercialised Health Service.

6.14 pm

Sir George Young (Ealing, Acton): Listening to the phrases used by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State to describe the reforms in the Bill, I thought that they seemed familiar—promoting competition and choice; making the system more responsive to the consumer and less dominated by producer interests; pushing decision-making down the management tier; and promoting efficiency. In fact, those were the phrases used in the Education Reform Act.

The parallels between reforms in this Bill and those in the Education Reform Act are striking, and hon. Members on both sides of the House could learn much by considering them in tandem. For example, the proposals for grant-maintained schools are replicated by those for self-governing hospitals, giving a measure of independence and local autonomy within the state-funded sector. Those for local management of schools are replicated by those for general practitioners to become fund holders, allocating resources as closely as possible to the point of consumption. The proposals for open enrolment and funds following the pupil are paralleled by those that facilitate switching one's GP and greater reliance on capitation, so rewarding popular provision and making the system more responsive to the consumer. National curriculum and assessment are paralleled by the proposals for medical audit to try to measure output and value for money, to raise standards and to determine where improvements might be made.

The philosophy behind the Bill is not new; it is wholly consistent with a similar reform to another part of the welfare state, with high political stakes, that touches most of our lives. I draw much comfort from that parallel, and also the opportunity to learn some lessons. I remember when the education reforms were launched, before the last election. I do not doubt that, initially, they were a political minus. They were not popular on the doorstep. At that time we were told that it was wrong to apply the sort of concepts that I have described to state education. There was dismay at the violent reaction from the producer interests—principally the National Union of Teachers. There was a confused response from the Government to some fairly basic questions, giving the impression that the proposals had not been thought through.

Two years ago, Conservative Members spent a great deal of time explaining what was going on to school governors, parent-teacher associations and parents. Much of the time was spent fighting fiction and we also had to listen to the Opposition making the same sort of speeches as the one that we have just heard from the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook). I do not expect Opposition Members to agree, but I believe that those educational reforms are now a political plus. There are still difficulties, to which I shall refer in a moment and from which we must learn, but the debate matured, the argument developed and it was won.

The new language, the new ideas, have taken root. Concepts that were derided three years ago are now quite popular. I speak not as a Conservative Member of Parliament but as a parent and school governor in saying that concepts such as national curriculum and assessment, local management of schools, open enrolment and grant-maintained schools are popular and accepted.

The conclusion that I draw from that parallel, which is relevant to today's debate, is that people do not rule out radical change to the welfare state, provided that the basic principles are left untouched—free at the point of use, available to all, funded out of progressive taxation. Indeed, there is much evidence that there is an appetite for change once it has been properly explained, and a warm welcome for it when it is implemented.

Mr. Matthew Taylor *rose*——

Sir George Young: I am prepared to give way only once, in an attempt to reduce the average length of speeches.

Mr. Taylor: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for making me his No. 1 choice. The hon. Gentleman has drawn a number of parallels between this Bill and the Education Reform Act. He suggested that, provided it was set out within the right framework, radical reform was acceptable. One of the differences between opting out of schools and the proposals for hospital trusts is that there is no intention to provide any process of consultation with the users in the way that there is with parents in schools. How does the hon. Gentleman feel about that?

Sir George Young: The users of a school are relatively easy to define, but the users of a hospital are not. That is an easy point with which to deal. I have now provided the one opportunity for Opposition Members to intervene.

There are lessons to be learned from the debate. First, changes must be adequately resourced. Secondly, the time scale needs to be realistic. Thirdly—and crucially—high staff morale is essential if the benefits are to be secured. In the same way that we cannot achieve our educational objectives without teachers, so we cannot achieve our health objectives without the enthusiastic commitment of NHS doctors and staff.

It is all very well Conservative Members of Parliament declaring themselves content with the philosophy of the Bill, but what will happen on the ground to convince the voters that we are right? I shall look briefly at the impact of our reforms at primary care level and assess the medical and public response. I choose primary care for a number of reasons. First, the units—basically, general practitioner practices—are far smaller than the other units in the NHS —basically, hospitals. Therefore, it is easier for them to respond than it is for an organisation that is, inevitably, more bureaucratic. Secondly, the units are run by independent contractors and are more likely to display an entrepreneurial flair. Thirdly, what happens in a GP practice is loosely defined. In my view, general practice is what is done by general practitioners. Therefore, it is easier

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for them to respond pragmatically to changing consumer demand and raised expectations than it is for other parts of the NHS, where contracts may be more rigidly defined.

Politically, what happens at GP level is crucial, because for most of us this is the only experience of the NHS. Every year, two thirds of us visit a GP, and the average constituent goes to the GP four times a year. Nine tenths of consultations go no further than the GP practice, so it is here rather than at hospital level that we shall be judged. The hon. Member for Livingston was a little misguided in spending nearly all his time on the hospital service and saying almost nothing about the GP service.

The combination of advertising, leading to raised expectations the changed capitation arrangements and the facilitation of switching will have the most dramatic effect on primary care that the NHS has ever seen. I speak as someone who represents an urban seat, with many practices within the reach of most constituents. I recognise that the position will be different in the rural areas. In a nutshell, what will happen is that market forces will work. There will be competition and choice, and this will push up standards.

For example, it may become known at one medical centre there is a creche where parents can park their children while they have a consultation—if not every day then perhaps on some days. The word will get around that that practice offers that service. Another practice may be offering minor operations at the centre, dealing on the spot with cysts, verrucas and warts. Others may have negotiated special deals with local keep-fit centres and health clubs, perhaps with discounts for their patients. Others will have clinics for those with particular needs such as arthritis and diabetes, or slimming groups. We could see more chiropody and counselling at GP level. A variety of services will be developed, making it less necessary to visit hospitals.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Will the my hon. Friend give way?

Sir George Young: I shall give way to my hon. Friend when I have finished this point, but that will be the last time that I shall give way.

It is not unthinkable that, in some of the larger practices, they will take X-rays, saving patients the bother of going to hospital. After all, that has now become routine at the dentist. There may be other services that no one practice can provide on its own, but that collectively, a number of practices can provide to improve the quality of care. There will be enormous pressure to improve premises, to the benefit of the patient, and to improve what one might call customer relations, such as more helpful receptionists and less queueing.

Mr. Winterton: My hon. Friend is implying that these facilities and activities are not already provided by the large majority of practices. Will he comment on that, and also on the fact that the guru who advised the Government on the changes, Professor Alain Enthoven, has expressed deep concern that fund-holding practices cannot properly or even effectively operate on a practice of only 11,000 patients?

Sir George Young: The very next sentence in my notes says that some of this exists already. However, what does not exist is the pressure to improve. There is little awareness of what is available in the more progressive practices. Expectations of what one should get from a GP are low. The Bill's provisions will result in more choice, more competition, more variety and an incentive to improve that does not exist at the moment. Some GPs will decide that this is not for them, but others will seize the opportunities available and dramatically improve services.

In two years' time, as we approach the election, people will be confronted by different rhetoric from the two sides of the House. We shall be talking in terms of billions of pounds spent—something that people seem reluctant to believe, and have difficulty in understanding. The Opposition will be full of their usual doom and gloom. I shall ask my constituents to judge for themselves, by their own experience of what has happened.

For that to be a successful test, we must learn from education. We need to examine resources, timing and morale. On resources, as we move over from a system where the producer is king to one where the consumer is king, there will be even more pressure for more resources. If the money is to follow the patient, the patient must have a full wallet. Otherwise, the patients will become impatient. The new system will quickly identify where supply is failing to meet demand. For our philosophy to succeed, there must be adequate funds.

What terrifies most of the GPs to whom I have spoken is timing. They are not all hostile to the concepts in the Bill, but the data that they need to give to the family practitioner committee and the district health authority are not data that they have at the moment. Nor do they have the information technology to identify, that data. I ask the Government to look again at some of the time scales to see whether we are not trying to do too much too quickly.

The third factor is morale. To achieve the higher standards of health care that we all want to see, we need an NHS in which the staff feel appreciated and are well motivated. We must do even more to win over their hearts and minds and show all of them that what they do commands our respect and appreciation. At the end of the day, they deliver health care, not us

In the time available, I have not touched on much of the Bill, and in particular have not mentioned community care. However, I hope that I have said enough to show that I have faith in the reforms and that I look forward with confidence to their introduction.

6.26 pm

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): The hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) has already referred to the crucial aspect of the debate—the feeling of those who will have to operate the service. Before talking about that, I shall make two brief personal references. I am the only Member who was here in 1948, when the original Bill went through the House. Even more appositely, I have recent experience of the NHS. I had two operations done at once. When I went to another consultant in the same hospital, rather boasting about this achievement and thinking that I had got it purely on medical advice, the consultant who was dealing with a different part of my anatomy said, "At any rate, that will have saved the NHS some money." I am glad that I have done so, as I am interested in how much money the service gets.

I thought that the Secretary of State would have come here with a little humility after all these weeks and months of debate. I thought that he would have listened a little to what has been said by people outside this place. I was staggered when he quoted only one sentence from the document presented to the Government a week ago by the bodies representing all the people who work in the NHS. They include not only the unions, whom the right hon. and learned Gentleman is so eager to deride at every opportunity, but the nurses, all the royal colleges and the British Medical Association. They all joined to make representations to the Government at the last moment, to try to put their case. The Secretary of State merely picked out one sentence, trying to suggest to those Tory Members who might be innocent enough to believe it that there had been some change in the attitude of those who will have to put into operation the proposals that the Government are seeking to force on them. There has been no change in the attitude of all those bodies, and that is not just due to propaganda.

I hope that everyone working in the NHS will listen to, or read, the speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook). I am sure that they will have great respect for what he has done, and the way he has put his case, ever since these proposals were introduced. He was never better than he was today. To surpass even his own previous performances took some doing, but he did it and he tore the Government's case to tatters.

Why do the Government not stop for a few minutes —the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) had enough diffidence to do so—to ask themselves why their policies are so unpopular, why their proposals do not command any real support among the vast majority of people who know about the service, be they the doctors, the nurses, the patients or anyone else involved in the service? Why have the Government been unable to persuade them? Do they not have the humility to wonder whether there might just be some defect in their proposals which has led to that extraordinary situation?

The Secretary of State was appointed to his job as the greatest of the communicators, but he must be the most misunderstood man of the century. Apparently, nobody knows what he has been saying. He has had plenty of opportunity and has spent huge sums of taxpayers' money to speak at the top of his voice, but still he is not believed.

When I was in hospital the other day I did my best to defend the right hon. and learned Gentleman; to see what his good qualities might be. I was asked whether I thought that he was all bad. I stopped for a moment and I did my best to think, as I am thinking now, what I could say in his favour. The best thing that I could think of is the fact that he is a supporter of Nottingham Forest, but if my friend Brian Clough managed Nottingham Forest in the way the Secretary of State has managed the NHS he would be reapplying for readmission to the fourth division.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman should have learned from his follies and mistakes. Right at the beginning he made an appalling mess of the nurses' regrading, which was carried out so inefficiently and insensitively that there are still many scars. As the right hon. and learned Gentleman said, huge sums of money were spent on the regrading process, yet far from in any way improving the atmosphere in the service, it has done the exact opposite. I checked last week, and even today in Wales, and no doubt in many other parts of the country, great soreness remains among vast numbers of nurses about the way in which the regrading was done and the way in which they were misused and misled. That is still creating grievance in the service.

One would have thought that the right hon. and learned Gentleman would think about that and consider some other way of going about his reforms, especially since the source of all the suspicion in Britain is the way in which the plans were originally devised.

When Aneurin Bevan set up the Health Service, he said that a way would be needed to inquire into the service every five or 10 years to see what improvements could be made and whether it could be enlarged, using the experiences that had gone before. He put forward such an argument on every Bill that he introduced. Of course he wanted to see such a process in the NHS. It was never dreamed then that the NHS would be kept on exactly the same lines as it was when it was first introduced.

The Labour party has never been against making changes in the NHS to make it greater, and I am sure that the next Labour Government will do exactly that. But the present Secretary of State and the Government began in the worst possible way, and that was the origin of the deep and justified suspicion about all their proposals—whether for general practice, for the NHS or for community care, on which the Government have consulted a bit more but not much more.

The Government did not consult at all. A committee presided over by the Prime Minister was charged to try to produce some proposals for the NHS which would satisfy the Prime Minister—the very worst way of going about it. The Secretary of State was not even on the committee. He chose to take on the job when the Prime Minister was showing greatest omniscience or omnipotence—whatever one likes to call it—when she thought that the Government had absolute power to do whatever they wanted. The Secretary of State is a clever fellow, but his ambition got the better of his political intelligence at that time. He took the job and now he is landed in it. Every time he gets up to speak he is even more unconvincing, and he has never been more unconvincing than he has been today.

Mr. David Nicholson: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way. It is always difficult to find a full stop in his remarks.

Will the right hon. Gentleman say whether it is still Labour policy to abolish competitive tendering in the NHS and whether the Labour party will continue the vendetta against private practice that the Government of which he was a member carried on? If so, how will that help the NHS?

Mr. Foot: There was no vendetta against private practice. The Labour Government carried out the measures that they said that they would carry out and introduced many measures for enlarging and protecting the NHS and some of its essential principles. I shall come in a moment to what should figure most prominently in a new Labour Government's plans for the NHS.

It is the origin of the Government's proposals that poisoned them right from the beginning. That is the reason for the strength of opinion throughout the country. The right hon. and learned Gentleman should have understood that. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? No one could get good reform for the NHS out of a committee presided over by the Prime Minister, who was

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eager to discover some means—she did not want to use the word "privatise"—to twist the Health Service into something different. The Prime Minister has no need to worry when such charges are made against her. She is supposed to be a great conviction politician. Presumably, one of her convictions is that Socialism is wrong.

Yet Socialism was embedded and entrenched in the NHS from the very first. The right hon. Lady says that she will kill Socialism in Britain, but she cannot do that without killing the NHS. To make a frontal attack would be too damaging, so the Government have carried their intentions through in a surreptitious way, which my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) has exposed. But they will not succeed because they have not been able to carry any significant section of opinion with them. One of the principal reasons for the change in mood throughout the country, and one of the principal reasons for the Government's coming defeat, is what the Prime Minister has tried to do to the NHS. Most Conservative Members know the truth of that.

The question is how much damage the Government will be allowed to do in the meantime. Anyone who accuses the Labour party of using the arguments about the NHS for partisan purposes, should recall the offer made by my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston on behalf of the Labour party in May, before the Bill was introduced. From the point of view of political advantage, it was not an easy proposal, but from the point of view of protecting the Health Service, which we want to build up in a proper way when we get the chance, it was a good proposal.

My hon. Friend suggested that we should not go ahead with the Bill but should let the electorate decide what kind of Health Service they want. They did not have a chance to do that at the last general election because the Government's proposals were not before them. My hon. Friend suggested in May that the electorate should be allowed to decide at the next election. We shall indeed decide then, of course, but shall we be allowed to decide before all the changes and convulsions in the NHS are introduced, with all the damage that could be done? That would be much fairer. If the Government had any desire to protect the NHS they would have accepted that proposal. As I said, it would not necessarily be to the Labour party's political advantage, but it would have meant that the British people would have the fair choice of deciding whether they wanted the Labour party's proposals or the Government's proposals. If the Government had had any faith in their proposals, they would have accepted that proposition then.

It is quite improper for anyone to suggest that the Labour party has used the great argument about the National Health Service for its own partisan purposes. We have been eager to protect the NHS and its future, because we believe that the service is the greatest domestic achievement of any Labour Government in modern times and we want to ensure that we have a chance to build it up properly. I am sure that my hon. Friend will be there to do that.

We shall want—among other things—to carry forward some of the reforms that were initiated in 1948. No one claimed then that the NHS had been founded on a democratic basis—indeed, the co-operation of doctors and other staff would never have been secured if that had been the case—and a national scheme had to be devised to take over many local government operations. Nevertheless, Aneurin Bevan and the others who introduced the scheme always argued that a much firmer democratic basis must be re-established in the NHS.

Mr. David Nicholson: More power for the trade unions.

Mr. Foot: Certainly it was thought that the new democratic system should be partly union based, in that those who worked in the service should have their say; more important, however, it was felt that it should have a basis in local government. The Prime Minister and the Government hate local government almost as much as they seem to hate the trade unions, but they have been logically forced to return to it by the sheer need to do something about community care. Their scheme is still half-baked; it is time for them to discuss it much more openly with local authorities, and to give those authorities the chance to make a full contribution that they never gave to those who work in the Health Service.

The National Health Service is one of the main issues on which the next election will be fought. I have no doubt that the country will make up its mind that it needs the Opposition's proposals for the protection of the existing service, and for its future. I congratulate my hon. Friend and his colleagues on the steadfastness with which they have put the case for the whole country, and on their refusal to be led astray by any of the diversions prepared by Conservative Members. They have made a great contribution to the welfare of the whole country.

6.43 pm

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): I shall not follow the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), except to say that it is clear from his speech that even an old Socialist will become inherently conservative as he grows older. The right hon. Gentleman's vision of 1945 is so perfect that, 40 years later, he believes that it cannot be improved upon; yet he knows that he was part of a Government who reduced expenditure on the same National Health Service that he is now lauding to the House. He also knows that it is Government's responsibility to manage the affairs of this country as they think best at any given moment, and to accept the economic circumstances in which such services can be provided.

I do not criticise my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State or the Government in any way for taking on themselves the task of looking at the NHS 40 years after its inception, or for asking whether its structures are as perfect as the right hon. Gentleman would have us believe or whether they can be greatly improved—not only to make the service better for those who work in it, not only to maximise its assets, but, most important of all, to ensure that the patients who are its customers benefit from the best treatment available.

Having said that, I must also say with some regret that the Bill, in my view, has missed a golden opportunity. Both the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) and my right hon. and learned Friend talked about patients, but the Bill makes no reference to their rights; I wish that it did.

The Health Service, as we all know, is available free at the point of use. It is about making people better—as many as we can, as often as we can and as effectively as we can, both economically and clinically. When, as sometimes happens, it fails to offers the service that we can reasonably expect, we are right to ask for explanations and apologies —and, I believe, for compensation for medical accidents without recourse to law. We, the patients, have entrusted ourselves body and soul to the medical staff to be made well: they have a duty to tell us what went wrong, and to compensate us if they have made a mistake.

I know that that is contentious, but I do not believe that we can continue much longer with the present compensation scheme, in which negligence is the sole reason for an offer of compensation. I am sorry that the Bill has done nothing to redress what I believe to be wrong, or to establish patients' rights more firmly—as firmly as they were spelt out in the patients' charter, that I drew up with the Association of Community Health Councils for England and Wales and presented to the then Secretary of State at the beginning of 1987.

Because of my views on the need for the service to meet patients' requirements, I strongly support the concept of medical audit. That concept is inherent in the White Paper, whose intention was to raise standards generally. The Bill provides for the involvement of the Audit Commission, which will bring about a similar effect in a different way.

Audit can be clinical or managerial: it can be assessment of medical practice, or a check on how resources are being used. Either way, it measures performance, and that has been one of the shortcomings of the service hitherto. The structure that we intend to use for clinical audit, involving the royal colleges, will require many man hours of consultants' time if it is to be effective, and will thus be a costly exercise. Extra resources will be needed if it is to be done properly, and it must be done properly if it is to be of real value.

If we have audits, what sanctions will go with them? Will their findings receive a public airing, or will they be confidential? Will access to the findings of a clinical audit be restricted to the doctors involved? Can a health authority be censured for poor performance, and required to do something about it? That is what patients will want to know—or, at any rate, what their representatives on the community health councils will want to know.

Perhaps, at long last, medical audit will provide some yardsticks for clinical competence. If it achieves its aim in making a contemporary assessment of a doctor's ability, it may shed light on whether—as a result of the speed with which medicine is progressing—retraining should be part of the work experience of doctors.

Ever since the Secretary of State gave me an assurance earlier this year that no chronically sick person would ever go without the drugs that he or she required from a GP, I have found it difficult to be convinced by those who have spread scare stories suggesting that the effects of indicative drug budgets would be detrimental to patients.

The national drugs bill is huge, but I do not doubt that most of it is wisely spent. However, we all know of doctors who prescribe six months' supplies of drugs, such as sleeping tablets, without ever considering whether the drugs are really needed or whether another course of treatment might be better for the patient. We know that 27 million tranquillisers are given out anually and that some doctors prescribe without a thought as to the price of the drug, or whether there is a cheaper generic substitute.

We all know that antibiotics given to cure an illness are thrown away before they are fully used up, simply because we are feeling better and have no further need of them. Patients seldom stop to think that they are throwing away public money. I do not think that it is unreasonable to ask the medical profession to have a care about what they prescribe; it is being paid for out of public money. That should not inhibit their clinical judgment, and from what my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has said, it clearly will not do so. However, it should make them more conscious of value for money. That point will not be lost on the drugs industry, efficient though it is.

I was grateful for the Secretary of State's answer to my question about hospital drug budgets. However, wonder drugs do not always receive the financing that they require. I personally am able to talk about a drug called erythropoetin, which is given to kidney patients who are receiving dialysis treatment. I am such a patient, and I can assure my right hon. and learned Friend that it is a wonder drug for kidney patients. It overcomes acute anaemia, it returns their haemoglobin to a normal level and it gives them back the energy that they lost when their kidneys failed. However, the hospital that is looking after me is funded for only half the number of kidney patients that could benefit from that drug.

I hope that the Department will examine again the possibility of finding sufficient money to fund a new drug when it comes on the market. It can, as in the case of erythropoetin, completely change someone's physical characteristics for the better. It is not good enough simply to say that the amount of money that can go into a hospital's drug budget is restricted and that the hospital must decide how to spend it. If we want to make progress with drugs research, we must provide the finance to make the wonder drugs available to the largest possible number of people.

I am concerned about an apparent overspend in West Berkshire health authority's drug budget during the first part of this year on acute cases. Taken together with other projected overspends, the authority will have to make reductions if it is to stay within its overall budget. Certain expenditure savings are possible without affecting patient care. However, in a letter to me, the chairman of the authority said:

> "To a great extent the severity of the forthcoming winter will control the success of this exercise. Inevitably there will, in any event, be a reduction in elective surgery."

That suggests to me that the two general hospitals in Reading are working within too narrow financial restraints. Some of the £33 million that, it was recently announced, will be used to help to reduce waiting lists may come our way. The abolition of the Resource Allocation Working Group formula, which has kept the Oxford region under-funded for so long, will improve our cash flow.

Perhaps we shall not have a severe winter, or an epidemic, but there are inescapable grounds for concern in the case of all of us who may need to use those hospitals this winter. I wonder why, year after year, we never seem to get the funding quite right. After April 1991, with the introduction of contracts between health authorities and hospitals, under which the health authority purchases health care from a hospital, that position will change. The audit may show up management shortcomings and even places where either savings can be made or resources generated.

We shall always want to use our district hospitals whenever possible because of the benefit of local access and family support, but the Bill will result in health authorities having a new discretionary power to buy

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services that cannot be provided locally at an economical price and to use the hospital facilities of other district health authorities to meet the needs of patients living on their periphery, if that is more convenient for the patient. By the same token, district health authorities may well see the advantages in encouraging local hospitals to specialise and so attract external contracts.

To revert to kidney patients. I think that it is possible that, as a result of the Bill and of the fact that the money will go with the patient, district health authorities which are currently sending their kidney patients for dialysis to hospitals that are often a very long way away from where they live, will treat those patients in the local hospital. They will set up small dialysis units, because they will have more money with which to create them. That is a positive example of the benefits that the Bill will provide for a particular group of patients whose needs are not met under the existing structure.

That is an example of one group of patients about whom I know quite a lot. Perhaps I ought to have declared an interest and said that I am the president of the National Federation of Kidney Patients Associations. The money will go with the patient and the district health authority will have sufficient finance to set up dialysis units, of whatever size is needed, for its own patients.

The introduction of block contracts will result in new financial incentives for the Health Service. It should create healthy competition and an effective internal market, in which hospitals will consider what they can do best to maximise their assets. There will be performance audits to improve clinical care and quality of service. Practice budgets will give groups of doctors a new freedom to get the best for their patients. Some self-governing hospitals will be able to take responsibility for their budgets and for the way in which they manage their facilities and set out their stall.

The reforms will take time to shake down and to work effectively and efficiently. No doubt changes will be made as we learn from experience. That is how it is with all reforms. I end, however, as I started, by reminding the House that the changes brought about by the Bill will be a success only when patients say that they are successful. They are the customers of the health care provisions that we make. They will decide whether, after 40 years, we have crafted a National Health Service that, to quote the Prime Minister, is so good no one will want to go privately. I believe that the Bill is an important step in that direction. I wish it well.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. It might be sensible if I were to remind the House that Mr. Speaker has decided that the 10-minute limit on the length of speeches should apply between 7 and 9 o'clock.

6.57 pm

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): No hon. Member doubts what has been said by the hon. Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson) about his personal experiences, or the sincerity with which he speaks. It is always a pleasure to hear him speak in Health Service debates.

The hon. Gentleman legitimately criticised certain aspects of the Bill. I agree with him. Not the least of those criticisms is the fact that patient rights are given little prominence. The Secretary of State said little about those rights today. However, I do not share the hon. Gentleman's optimism about other aspects of the Bill. It can be understood only in the context of Conservative party thinking on the subject. During the last decade, the Government have come to believe that they know the price of everything. The Bill is the apotheosis of that process. However, they have revealed that they know the value of nothing. Nowhere is that more clearly demonstrated than in their proposals for the National Health Service.

Throughout the last decade, the Government have been singularly unsuccessful in persuading the British public, in the Prime Minister's famous phrase, that the Health Service is safe in the Government's hands. Opinion poll after opinion poll throughout that period has demonstrated that they have not persuaded the British public to that view. Personal experience at community level has underscored that point. People have seen the distance widen between the rhetoric of Ministers at the Dispatch Box and on national platforms and the reality of what is happening to the NHS. They have witnessed forced cuts, ward closures and a general decline in morale among so many of the professionals within the NHS.

Perhaps it reached its most farcical climax under the present Secretary of State during the difficulties and the controversy, referred to by the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), which surrounded the nursing profession in the summer of 1988. The Secretary of State disappeared out of the country and the service appeared to be rudderless. More time and money seemed to be spent by the press trying to track down the Secretary of State abroad than the police devoted to trying to locate Lord Lucan. The difference between Lord Lucan and the Secretary of State is that Lord Lucan got away with murder before he left the country, whereas the Secretary of State has been trying to get away with ministerial murder since he returned from that summer sojourn.

The proposals were made by the Prime Minister and handed to the right hon. and learned Gentleman by his hapless predecessor. This is a fundamentally bad Bill for Britain.

It is worth taking the Government at face value and considering the thrust of their approach. Their White Papers are called "Working for Patients" and "Caring for People". I echo the words of the hon. Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson) and ask to what extent the Bill enhances, strengthens and extends patients' rights within the Health Service. The conclusion has to be, emphatically, that it does not.

Hospital trusts, budgets and contracts and the language used by the Secretary of State in his opening speech are all designed to enhance competition through the diversion of financial resources, rather than through the extension of consumer choice.

I shall give two examples. The first is hospital trusts. Several of my hon. Friends have challenged the Secretary of State during the debate to say why, if patients are to be of paramount importance, there is no inbuilt mechanism for them to be consulted about the future of a hospital, when it makes a fundamental decision about opting out of the Health Service—or, if the Government do not like that expression, deciding on hospital trust status.

Secondly, when we consider the new three-year contracts to be held by health authorities and GPs for care at a hospital which has put in a bid for a particular type of treatment, our main worry must be that the motivation for sending a patient in a particular direction will be financial rather than consultative or allowing the patient the right to choose the treatment and the most practicable hospital for it to be carried out.

The Government claim that patients will be all-important, but the truth is that, given the motivation behind the Bill and the mechanics involved in it, their position will be devalued.

On the principle of general practitioners' rights of referral, the Department of Health has said that they

"cannot be interpreted as a licence for GPs to disregard the contractual arrangements . . . a presumption of the right to make an extra-contractual referral cannot be a guarantee that the DHA would in all cases meet the cost".

That is the proof of the pudding. Money is talking in all the decisions and the new mechanisms that are being set up. As many right hon. and hon. Members have already said, what is worse is that none of the available evidence shows that the Department has a clear conception of that.

Even more important is the fact that GPs, in order to make correct, informed decisions about a patient, will require a degree of information technology, recall facilities, and computer links within the National Health Service, which they simply do not have.

Today I heard evidence from a number of hospitals, some of which are potential bidders for trust status in two years' time. They said that they need time to bring information technology facilities up to scratch to meet the provisions of the Bill if they are to achieve independent hospital trust status. The Bill will be £6 million a time. I think that the Select Committee has examined that and come up with evidence for it.

Where is the money to be found for the necessary upgrading of information technology to make a success of the scheme, and to enable the necessary take-up of the innovations proposed by the Secretary of State? I do not base my arguments on the grounds used by the Opposition, because we are opposed to their scheme, but on those laid down by the Government. It has not been costed properly. A consultant surgeon, James Appleyard, perceptively wrote:

"No responsible and ethical business would undertake such an untried venture without the full costs and appropriate information technology to ensure these are valid and up to date."

The best place to discover the possibilities of failure and abuse is in a letter to health authority chairmen and managers from the Department of Health, entitled "Pricing & openness on Contracts for health services" which states:

"Monopolists will have an incentive to restrict supply, to drive up price and either to inflate profits or costs. Buyers will be offered lower quantities at higher prices than would otherwise be the case . . . information about quality and price is generally poor . . . hence buyers are in a weak position to make meaningful price and quality comparisons and to shop around".

I do not like the terminology, but let the Department speak for itself:

"All of this suggests that we will not always be able to rely on actual competition, potential competition or bilateral monopoly to ensure that the NHS internal and external markets work effectively".

That is the advice sent out by the Department of Health, not an Opposition spokesman or a critic from within the Health Service.

Opposition Members should not feel so sad or frustrated about the Secretary of State. We know that he does not listen to nurses or to patients, he does not pay any attention to doctors and he rides roughshod over views expressed in Parliament. We can seek reassurance from the fact that he does not pay a blind bit of notice to what his own Department are saying about the centrepiece of the proposal—the flagship of self-governing hospitals. We will deal with that in detail in Committee, but I shall touch on three important issues.

First, the proposal turns the clock back. As the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent said, there has been a steady, if not always perfect, attempt to expand a truly planned National Health Service. Enshrined in that aim was the belief that, wherever one lived, one should have access, as far as possible, to the same level of treatment. The proposal can only erode that principle.

Secondly, the proposal will further entrench the importance of cash over care, with the result that the less profit-making services will have to be sacrificed to build an attractive and glamorous national image. The services that are most likely to go are basic services to the local community, such as geriatric and maternity services. I find it amazing that the Secretary of State could not say any more about that issue in his opening speech. We shall seek further clarification about what the Government and the Department think constitutes a core service that must be maintained by a district or regional general hospital.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: I have handed to the Secretary of State today a petition with 7,500 signatures from my constituents, who are concerned about the proposals. Are the problems of the scheme not best illustrated by hospital trusts? People feel that they are not being consulted about the future of a National Health Service that they are proud of and depend on. That problem is stirring up concern among ordinary people, not just among doctors, and Front-Bench Labour or Conservative spokesmen.

Mr. Kennedy: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and pay tribute to the work that he has done in his constituency to alert people to the dangers. I know of one direct consultation exercise. It was conducted in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown). Some 96 per cent. of those who registered an opinion were unambiguous about their desire for the local hospital not to opt out of the National Health Service. That was a very good judgment.

Education and training is a deep worry to the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South) *rose*——

Mr. Kennedy: I shall not give way.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member has already overrun his time.

Mr. Kennedy: With deference to the Chair, I am trying to finish my speech.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am required to ask the hon. Member to finish his speech.

7.10 pm

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): It is flattering to have the whole Liberal doughnut to speak to. Perhaps Liberal Members will leave quitly.

I have taken a part in the management of the Health Service for much of the past 15 years, from membership of an area health authority and chairmanship of a social services committee in the middle 1970s to the chairmanship of a district health authority in 1982. My first year here was spent on the Social Services Select Committee, before I was invited to join the Department of Health and Social Security team as Parliamentary Private Secretary to my right hon. Friend the Member for Braintree (Mr. Newton).

From those diverse vantage points, I have become convinced of the urgent need for reform of the National Health Service. It has tottered from one crisis to the next for all of those 15 years. The symptom of the crisis has usually been a comparatively small apparent shortfall in the NHS budget. There appears to be a recurring £200 million shortage which suddenly manifests itself around Christmas time and causes panic among managers, who always try to resolve their imagined problem by closing beds, wards, or even hospitals, and by curtailing other sharp-end patient services. I deliberately used the terms "apparent shortfall" and "imagined problem", for £200 million represents less than 1 per cent. of the Health Service's enormous budget, and it requires much more sophisticated financial management to foretell an overspend of less than 1 per cent. four to five months before the end of the financial year.

Just two years ago, when my right hon. Friend the Member for Braintree was Minister for Health, there was a particularly severe dose of the pre-Christmas wobblies. As ever, 100 per cent. of the service was plunged into crisis for a 1 to 2 per cent. predicted cash shortfall. After some especially unsavoury examples of shroud-waving around the country, additional money was given to the Health Service, but the time had finally come to investigate the cause rather than the symptoms of the recurring crisis.

A committee to review the Health Serice chaired by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was convened. The result was "Working for Patients", which I welcome, for it challenges some of the most sacred cows of the service. The review recognises for the first time—the Bill tries to tackle it—the essential changing nature of health care, from the fairly simple public health service remedies of the 1940s to all the marvellous modern techniques which we increasingly regard as commonplace today. It recognises that the Health Service has become a victim of its own success, as each new therapy, whether surgical or medical, adds to everybody's life expectancy, but particularly that of the very elderly, and produces its own waiting list.

The Labour party uses waiting lists, or waiting times, as a stick to beat the Government because the last time Labour Members were in government, they allowed their union paymasters to force the devastating strike that we now remember as part of the winter of discontent. They remember the mismanagement of the economy, which led to the International Monetary Fund demanding major cuts in public spending, and the effect that that had on the NHS. The increase in waiting lists to an all-time record in 1979 was indeed a measure of failure. I believe that, today, the waiting list is largely a measure of the NHS's success.

There was no waiting list in 1959 for hip joint replacement or coronary bypass grafts. Those techniques were at an early stage of development. The lack of waiting lists for those and many other procedures was hardly a measure of success. Today, the waiting list is a good indication of people's vastly increased aspiration for life-saving and quality-of-life-improving treatments.

The review also recognised the rigidities in the present system which arise out of the NHS's very size, its massive work force, its inertia and the inefficiency with which its resources can be deployed. In short, the review recognises the near-impossibility of managing the Health Service in its present corporate or conglomerate form, and seeks to break it up into smaller, more manageable, and more reactive parts.

Waste is endemic in all very large organisations, and the Health Service is typical of that. Successive reorganisations have recognised, but not tackled, that problem of waste of resource, largely because they have not recognised the fundamental inefficiency of a vast monopoly purchaser of health care which is also a vast monopoly provider. The Bill tries to tackle that, but of course the Labour party, with its reverence for Aneurin Bevan's memorial, and its consciousness of its trade union masters, recognises the great danger of fragmentation to the trade unions. The Health Service is uniquely vulnerable to industrial dispute because of its national negotiating machinery and national wage agreements, which take almost no note of local circumstance. There is no doubt in my mind that it is this aspect of self-governing trusts which most frightens Opposition Members—that local pay and conditions will be negotiated without reference to the thrall of national union leaders.

The emphasis which the review and the Bill put on outcomes is to be welcomed. Medical accountability and clinical audit are long overdue. I believe that the vast majority of good clinicians will welcome the opportunity to have their dedicated efforts measured against sensible benchmarks. If the monitoring process highlights those few whose productivity is compromised either by idleness or by their assiduous promotion of their private practices, the Health Service will be the winner.

It is in regard to the outcomes that I should like to express one of my two reservations about the Bill. I refer to indicative drug budgets. I must declare that I have had many discussions with the pharmaceutical industry, and I have lately advised one company on matters pertaining to the Bill. It makes no sense to save a few pounds by denying a patient the most modern and efficacious medication if the outcome is that he or she lands up in hospital. That is a poor outcome for the patient, and a poor outcome for the service, but it is a risk if the only sanctioned or monitored measure of a doctor is his prescribing habits. Doctors who have practice budgets will have wider choices to make, but those without practice budgets may have care only for their indicative drug budget.

I should like to give an example of an extreme case. The new British drug eminase is a thrombolytic drug with the most exciting potential. It is given as a one-shot emergency injection to heart atttack victims. It dissolves the life-threatening clots and limits the amount of heart muscle that is destroyed by the atack. Moreover, its chemistry controls the rate of delivery over several hours. It is a very clever drug which markedly improves the immediate prognosis for the patient, reduces the time likely to be spent in intensive care and reduces the likelihood of the victim being left a cardiac cripple.

Eminase offers excellent outcomes all round, but it is expensive. It costs about £500 for the single emergency shot. I should like to think that no doctor is mindful of his indicative drug budget when I fall victim to a heart attack and my condition indicates the need for an urgent shot of eminase.

While considering how to bring into line the minority of general practitioners who are bad prescribers—it is worth noting that under-prescription can be as detrimental as over-prescription—it behoves my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State to remember his days at the Department of Trade and Industry, and the battle for a positive trade balance. The pharmaceutical industry is a rare star in that area, having an annual positive trade balance of some £850 million, but it is an industry in which decisions about investment are particularly susceptible to whether the market is perceived to be hostile or favourable. Investment decisions about where to put new research and development, manufacturing and distribution, especially by multinationals, but also by British companies, will determine whether that favourable trade balance is maintained.

The Henley centre has recently suggested that imprudent implementation of the White Paper proposals could be highly detrimental and cost far more than will be saved by the indicative drugs budget. That would be a poor outcome.

My second reservation is about the explanatory memorandum, which sets out in bland terms the costs of the Bill in financial terms and in manpower. That section sends shivers down my spine, for I have watched at first hand as a district health authority chairman the Health Service's infinite capacity for creating bureaucracy. The systems under which the purchaser, whether health authority or general practice, will contract with the provider for services offers scope hitherto undreamed of by bureaucreators. The method of tracing through and monitoring payment for service by the Health Service to the Health Service could make the reorganisations of 1974 and 1982 look positively transparent. Beware of the bureaucreator, who is already alive and well and flourishing among the regions, including my own region of South-East Thames.

As a former chairman of social services, I should have liked to speak about the community care proposals but I hope that I shall be allowed to contribute to the debate on them in Committee. I recognise that many other hon. Members wish to speak tonight. I believe that the Bill will take the NHS into the 21st century in a healthy and vigorous form. I wish it well and will support it enthusiastically.

7.21 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): For 10 years I have listened to Conservative Ministers say how strongly they are committed to the National Health Service and how simply it could be improved if only it had less money at its disposal. "Efficiency, efficiency, efficiency", we are told. More than one reorganisation of the Health Service has been masterminded by the great brains of the Conservative party resulting in chaos from which it usually takes the NHS a considerable time to recover. But the present Bill is a real corker. One might call the ability to produce such a Bill a unique gift, even for the Conservative party. It is a Bill spawned in dislike, produced out of ignorance and apparently being pushed with malice.

The Secretary of State seems to have come to the House today, not to detail the changes that he genuinely believes will produce positive results for patients but to say that people in the Health Service who do not instantly agree with the mess of pottage that he is presenting to them are automatically ignorant, incompetent and malicious. That is the only explanation for his constant attacks on all sections of the NHS. He says that consultants keep up their waiting lists as part of their prestige, the nurses questioned their upgrading because they did not understand that it would put them on a better footing, and that the ambulance men must be starved into submission because they are just taxi drivers who do not understand patient care. I find that despicable. There are no words strong enough to condemn the performance of a Secretary of State who is not stupid and who knows that what he says is based irrevocably in deep contempt for the NHS.

The Conservative party has opposed every positive move since the Health Service was first suggested, and now it is coming forward with suggestions somehow to transform the NHS into a commercial organisation. I have received in my post an interesting glossy brochure emotively headed, "Not for Sale". One might think that that referred to some political party, but not on your life: it refers to the creation of hospital trusts among the mid-Cheshire hospitals. The brochure contains pictures of the district general hospital—in the centre of my constituency and the only one for a considerable distance—and the Victoria infirmary, telling us that they are not for sale.

Only towards the end of the brochure is one told that other hospitals will not be included in the opted-out independent NHS trusts. Those hospitals have one thing in common—all of them provide high-cost, important, long-term services for the mentally handicapped, for psychiatric and geriatric patients, and for others who require support services due to long-term chronic illness. The hospitals involved have one other thing in common—all have large acreages of land suitable for sale by an independent trust.

The Secretary of State says, "Don't worry, we shall have contracts," and that they will not really be contracts but agreements. If anything makes the hair on the back of my neck wave, it is a barrister who tells me, "Don't worry, it is not what it says but what I say it says." A contract is a contract. What will happen to services which are not provided to a standard that the people responsible for the bills regard as acceptable? Will there be constant litigation between sections of the NHS? When GPs find that they cannot obtain suitable services from hospitals, will they take some form of legal action against the hospitals concerned? It may seem absurd, but in my view it is all too possible.

What will happen under the Bill is quite different. It will be particularly damaging for rural general practices in my constituency. It is not true that the Bill will help women doctors. Many women doctors who have families like to provide single-session services, not just to keep up the standard of their medicine but to provide a useful service. General practices faced with a limited budget—we have been given no assurance that they will have sufficient

[Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody]

resources to run a proper service—will almost automatically cut down on use of single-session part-time doctors because, even if those doctors provide an essential service, the doctors in the practice will prefer to provide the service themselves even if it is less adequate. So long as they deal with sufficient numbers, that will be all that counts. They will say, "We can provide a sufficient level of care to ensure that we can put in the figures at the end of the quarter and get the cash back." That will be an increasingly frequent occurrence and those who wish to continue working on a single-session basis will have real problems.

There will also be problems of trust between patients and GPs. General practice is, after all, the best way of delivering health care to patients when they most need it. GPs are the best clinicians and they know when people need to talk and when they need medication. The GP should provide the services that have been paraded before us this evening as though they were revolutionary innovations. Twenty-four years ago I worked in a general practice where it would have been regarded as a disgrace not to be able to take out a verruca without being told by someone else that it was a brilliant idea.

We are talking not about the level of patient care but about money and the provision of more accountancy services. We are constantly being told of the huge sums put into the NHS in the past three years, but where has that money gone? It has gone to provide accountants and the modern equivalent of the cash register—the computer. Like all good computers, the NHS computers will no doubt lose as much detailed NHS work as they manage to lose political work.

There will be a fragmentation of the NHS. That was the word used by the Secretary of State. That is clear from the brochures that have been circulated to staff and it is clear to everyone who looks at the details of the Bill. The balkanisation of the NHS is what the Bill is all about. Increasingly, hospitals will compete with and not complement one another. They will not say, "Where are the services that are helpful?" They will not talk to GPs about the need to plan the integration of services so that practice nurses, physiotherapists and others can be provided. The Labour party has been asking for that for the past 10 years, ever since the massive investigation into NHS needs which was wholly ignored by the incoming Conservative Government.

I am still a softie at heart and I want to believe that the good, kind gentlemen in the Conservative party mean what they say when they talk about their commitment to patient care. Throughout the passage of the Bill, there will be repeated opportunities for them to prove that. They will be able to tell us how rural practices will carry on, and how inner-city practices, which already have difficulties with shifting populations, will be able to show that they have maintained the level of specialised care that they are told is essential. Conservative Members can also explain to us how the staff and, above all, the patients in my constituency are to discover what core services are.

The Bill does not make it clear what core services will be, but I can tell the House what the core of the Bill is —it is a deep contempt for the concept of the National Health Service, and the sooner the Government make that plain, the sooner patients will tell them where to go.

7.31 pm

Mr. David Atkinson (Bournemouth, East): This has been an exciting week in the Health Service for my constituents. On Monday, phase 1 of our new Bournemouth general hospital opened its doors to patients. It is a magnificent hospital, of which the East Dorset health authority has every reason to be proud. I congratulate all those responsible for it.

I take this opportunity to pay particular tribute to the people of Bournemouth and the surrounding districts for raising £2 million for the new Bournemouth hospital appeal. That enabled this already well equipped, new hospital to have the additional facility of a body scanner, which I had the pleasure to see in operation on Monday.

It would be well to remind the House, if it needs reminding after three Adjournment debates on this subject, why there were delays in starting the hospital. It was planned to be built more than 10 years ago, but together with many other hospitals it was a casualty of the cuts which the Labour Government imposed on their hospital building programmes. On behalf of my constituents and my hon. Friends the Members for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill), for Christchurch (Mr. Adley), for Poole (Mr. Ward), for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) and for New Forest (Sir P. McNair-Wilson), I thank my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and the Government for making the money available for phase 1 to be completed and for the second phase now to commence.

Now I must be a little critical of my right hon. and learned Friend. I regret that he has combined in one Bill his White Paper proposals on the NHS with his White Paper proposals on community care. I know that the Bill is comparatively short, but these are two vital and distinct matters. One is primarily concerned with returning people to health, while the other is about keeping people in health at home. However, I welcome the Government's response to the Griffiths report, confirming his recommendation that it will be for local authorities to prepare plans for community care.

I wish to draw attention to several points which arise from the Bill and I look forward to hearing the response of my hon. Friend the Minister for Health on Monday. First, the need to ensure that schizophrenics are registered with a GP or are on a psychiatrist's out-patient list appears to have been overlooked. Clause 3 is not definite on that point. Secondly, mentally ill people are prone to moving around and to be of no fixed abode. How, then, will remuneration for health authorities on the basis of residence be made? Should the provisions in the Bill not be clearer on that? Thirdly, clause 41 does not make it clear that local authorities should agree their plans for community care with health authorities, as the White Paper suggested. I should be grateful for confirmation that the Bill provides for that. Fourthly, clause 46(3) provides for Scottish health boards to consult voluntary organisations in preparing their community care plan, but there appears to be no similar provision for England and Wales. I should be grateful for a response on that.

As one who helped to steer through the Schizophrenia After Care Bill *[Lords]* during the past Session, I was dismayed that clause 42 does not provide for community care packages for mentally ill patients to be specifically linked to their discharge from hospital. It is essential that this legislation is wholly meaningful for the mentally ill, particularly for schizophrenia sufferers. The House will be aware of the widespread public awareness, support and concern for care of the mentally ill. Social workers will require new and specific training in the needs of the mentally ill to satisfy the complex community care needs which they will inevitably face. That will represent one of the major challenges of this legislation for local authorities.

I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on sticking so firmly to his original proposals, despite the unethical and highly misleading campaigns of the BMA and other unions. I welcome the opportunity for hospitals to free themselves from bureaucratic health authority control by applying to become self-governing trusts, if that is what they want. One of the essential points, which has not been accepted, is that that is voluntary and for local hospitals to decide.

All but one hospital in my health district have signalled to my right hon. and learned Friend their interest in becoming self-governing because of the opportunities that they foresee in developing the services and treatments which local patients and doctors want and which they can offer in services elsewhere. I expect that hospitals will return to being much more like the local community hospitals—which they were before nationalisation.

I welcome the opportunity for larger general practices to apply to manage their funds, if that is what they want. Again, it is entirely voluntary. In October I had a meeting with most of my GPs to discuss the contents of the White Paper, and, yes, I was disappointed that so few saw the advantages to develop their practice which would come with having their own budgets or the greater flexibility on treatment and waiting times for patients. Many of my doctors fear future underfunding, conflicts between partners, conflicts with the local family practitioner committee, conflicts of interests with patients and the need to employ accountants to control their budgets. I appreciate those fears, but I hope that practices that recognise the advantages and volunteer to have their own practice funds will prove that those fears are groundless.

I welcome the introduction of indicative drug budgets which build on the experience of the limited list, encouraging more cost-effective prescribing, which will release more resources to be spent elsewhere in the NHS. However, I must voice the concerns of some members of my local health authority who feel that the proposed smaller membership may mean too few members capable of adequately fulfilling the responsibilities and considerable commitments which membership entails. They also fear that there will be insufficient scope for a broad base of experience and representation.

A number of hon. Members have already said that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister supports the reforms. She does so because she wants the NHS to be so good that no one will want to go private. The proposals are the last chance for the NHS to remove all the reasons why people are still prepared to sacrifice and to pay twice for an alternative service. If the reforms are not allowed to improve the service to patients so that waiting times are reduced a two-tier service will inevitably follow with the NHS as the safety net. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has repeatedly said that he does not want such a service. It must be in the interests of all those in the NHS to make the proposals work.

7.40 pm

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I welcome the opportunity to follow the hon. Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson). I support his plea in aid of the mentally handicapped and schizophrenics. I also underscore what he said about local management. When the Secretary of State spoke about local management I began to wonder whether I was reading the Bill and the background to it in the same way as the right hon. and learned Gentleman. He talked about the need for smaller and more effective leadership and I can understand that. When he spoke of better local leadership, however, I could not understand him. He spoke about looking for respected people in the community to provide that leadership, but it appears that locally elected representatives will be dropped. I find it strange that one should remove the local input and yet still expect the local leadership to be better than in the past.

I support the motion tabled by members of the Select Committee on Social Services which calls for a Special Standing Committee to be established after the Second Reading. Such a Committee would offer an opportunity to listen to and to cross-examine those involved in the NHS. That Committee hearing would last three days at the most and I believe that it would enhance the passage of the Bill.

I recognise that it is not always possible for Ministers to listen to everybody. Last week some people were so keen to speak to the Under-Secretary for Northern Ireland with responsibility for health care that they pursued him over a roof. In the confines of the Committee Room I should like to think that the Committee, in the presence of the Minister, would be able to cross-examine NHS staff much more effectively.

Proper consideration should be given to special financing. When it was proposed that the finance specifically set aside for community care should be ring-fenced a Minister said that that meant that trust was not put in local authorities. The harsh reality is that the Government have rate-capped local authorities and come down on them in different ways. If the House budgets funds for community care, they should not be frittered away on other local authority services. If extra money is needed it should be raised in some other way and should not be taken from the funds for community care as that deprives people who require that care.

The National Consumer Council has pointed out that consumer input on the community care provisions in the Bill is inadequate. There is also no means by which local authorities can have a say and no provision for an appeal system to ensure that patients are treated where they want to be treated. In the Bill, no mention is made of community health councils. As far as I can tell, there is no requirement properly to consult those councils on community care plans. There is no provision for an appeal against a local authority social services department decision on community care, and there is no duty to assess that care. I know that that remark will be met with an immediate response that there is such a duty to assess. If one looks carefully at the Bill, however, it is clear that the duty to assess operates only when a need is identified. I believe that that leaves the door wide open.

When the Bill is in Committee I hope that careful examination will be made of its implications for the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986. All over the nation the cries are

[Rev. Martin Smyth]

for the implementation of sections 1, 3, 2 and 7 of that Act. The White Paper promised that those sections would be implemented in the Bill, but there is no mention of that.

One of my medical friends in Northern Ireland who is generally sympathetic to the proposals wrote to me about one aspect which he felt limited the original emphasis of the Bill—patient choice. It appears that authorities and health boards will have the right to restrict the choice of the GP and the patient to be referred to a particular hospital if those bodies have no contact with that hospital. Perhaps that decision can be defended in terms of distance and finance, as suggested by the guidelines, but how does one equate finance with providing the right treatment for a patient? How does distance come into it when we have already heard about people being referred to a hospital 160 miles from their home? If the doctor and his patient believe that that is the place where he should receive treatment, why should an authority or a health board have the right to say no? That important consideration should be borne in mind.

As I represent a university constituency, I am especially concerned about research. The Bill provides little to require the NHS trusts to undertake and to commission such research. They are empowered so to do, but they are not required to do so. That will have an adverse influence on the proposed reforms.

I do not wish to prolong my contribution as I want other hon. Members to be able to participate. My specific request is for the appointment of a Special Standing Committee which can consider ring-fencing the necessary finance.

7.47 pm

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I am delighted to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth). He and I have served on the Select Committee on Social Services for many years. The views that we express have been gained from the experience and knowledge derived from many years of service on that Committee.

I commend my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) who sadly is no longer in his place, on the mention that he made of the indicative drug budget. The Government will neglect at their peril the pharmaceutical industries of the country. They make a major contribution to our balance of trade and they generate a surplus of more than £850 million. If we proceed with some of the proposals in the White Paper that seek, unjustifiably, to contain prescribing, we shall drive investment out of this country to the detriment of employment and the economy of our nation.

I speak with a constituency vested interest as ICI Pharmaceuticals, a massive employer in this country, employs some 5,000 people in my constituency. It puts about £50 million a year into new investment. We should bear such investment in mind. As my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham has said, however, it is most important that the people who require treatment feel that they will get the best possible medication that they require.

When new drugs come on to the market and do dramatic things—such as the drugs to which my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham referred—people should not be deprived of that beneficial medication because of cost, especially as it often probably means that if they do not have it, they will spend much longer in hospital. That is far more costly to the health service, whether in the private sector or the NHS.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) should look at the American experiment. The Americans have tried formularies, which is the direction in which we are moving. That has imposed an extra cost on health service expenditure in that country. Medication can reduce the need to put a person in hospital.

I do not support the Bill and I will not vote for it on Monday evening. It is severely flawed and, in the limited time available, I intend to tell the House why. I do this not for reasons of prejudice or malice but from the immense knowledge which I have managed to glean from the more than 14 years that I have been on the Social Services Select Committee and its predecessor. The White Paper "Working for Patients" and the Bill, which implements its reforms, propose to improve cost and outcome information and tackle the problems arising from what many may describe as the lethargy of the medical profession in monitoring and evaluating its services.

The NHS could be improved considerably with the reforms contained in the Bill. Those reforms may enable the objective of the NHS—to provide health care on the basis of need, measured by the capacity of the patient to benefit from care—to be achieved much more cost effectively. I accept that view. I believe that the objectives behind the Bill and the White Paper are laudable in every way.

However, the other proposed reforms in the Bill—GP budget holders, or fund-holding practices, independent NHS hospitals and tax breaks to increase the purchase of private health care insurance by the elderly—may undermine the NHS as we know it. As a Tory, I am deeply committed to the NHS. There are many within the independent and private hospital sector who are deeply unhappy about what the Government are doing because they believe that it will prejudice them in acting complementary to, not in competition with, the NHS.

These other reforms—GP budget holders, independent NHS hospitals and tax breaks—may undermine the NHS, but of the three, the independent NHS hospitals may have the greatest adverse effects on access, quality and costs. With independent NHS hospital managers free to fix pay and prices and the removal of the NHS monopoly on purchasing power, which has held costs and expenditure in check, there is likely to be massive cost-inflation. If the Government hold cash limits, district general manager budget holders will face increasing pressures and the quality of care is likely to be eroded, as was shown in evidence to the Select Committee. If due to these pressures the NHS produces increased waiting lists and times and declining quality of care, the incentive to buy private health care insurance will be sharply increased.

The overall effect of these pressures may be increased expenditure on health care which is financed largely from private sources. Much of this increased expenditure may well represent increased rewards to providers rather than increases in the volume and quality of health care for United Kingdom citizens. This outcome—increased expenditure on health care from private sources—may be the Government's implicit objective. Their explicit objective is to defend the NHS, but that objective may not be achieved through the existing provisions of the White Paper, which are encapsulated in the Bill.

The likely outcome of these proposals is greater inequality in access to health care, provision of health care of inadequate quality and cost-inflation. *[Interruption.]* I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State is listening. Sadly, the Government appear from time to time not to listen to those who have some knowledge. I am delighted that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State said in responding to my intervention that I had some knowledge of this matter.

Having well and truly put my views on the Bill as it relates to the reforms to the Health Service, I should like to put my worries about community care. We are moving much too fast. The policy of community care is being introduced too rapidly, too soon and for the wrong reasons. It is returning patients to a community which is unwilling and unable to welcome them. We are losing centres of excellence and denying some patients the security and stability which they need and which they can find only in long-term residential care. Before disposing of all these centres of excellence, I hope that we will think again to ensure that we are genuinely improving the lot of the mentally ill, the mentally handicapped, those suffering from Alzheimer's disease and the elderly who need residential care.

My county of Cheshire, which is Labour-controlled with Liberal support, is being forced to dispose of its residential homes. This is disastrous. It is wrong that the private sector should have a monopoly of care for the elderly. I do not believe that the monitoring of the private sector is likely to be adequate.

We are perhaps debating one of the most important Bills of the past 10 years, not just of this Parliament. I therefore hope that, in Committee, the Government will listen closely and sensibly to the amendments that are proposed. I regret that I cannot support the Bill in the Lobby on Monday evening.

7.57 pm

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): The views of the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) on community care are respected on both sides of the House and, as usual, they were vigorously expressed. The Government's proposal to end Crown immunity for all Health Service bodies is welcome, but suspect. If the Government are converted to my belief that Crown immunity is an unjust anachronism, all Crown immunity should be abolished, but that is not happening. Crown immunity cannot apply to private institutions. The Government are obviously paving the way for the future, privatising by this selective means. That is deplorable if health services are privatised.

Millions of people rely on community care for their wefare. The Bill is crucial to them, and I am glad that this matter has been raised in the debate. However, there should have been a separate Bill to ensure proper consideration of that aspect of the problems. I ask for a commitment from the Minister that discussion of the community care clauses will not be guillotined in Committee.

Disabled people demand very little, but they ask for some fundamental rights. Section 4 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 gives them the right to assessment of their needs, if they request it, but they also want the right to make representations about that assessment. They want the ordinary right to appeal against decisions. Above all, they want the right to properly funded community care.

Assessment is the key to the new system, but unfortunately the way in which it will operate has been left entirely to the discretion or whim of local authorities. There are no requirements for local authorities, there is no guidance, and they are not committed to involving the disabled person in the way proposed in section 3 of the Act. There is also no right of appeal. Local authorities —the good and the bad—can do as they please, and there are some very bad ones. The Government are abdicating their responsibility.

Who would be assessed and reassessed under this provision? Reassessment can be as crucial as assessment. If this Bill had been in force, would deaf-blind Beverley Lewis, who died weighing four stone, have been reassessed? Would her life have been saved? Would disabled people and their carers be affected by the Bill? They are now at the end of their tether, trying desperately to cope. The answer is that Beverley Lewis would not have been saved; nor would severely disabled people be affected, because the Bill will do nothing to avert future tragedies in community care or to raise the present inadequate levels of care. The provisions of the Bill give local authorities the right to assess on whatever criteria they choose—it is a charter for evasion. It is essential that section 3 of the 1986 Act be implemented. It is also essential that centrally decided requirements be placed on all local authorities.

The Bill and the White Paper on which it is based view community care provision from the providers' perspective, not from that of the consumer. The truth is that the Government have been worried by the escalating costs of care in private residential homes and have decided to put a stop to them. They thought that they would ditch that commitment, and indeed they have done so. They are now talking in terms of administrative change, cost-effective provision and simplicity—fine-sounding words which permeate the White Paper and the Bill, but little attention is paid to the level and quality of care for the consumer.

The specific grant to local authorities for people with mental illness is welcome, but it has not been ring-fenced. That means that it will be vulnerable to the vultures. One of the main failures of the Bill is the refusal to allocate a specific grant for community care in general, as Griffiths recommended. The Government apparently intend to provide additional resources only for demographic change and for the new tasks related to the new procedures, but they have failed to recognise that today's unacceptable black spots of community care must be erased and that community care money must be used only for the people for whom it is intended. We do not want councils to spend the money on bypasses and other daft things. The Griffiths proposal will come to naught if his recommendation for a specific grant is disregarded. Nothing could be more crucial for the future of community care.

Devoted family carers are the kingpins of community care, but despite the bromides there are no specific proposals to help them—merely a mention in the White Paper that, when possible, their ability to continue to provide care should be considered and their participation included in the assessment. Who is to say whether that is possible? Again it will be the local authorities.

The Bill fails to recognise the army of carers who are being exploited and overstretched, many of whom are

[Mr. Jack Ashley]

themselves very frail. No one should be forced to care for a disabled relative if they feel that they cannot handle it, but local authorities are only too happy to turn the problem over to the family. Some local authorities are very negligent, and that is intolerable for the carers. There should be a commitment to seeking out carers, easing their burden and recognising that they should not be pushed to the point of total exhaustion.

I make this appeal to the House. The problems of carers and of disabled people will not be solved by the Bill, which fails to provide them with essential rights. It also fails to provide adequate cash and to provide comfort for carers. I hope that the Government will listen to the voices of disabled people, carers and voluntary organisations, and think again.

8.6 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): The right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) has a distinguished record of defending the interests of the disabled, and I am sure that his words have been listened to with care throughout the House.

The proposals in this Bill are designed to increase choice in the National Health Service and make the service more responsive to patient needs. The Bill is also designed to raise standards of care in all health board areas and to bring them up to the level of the best. It is also designed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the services provided by the Health Service, and to ensure that the maximum possible resources go directly into patient care.

The Bill must be seen against the background of the continuing increase in Government support for the NHS —in the amount of taxpayers' money going to the service.

In Committee, I believe that we shall have ample opportunity to study the Bill's details in depth, and in the limited time that I have this evening no one would expect me to do that now.

It will come as no surprise that I want to concentrate on the Scottish aspects of the Bill. Reaction in my constituency to the Government's proposals can best be described as mixed. Some in the Health Service are wholly opposed and have made their views clearly known. I have met a number of those who are concerned, but they are unable to define precisely the causes of their worry. I know that because I have had a number of meetings with people in the Health Service—with GPs and others. I am pleased to inform the House that others have seen the proposals as a means of obtaining long-promised but never delivered new facilities.

I cite, for example, the county town of Forfar in Angus which, 25 years ago, was promised a new community hospital. Twenty-five years later it is still waiting.

Forfar GPs are trying to set up a budget. They are supported by many people in the area and are looking at the possibility of a self-governing hospital trust. That is no surprise to me, because I have always viewed health as I view education. In the House, a great deal of rot is talked about rural areas. My constituency covers 2,000 square miles of rural Scotland and I think that I can claim to know something about the problems of hospitals and Health Service facilities in rural Scotland.

There is a good Health Service in north Tayside and we are proud of it. However, it can and must be improved to meet the demands of today. The Service is far better than it was 10, 20 or 30 years ago, but it must continue to improve because the demands upon it increase every year. Stracathrow hospital is not in my constituency but my constituents use its services and the GPs regularly use it. There have also been rumblings of interest about a self-governing trust for that hospital.

Anyone with any sense realises that the changes proposed in the Bill are fundamental and will cause concern. It is up to us to deal with that concern and we must get through to the people to make them understand. Our education reforms are beginning to be appreciated and understood and people are supporting them in my constituency and looking at self-governing schools. It was once suggested that no rural school would consider that. The school that I have in mind is very rural because it is in one of the remote parts of my constituency.

We must first deal with the misinformation that is being spread about the Bill. It is also important to recognise that there are problems within the British Medical Association. Its negotiators are not trusted and their recommendations have been rejected. That is hardly the way to move forward. I draw the attention of the House to early-day motion 63 about the leak of a BMA letter. The motion, in the name of the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) who speaks for the Opposition on Scottish health matters, states:

> *"That this House condemns the leak of a confidential letter from the BMA to the Scottish Office; and asks for an investigation to find out who was responsible for this letter coming into the possession of the Sunday Times (Scotland)."*

I tabled an amendment to the motion. It says:

> *"Line 1, leave out from 'House' to end and add 'notes that a copy of the BMA letter, which is not confidential, has been placed in the Library where honourable Members can note that the British Medical Association Scottish Office is not interested in negotiating a special deal for Scottish general practitioners'."*

That comes out clearly in the third paragraph of the BMA letter, which says:

> "The first point to make is that there is no question here nor has there ever been of making 'a special deal' for Scottish GPs."

That is news to the GPs in Scotland and to most of us. We always thought that we negotiated things differently for our separate Health Service in Scotland, but now we are told that Scottish GPs cannot be treated differently as they have been for a long time. When the BMA is so divided and uncertain, one must be careful about what one takes from the kind of literature that the BMA has been putting out.

I repeat that there is a superb Health Service in north Tayside. That is because it is a lovely part of the world in which to live. We have no problems about recruiting teachers or doctors or anyone else from the professions because people go there for the quality of life.

Another reason for our good Health Service in that area is the spending by the Government. That needs to be mentioned. It has been said that the only thing that Conservative Members talk about is expenditure. I have news for everyone. If we had not spent that money, hon. Members would be talking about the lack of expenditure. The planned spending in Scotland for 1989-90 is £2,800 million. In 1990-91, that will be increased by £220 million. That will bring expenditure on the Health Service in Scotland to over £3,000 million. That is an interesting figure because it is three times the size of the Health Service budget 10 years ago when we came to office. Spending on health in Scotland is now £550 per head.

Mr. Devlin: It is far too much; more than in England.

Mr. Walker: It is not far too much. It is what is needed. The proposals in the Bill, which I support, require additional funding and the Government have pledged that. That is unlike the Labour party, which sets out what it will do but when it comes to office it cuts expenditure and hospital building programmes. This Government make a pledge and then deliver.

Since 1979 there have been 61 major new hospital developments in Scotland, providing 6,777 beds, and there are 40 major hospital developments in the pipeline. That is a 44 per cent. increase over the rate of inflation since 1978-79. If I had gone to the electorate in 1979 and said that we would increase expenditure by 44 per cent. on house and hospital building programmes people would have laughed at me, but that is what has happened. More people are being treated than ever before both in and out of hospital and we have more doctors, dentists and nurses.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I regret that I have to call the hon. Gentleman to order. His time is up.

8.17 pm

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): As the Secretary of State suggested, clause 4 of the Bill, which introduces the concept of universal contracts, is at the heart of the proposed legislation. Section 8 of the White Paper on community care, which makes the disastrous distinction between the cost of care and the cost of keep and attempts to stitch plans together for people on the basis of that distinction, is at the heart of the White Paper. That is where the difficulty lies. For many years the Government have tried to operate a network of clumsy cash limits. The Bill does not lead us away from those limits but clones and reproduces them on a massive scale. Through the network of care plans, keep plans and universal contracts, it extends those cash limits into every region of the service, thus controlling the experience of every patient.

Eminase has already been cited as a drug treatment which is difficult to fit into a contract, format. Another example is hormone replacement therapy. How do we put speech therapy into a contract, when 80 per cent. of referrals come not from doctors but from schools, health visitors, self-referrals and concerned parents? The Government will have to face those difficulties.

My city of Newcastle upon Tyne has one of the six centres of the resource management initiative. The products of that initiative are interesting. They clearly show that, given time and money—far more time and far more money than the Bill allows—one can formulate the cost of individual patient treatment plans. That can be done by eliminating the costs associated with long-term support which is hard to fit into the format. The result will be a system which cannot survive in a system of block contracts which are looked upon as rationing cards, whereby every patient is treated as a unit with absolutely identical needs. That is the deficiency of the contract system, and that is where it will fail. In the same hospital at Newcastle, which is a world centre for transplant surgery, no food is served from 5 pm until 8 am the next day. Only a few weeks ago, patients were asked to bring pillows because they were in short supply. That situation will be reproduced on a massive scale if the Bill is implemented.

There are further examples of the same sort in the same city. The regional health authority is privatising some of its staff and handing them over to a company which includes BUPA membership in its employment contract. There could be no greater testimony to the direction in which such a system will lead us. In the same city we have one of the finest networks in Britain of community residential care provision for the mentally handicapped. As a cost-saving measure, and to meet the needs of community care within the administrators' understanding of the Bill, those facilities will be disposed of to the private sector. That will be a calamity and a disgrace.

In the same city, the regional blood transfusion service —responding to the terms of the Bill—is proposing to convert itself into a trading agency which will sell blood to hospitals. Blood that is freely given will be converted into a commodity that is traded. It will be sold to hospitals.Is that the sort of spot market in blood to which my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) referred in his compelling and brilliant speech? That, too, is a disgrace.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston said, the lines of power in the Bill all radiate from the Secretary of State. That is its central defect. But the lines of responsibility also lead back to the Secretary of State, and it is for that reason that Conservative Members will regret the confetti of controls and cash limits that they are creating.

8.22 pm

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): The essence of the debate is that the Opposition seem determined to present themselves as the defenders of the National Health Service in its present form and to be blind to its shortcomings and deficiencies. The Government have recognised those shortcomings and deficiencies and —in my view with considerable courage—are trying to remedy them.

What are the key deficiencies? First, there are the excessively long average waiting times for a range of non-emergency hospital treatments, including some key areas of elective and orthopaedic surgery. Ours is the only country in the European Community to suffer from that problem on such a scale. No Member of Parliament should remain content with that. I refer advisedly to average waiting times and not to waiting lists. It might be satisfactory to have 2 million people waiting a month, on average, for non-emergency operations, but to have 100,000 people waiting 20 months would be entirely unsatisfactory. I hope that the Opposition will recognise that important distinction.

Secondly, there is a lack of patient choice in the NHS, which means that, against a background of generally dedicated and devoted care, for which many of my constituents and members of my family are deeply grateful, there are too many instances of perfunctory or arrogant care. There are take-it-or-leave-it attitudes—for instance, or "Strip off and wait for three hours"—and I fear that such attitudes are inseparable from monopoly provision in any area of human activity.

[Mr. Quentin Davies]

Thirdly, and most seriously of all, is the slow rate at which new life-saving therapeutic and diagnostic techniques, even those invented in Britain, have been incorporated in the NHS. I have in mind the number of kidney dialysers per 1,000 people in this country compared with the number elsewhere in the western world. I think, too, of the insufficient use in Britain of colorectal scanning, computerised tomography, magnetic resonance imaging, ultrasound scanning and other diagnostic techniques. I have the figures on MRI and CT, thanks to a recent answer from my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State. There are 198 CT scanners in this country, compared with 450 in West Germany, 3,000 in Japan and 3,600 in the United States. In the United States there are 1,300 MRI machines, compared with 275 in Japan, 85 in West Germany and 15 in the United Kingdom.

We pay a heavy price for that. The figures reinforce the conclusion that the NHS has had a tendency over the past 40 years to be not so much the National Health Service as a national illness service. We neglect modern diagnostic techniques at our peril. In the past half century, as in the first half of the century, the general health of the population has improved markedly, but in the second half it has improved at a much slower rate than the average rate of improvement in the rest of the western world. In 1948, we were in the first quartile among western countries for life expectancy and the last for infant mortality. I fear that we are now in the third quartile in both respects. We should not be satisfied with that.

The Opposition have a simple answer to such problems. It is a mindlessly simple answer—the five-word answer "Throw more money at it". If one thing has been proved by the Government's experience, it is that throwing more and more money at the NHS is not a sufficient response. Of course we must spend more money on the nation's health, and we have thrown enormous amounts of new money at it, yet by all available measures patient satisfaction has continued to decline. I fear that that demonstrates incontrovertibly that the money has too often been spent by the wrong people in an inefficient way or on the wrong things.

I shall give four important examples of how spending has gone badly wrong. First, until now there has been no effective cost information in the NHS. Managers have not known whether it was cheaper to perform operations, or to deliver other treatments in their own units or to farm them out to the private sector. They have not known their own costs. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and his predecessor, for the first time since 1948, have now addressed that problem.

Secondly, until now there has been no notion of depreciation in the NHS. That is extraordinary. The idea of taking rational management or investment decisions without any idea of the cost of capital is ludicrous. Yet until my right hon. and learned Friend came along, that was exactly the position in the NHS.

Thirdly, there are perverse incentives, some of which my right hon. and learned Friend mentioned briefly today. Time and again performance is penalised and failure or mediocrity rewarded. The hospital manager who increases his throughput runs through his budget and is penalised. The manager who wishes to stay within his budget by cutting his variable costs and leaving wards empty at the end of the year is patted on the head. Under the Resource Allocation Working Group system, a health authority which has been successful in improving the morbidity rate in its area to a greater extent than the national average will be penalised. For the first time, my right hon and learned Friend has faced these problems head on, and these at least of the bad practices of the past are coming to an end. I thank the Lord for that.

Fourthly, I come to the heart of the great devotion which Opposition Members have to the present structure of the NHS, including the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), for whom I have the greatest personal regard. Opposition Members display this great devotion precisely because the NHS enshrines to the supreme degree the model of paternalistic, bureaucratic provision which lies at the heart of Socialism.

The great and the good in Westminster and Whitehall decide what proportion of national income should be spent on health. That money is handed down through the RAWG system to the regions. They arbitrarily and unaccountably distribute it to district health authorities, which equally arbitrarily and unaccountably allocate it to whatever purpose they choose—more intensive care beds, another orthopaedic unit, more chronic care for psychiatric and geriatric patients or just doing the garden or painting the staff canteen. There is no assurance that the actual distribution of resources and the pattern of outputs under this system will in any way correspond to what would be the aggregate choice of patients if they could express such a choice. There is every reason to suppose that, as the volume of outputs and services under such a system increases, the correlation between that selection and potential patient choice declines.

This is a historic moment in the NHS because the Government have had the courage to face those problems head on. In all the years that I have taken an interest in politics—long before I came to this House—I have never known as man so subject to such sustained, ill-informed and hysterical vituperation as my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State. I have also never known a man who would be less affected by it than he appears to be. I salute his courage and greatly support his Bill. I look forward to supporting both him and it during its passage through the House.

8.31 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): For the greater part of the past two hours, there has been no Minister in the Chamber. We are now graced with the presence of the Adam Smith look-alike, who has just returned to the Chamber but who is not even replying to the debate. It is disgraceful. The Government claim that the Bill is important and they have spent £5 million telling people how good it is, yet Ministers cannot be bothered to be here to listen to hon. Members responding to the Government's consultation and the Government's publicity.

There is a fundamental difference between the two sides of the House. We believe that health care should be a right, free at the point of use for everybody irrespective of background, social standing or ability to pay. The hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) is a good, true Tory who understands only pounds and pence. He understands only the cost of something—he does not have any idea of the value of anything.

Mr. Davies *rose*——

Mr. Corbyn: No, I shall not give way.

Mr. Quentin Davies: The hon. Gentleman has spoken about me in the most unflattering terms.

Mr. Corbyn: I am not giving way.

Mr. Davies *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) is not giving way.

Mr. Corbyn: Hon. Members are limited to 10 minutes. The hon. Gentleman had plenty of opportunity to tell us about the value of the market economy in health care. I think that I should take this opportunity to tell him about the value of socialism in health care.

Does the hon. Gentleman honestly believe that everything should be bought and sold? Must every operation be judged against its cost? At no time did the hon. Gentleman mention the convenience of the patient, his safety or his comfort. He knows that the Bill's aim is for every hospital to become a company. Every doctor must look to his accountant before doing anything——

Mr. Quentin Davies: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Would it not be in accordance with the best traditions of this House for an hon. Member who attributes to me opinions that I did not express, and who is giving a summary of my speech that I seriously dispute, at least to give way to allow me to correct the position?

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has made his point, but it is for the hon. Member who has the floor to decide whether to give way.

Mr. Corbyn: I plead for injury time because of that intervention.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am not sure that the hon. Member will get it.

Mr. Corbyn: The House can judge for itself which side of the argument it wished to support. The problem for my constituents is that for many years there has been persistent underfunding of our health authority, which each autumn leads to the spending crisis faced by most inner-city health authorities. My authority has met that crisis by taking more than 100 beds out of use. That is happening throughout the country and is a measure of the crisis in health care.

Conservative Members lecture us and claim 10 years of success under successive Secretaries of State, yet hospitals and wards have been closed. I accept that new hospitals have been built, but there are fewer beds available, there is a worse service and there are longer waiting lists than there were 10 years ago. Conservative Members should recognise those facts. They should study a few of the international comparisons. By every index on health spending in industrialised countries, this country comes very low if not bottom. The solution is not to bring in the accountants, the market economy, the sales people and the idea that every hospital must have a commercial manager to decide what can be sold to make some money; the solution is to begin thinking about the health needs of our people.

Why is the life expectancy of working-class people shorter than that of middle-class people? Why do people living in overcrowded accommodation have a shorter life expectancy than those living in salubrious suburbs? Why do children living in high-rise council flats or the slums in every one of our major cities suffer more bronchial problems than children living in suburban areas? Why are all those inequalities in health ignored by the Government in favour of the market economy? They know that the market economy means that those who can afford to pay can buy their way past the queues. The Bill is a massive attempt to privatise the entire National Health Service by stealth.

The other matter that I wish to raise, and which I predict will be guillotined off the agenda in Committee, is that of community care. Conservative Members have lectured us for a long time about the needs of community care. Those who honestly believe that community care is working should, when they leave the House tonight, walk across the river, go along the south bank and talk to those living in cardboard city. They should talk to the people at Charing Cross station. There are 10,000 people sleeping on the streets of this city; some, although not all, have been in long-stay institutions. There is not much community care for them in living in a cardboard box outside a tube station on a cold winter's night in London. That is the sort of issue that should be dealt with in the Bill. It is the reality of the inequality of health care, the inequality of life expectancy, the inequality of community care—inequalities that are exacerbated, not lessened, by the Bill.

I make no apology for being sponsored by the National Union of Public Employees. The question of very low pay for Health Service workers is not dealt with by the Bill and neither is the question of their conditions if a hospital decides to opt out. They are not protected—they are given away, along with the hospital, to any trust that it chooses. There is an attempt to break up the national negotiating machinery that has been some protection for some of the lowest paid and most dedicated people in the NHS.

The Government often lecture us on the freedom of choice—the freedom to lead one's life as one wishes. It is true that there is freedom of choice. We are all free to go out and buy a Rolls-Royce—the only problem is that 98 per cent. of the population cannot afford it. We are all free to buy a house—the only problem is that as thousands cannot afford to do so they go homeless. We are all free to pay high rents—the problem is that most people are too poor to pay them. The Government now say that we are free to choose the health care that we want. The Prime Minister said that she wants her health care when she wants it, how she wants it and from whom she wants it. For her there is freedom of choice, but for the majority of the population there is not.

The Government talk about protecting and defending democracy in this country. Every health authority that has, in the past 10 years, attempted to stand up against the Government's attempts to cut resources and, when RAWP was in operation, to take money away from inner-city areas, found itself in receipt of a letter either from the chair of the regional health authority or from the Secretary of State, announcing that its services were no longer required because it had attempted to represent its community. Now, what vestiges of democracy remain in local health authorities will be taken away by the Bill because health authorities will be stuffed full of placepersons put there by the Secretary of State, and representing the local business community. The idea that local authorities have no part to play in health matters is both insulting and disgusting.

[Mr. Corbyn]

The centralisation of powers that the Secretary of State is taking unto himself through the Bill would do credit to the most authoritarian of states. He should remember that what comes out from Richmond terrace to the health authorities also goes back to Richmond terrace and when an election finally comes, people will have one person and one person alone to blame for the inadequacies of their Health Service, and that is the Secretary of State.

Many of those who work in the NHS, as nurses, ancillary workers such as porters or gardeners, doctors or consultants and all those who work in community care, attendance or long-stay institutions, are frightened and fearful of the Bill. There is little protection for them. There is no ring fencing to protect the salaries of those who are transferred. There is no protection for the money transferred into local authorities from the long-stay institutions. The treatment that the Government mete out to the ambulance workers, in their attempt to destroy the dispute when those workers are providing the only real emergency service, shows the Government's contempt for people who are genuinely trying to run a Health Service. The Bill may not be defeated in the House, but it will be defeated eventually, because the principles on which it is based are wholly and odiously wrong.

8.41 pm

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): This autumn, our youngest child, an extrovert and articulate girl, went away to university. Soon after she arrived there, she telephoned home. It was, in family terms, an epoch-making call. It lasted for three minutes and ended when she said, "Must stop, can't afford any more." It was her first telephone call as a budget holder. How many parents recognise the changes in behaviour that come when their children have to start paying for the services that they use? Even when the budget is £28 billion, the same principles are at work.

The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), like a Savonarola of the social services, is roaming the country urging citizens to burn the Bill on a bonfire of Socialist sentimentality, just as his Florentine predecessor forced Botticelli to burn his easel and paintbrushes in front of the Duomo. I am not suggested that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State is the Botticelli of the Front Bench, but I am clear that subsequent generations would be impoverished if the Bill were to be destroyed.

The hon. Member for Livingston excoriated the Bill for leaning on incentives, where he would trust that enormous sum solely to the staff's good will. I share his admiration for the generosity and altruism of NHS staff at all levels, but under the present system, the disincentives are acute. For example, what about the departmental head who, in my district health authority, on his own initiative saved the hospital thousands of pounds, but saw it all disappear into the district funding and found his enthusiasm for making further savings sorely blunted?

We are talking not about personal gain, but about the salutary effect of letting staff see gains for their own unit as a result of their better use of their resources. What about the supplier to a great hospital, who, week in and week out, sees over-ordering of perishable goods, but sees no evidence of management concern about it?

"Cost-effectiveness" is not a dirty phrase. It is not, as the hon. Member for Livingston and his friends suggest, a device for making cuts. Rather, it is a necessary discipline for ensuring that money is spent on patient care and not on wasted food or dependence-generating tranquillisers. The Government will always find it hard to win the rhetorical argument on the NHS, but they have to find the money. They do that very well, as is shown by the 25 per cent. increase in cash terms in the past two years.

The hon. Member for Livingston and his colleagues have no such need. They can, as they have done again today, leave the nation with the implied suggestion that, if they were in power, the resources for the NHS and for community care would somehow be limitless. That works because all of us would love it to be true and because the public, after 10 years of Conservative increases in NHS funding, have forgotten just how deep and savage were the cuts made in NHS funding by the Labour party when in power.

I do not wish to follow my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State down his path of leaving community care to another occasion. I have already told him and my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House that it would be a disaster if the partisan dispute over the NHS proposals cut out a full and proper debate on the Bill's proposals on community care. Those proposals are both important and overdue. The level of service depends on the level of resources available, but the Bill sets out to do what Griffiths saw it was vital to do—make the best use of whatever level of resources is achievable at any particular time, and remove the perverse incentives that waste money by making it hugely profitable for a local authority to send clients into expensive residential care at the expense of the Department of Social Security, when it would be both cheaper and better care to keep them in their own homes at local authority expense. That is an important advance, and it has met with widespread approval.

The Bill requires local authorities to create a care plan for every client, and that, too, is an advance. However, in Committee, we shall need to look in detail at how that should be done. First, we must make sure that the client is properly heard. The Bill must have no more to do with paternalist prescription; we must listen to the client's preferences. Where a client cannot state them for himself, he should be afforded a friend or volunteer to speak for him.

We must make sure that the assessment is well founded. It will be no service to anyone if the natural suspicion and ignorance that social services staff have of NHS staff and vice versa leads to lopsided and partial assessments. For example, the contribution that can be made by occupational therapists, speech therapists, voluntary alcohol abuse counsellors and so on has to be understood and incorporated in the assessment. That will mean a large exercise in co-operative working, and to the extent that it can be addressed by training, that joint training should be started now.

I welcome the recognition of voluntary organisations, which have done so much to pioneer new patterns of caring and carried so much of the load that the aging of our population, and their rising expectations, lay upon them. I share their unease lest their initiatives and priorities should be distorted by having too many public priorities pushed upon them. A huge amount of work must be done in the development of community care, and my time is too short to go through it all. The truth is that we shall always have a crisis, both in health and in community care, because the expectations of the public rise, quite properly, every year and there is no possibility whatever of any Government ever being able to provide enough resources to meet the growing needs that our own success in solving many problems has called into being.

Ring fencing is not the answer. Everybody who has a special interest in politics, whatever it may be, clamours to have that part of Government expenditure which is devoted to their interests ring-fenced. Somehow that seems to be a way of keeping the thieving hands of more powerful committee chairmen off their precious budget. Ring fencing is a recipe for conservative structural developments. The moment someone is inside a ring fence, he is reluctant to pioneer services which spread outside it; most of the advances in community care, and many of the advances in health care, will come from that kind of lateral pioneering co-operation between services which, if they were ring-fenced, would never extend a hand across the boundary to one another.

8.50 pm

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): I listened with great care to the Secretary of State. He was at great pains to explain once again to the House that the Government's plans for the NHS will not lead to privatisation. But it is not so much the right hon. and learned Gentleman's speech that worries many hon. Members, as the Bill, because in many respects privatisation is clearly behind it.

When one looks at the new-style management of the district health authorities, as they are to be called, and the family practitioner services authorities, as the family practitioner committees are to be called, it is clear that they are to be run along the lines of private companies. In other words, there will be no room on the new-style boards for local authority representatives. As other hon. Members have said, that is a retrograde step.

Paragraph 8·5 of the White Paper says:

> "The Government believes that authorities based on this confusion of roles would not be equipped to handle the complex managerial and contractual issues that the new system of matching resources to performance will demand."

That is the official reason why local authorities are not to be included on the new management-style boards. But the real reason is that the Government believe that local authorities will not do what they are told—that they will not be party to cuts in health provision.

Another vital point is the way in which the Government seem to want to set up NHS trusts. In partiuclar, the management boards of those trusts will have no provision to ensure that patients' needs are taken into account. In the White Paper, the Prime Minister says that the needs of the patient are to be paramount. But when one considers the way in which the new trusts are to be set up, one sees that there is no way in which patients are to be consulted. In Committee, we shall need to look at ways in which patients are represented on those boards at area or district health authority level and in the trusts.

We shall also need to consider the way in which the NHS contract principle is included in the Bill. Traditionally, the Health Service has been based on the statutory responsibility of hospitals to provide care. In the private sector, there is a contractual relationship. It is that contractual relationship that is now being brought into the Health Service between health boards and those services which provide health care. We are moving away from the traditional statutory responsibility to provide health care that we have known in the Health Service and into a contractual conception.

A general practice which is large enough will be given a budget, which will clearly be cash-limited because budgets cannot mean anything else. If a practice is not big enough to acquire a budget, the district health authority will force doctors to choose health care for their patients, not according to their needs but according to the cost of that provision. In other words, as the cash limits bite, they will be shunted from hospital to hospital.

All the provision for a privatised Health Service—the NHS trust hospitals, the new board managements and GP budgets—are now in place. We may not have a Secretary of State today who believes in a privatised Health Service, but if a future Secretary of State does, the structures are there. It is only a small step between the Bill and a fully privatised service.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House have said that the great danger is that that will lead to a two-tier Health Service. Moreover, it will mean that the Health Service provision in rural areas will be drastically affected. There is no question about that.

The Bill's central provisions are completely irrevelant to Wales. I asked the Secretary of State for Wales two questions, which were answered yesterday. First, I asked how many hospitals in Wales want to opt out under the new system. The answer was none. That is because no GP in Wales wants a budget, and so cannot buy in services. There is no private provision in Wales. As the White Paper makes clear, that is underdeveloped. Therefore, the hospitals cannot buy in from the private sector. That is completely irrelevant. Secondly, I asked how many general practices in Wales want their own budgets. The Secretary of State made it clear that none of them wants that.

Those provisions are irrelevant to Wales, and in Committee we shall be seeking to exempt Wales from the Bill. If the Committee will not agree to that, the only sensible course will be for each area health authority to have a referendum of all the electors in that authority to decide whether a hospital should opt out. Consultation is not sufficient, because all the patients who may be affected by such a decision should be consulted in a referendum.

I welcome the news that local authorities are to be given responsibility for assessing the needs of individuals: that seems sensible. However, as Opposition Members have pointed out, there is no obligation on local authority social services departments to carry out such assessments, and I feel that we should do something about that.

I disagree with the hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe), who said that funding for community care should not be ring-fenced. He should look at the submission sent to all hon. Members by the voluntary agencies and local authorities that will have to operate the scheme. They all say that, unless a community care budget is specified, money will simply go into the local authority pot without being earmarked for community care. Such specification is necessary to ensure that both current and future needs are met. If there is to be a partnership between the social service departments and the voluntary agencies, they must know how much they can spend on community care from year to year.

We in Wales have a passion for the Health Service, and we speak of it with passion. We know that its guiding principles were based not in City boardrooms but in the mining communities of Wales, Scotland and northern

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England. Those principles were born not in the rich pastures of the south-east but in communities that have had to fight for everything they have ever owned. If the Government will not pay attention to the need to retain the Health Service as it is—free at the point of delivery for every patient who needs it—the people will vote them out in the next election.

9 pm

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): As the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) has just said, the National Health Service is every bit as valued in the north of England as it is in Wales and Scotland. It is valued, indeed, throughout the length and breadth of the country, for it is a national Health Service—and it is in pretty good shape, considering that it is 41 years old this year.

Despite soaring costs and increasing demand, coupled with the pressures of an aging population and expensive leading-edge technology, the service is still free to all, and funded mainly from taxation. It is still equally available to all types of patients from all parts of the country. It still provides a system of primary health care, giving each person his or her own GP, and a referral system for specialist consultations of every kind. It is still highly regarded internationally, and it provides good-quality training for doctors who come here from all over the world. Each and every one of us, whether we are for or against the reforms suggested by my right hon. and learned Friend, should begin our speeches by paying tribute to an excellent service in which many people give of their best to provide help for us all.

The Government, however, have played an essential part. It is their fine record in running the nation's economy soundly that has enabled total spending to rise from £166 per head in 1979-80 to £444 per head in 1989-90. My hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) suggested that we should fund any treatment that came on the market regardless of cost, but I cannot stand idly by and listen to such a suggestion. I have seen at first hand —because all my family were in the NHS—the effect of diverting resources to expensive procedures with indifferent or uncertain outcomes, at the cost of many thousands of "bread-and-butter" operations which could otherwise be carried out. Under the last Labour Government, a Royal Commission found that, even if the country spent its entire gross domestic product on the NHS, there would still be unsatisfied demand for services.

The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) asked us to look at our own communities, and when my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) was looking at his, I happened to remark jovially —and jokingly, I must add—that spending in his region was too high. Spending per head on the NHS is indeed far higher in Scotland than in England, but after tabling some parliamentary questions I have been able to obtain the figures for my part of the country. Hon. Members may think that I am going to recite the usual cash figures—revealing that in 1982 the figure for the northern region was £520 million, compared with £802 million this year —but I have had all the figures recalculated at constant 1989-90 prices. In 1982, the figure was £741·8 million, while in 1989—at constant prices—it had reached £846·8 million. That is a significant improvement.

Services have also improved. In 1983, 409,000 in-patients were treated in the north; by 1988, the figure has risen to 462,000. The number of new out-patients rose from 550,000 to 590,000. None of that is possible unless the money can first be made available by running the economy correctly. There are 22 major capital schemes worth over £1 million under way in the Northern Region health authority. That has to be compared with the cut of over one third in the region's funding that was imposed by the last Labour Government.

My own hospital, North Tees, has only just been given the new roof that it should have had in 1977, but for the cuts that were imposed by the last Labour Government. The figures for the Darlington, North Tees and South Tees health authorities show that there has been a significant improvement in their funding under a Conservative Government.

Amid all the good news, however, a major case for change can still be made. It is not quite a mid-life crisis; I shall be 40 in 10 years, and I should not like to have to regard myself then as being old. A structural change is needed. *Woman's Realm* asked 10,000 of its readers what they expected from their GP services. Less than half of those who responded thought that their GPs were sympathetic and took their problems seriously; 60 per cent. considered that most GPs were helpful, whereas 43 per cent. were only "satisfied" with the treatment that they had received.

A recently undertaken "Which?" survey commented that the

> "Consumers' Association welcomes the stated objectives of the Bill. In particular we applaud the Government's commitment to putting 'the needs of the patient first.' Consumers' Association wants consumers to have a greater choice of better quality health care, wherever they live. In pursuit of these objectives we support the major principles behind the Bill—of promoting efficiency and value for money; bringing all parts of the NHS up to the standards of the best; and developing a system which rewards those who work hardest."

The standard of care in and the performance of different hospitals varies greatly. The average stay in hospital for the same treatment varies from three and a half days to nine and a half days. The average cost of treatment can range from £450 to £1,300. How can that possibly be justified? It must be right in a compassionate society to seek to maximise the performance of a service that has to rely on limited resources. However great those resources may be, that will always ultimately be limited.

The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) said that there should have been consultation before the reforms were implemented. However, the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) said that, when the National Health Service was established, there was no consultation —for the very good reason that the Labour Government knew that a National Health Service was not what the providers of health in the country wanted. It is interesting to note the different arguments on just that one point.

Payment should be linked to performance. The Bill will ensure that additional payments are made to general practitioners for health screening, the elderly and patients with persistent health problems. Additional money will be provided for those who work in the inner cities, under the Jarman index. Additional money will also be provided for those who work in distant rural areas. All the various factors that ought to be taken into account will be taken into account.

GP practices will be provided with much greater powers as a result of the budget-holding provisions in the Bill. It is right to make the point that many practices do not yet possess the information technology that they will need if they are to carry out their responsibilities. Many forward-looking practices have, however, already installed the technology. Many of the GP practices in my constituency and in other areas have already bought computers and are considering how they can best improve the range and quality of the services that they offer to their patients. The real power of this reform is that it is patient-led and patient-driven. It is up to the patient to obtain more information about health services in his area. He has to make the comparisons and find the doctor who suits him best.

As for hospitals, the funding will, quite rightly, follow the patient. However, a contracting system, which is regarded as the central provision of the Bill, already exists in many parts of the country. The waiting list initiative has already been introduced on a contractual basis. It is only right that we should cease rewarding the bad performers in the Health Service.

There are two adjacent health authorities in my constituency. One has a waiting list in one specialty and the other does not. The Government came along with their waiting list initiative and paid money to the poor performer—the authority with the waiting list. The authority without a waiting list came to me and said that they had never had a waiting list for that particular discipline but, for the first time, they thought that it might be a good idea if they did, because otherwise the money would go to the authority across the river. I have never understood why that kind of resource allocation took place. Managers who save money by making sensible economies within their local unit find that the money is taken away and reallocated to a less efficient manager. That cannot be right.

Surgeons within the Health Service know which are the bad surgeons and which are the good—my father is a surgeon. They know which surgeons turn out a large number of good quality operations, and which turn out either a low quantity or low quality. Good surgeons are happy to bid for work from other areas. We must get rid of the boundary problem that prevents patients from going across the river, or across the line. Then improvements will follow and that will be the reward for popular and successful units.

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Devlin: I am trying to get on as quickly as possible, and I am sure that the hon. Lady will have many more opportunities to speak about health than I shall have.

Let us consider the information that is available at the moment. For example, only recently have figures for post-operative complication rates become available. The confidential inquiry into peri-operative deaths showed that some 1,000 unnecessary deaths each year result from inappropriate surgical procedures. That information has only recently become known because the Government, during the past 10 years, have progressively increased information requirements and the information technology to bring them to light.

The internal market will result in patients being referred to more specialised units, and that will mean that costly, post-operative complications must decrease.

I welcome the fact that audit is part of the Bill, as it is critical to its success. Unless clinicians can get to grips with their costs, we will never get to grips with the overall funding problems of the NHS. People must know what they are expected to do. Clinicians must realise that they have a responsibility to manage expensive resources well.

In an article in the *Daily Mail* on 27 November 1989, Dr. Colin Leon said:

> "It's about time the medical profession accepted the need for some kind of accountability. We spend public money so should be called upon to explain what we do with it."

He continued:

> "I have always voted Labour and have always believed socialism to be more attractive than capitalism, but I do not share Labour's belief that the Health Service is under threat from these reforms."

Consultants have a closed shop and they must regulate themselves. The royal colleges do not deny the need for change in the NHS. There are several pleas for improvements of the NHS, resourcing must be made available for information technology, and more imaginative powers are needed for patients.

I say to Ministers that if we are to gain the hearts and minds of the British people, we have to explain, in a patients' charter, exactly what rights and abilities they will have after legislation has been passed. That is the one thing that is not in the Bill, and it should be in it. That would solve all the arguments for us. If we were able to present a shopping list of rights and abilities for patients vis-a-vis their own doctor, or hospital and other NHS, services, they would be a lot happier.

At the top of the shopping list, they would see the one thing that we should have made clear time and time again —that there is no proposal in the Bill for any hospital to be privatised. No one can opt out of the NHS, and it will be disciplined—business not oriented. The service will be better organised and better disciplined. I commend the Bill to the House.

9.14 pm

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): I shall concentrate on community care and express some regret that the Secretary of State for Health had to be reminded by Opposition Members that it is affected by the Bill. It is quite clear that there is an urgent need for change in the Government's policies on community care, and the reasons are precisely the legacy of the policies they have pursued since 1979.

One of my worries is the indecent haste with which large psychiatric hospitals are being run down because of financial pressure on the Health Service. That process is also influenced by performance-related pay for general managers, who have had incentives to get people out into cardboard boxes, rather than proper community care, and have discharged patients in questionable circumstances.

The huge explosion in private institutional care is the direct result of the publicly funded experiment in free-market provision. People are being forced into institutional care because of the contraction of an alternative to it in their communities.

A letter from Pat and Michael Frobisher, who live in Walton in Wakefield, arrived on my desk here last week. With their permission, I should like to quote it, as it illustrates my argument. Pat Frobisher writes:

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> "Michael was diagnosed with MS in 1970. I have nursed him since he gave up work in 1975. I had help from a nurse to bath him once a week after 1981 and respite care one week in 6 in the YDU at Pinderfields since then. Last year, in 1988, I begged for more help from the Health Authority. No dice. No money. No staff—consequence, I collapsed in July 1989 and Michael had to go into care, the one thing we had hoped would never happen."

He was moved 15 miles away from Wakefield to a private home near Goole.

Pat Frobisher then mentioned costs, saying that they are covered by the Department of Social Security and a small occupational pension, which gives them an income of £245·05 a week. The letter continues:

> "The fees at Greenacres are £245 pw, leaving Mike 5p per week spending money."

As a result, the family are having to sell their house in Wakefield to raise money to pay for the man's care, simply because domiciliary support is not available. I telephoned Mike Frobisher today to ask his permission to use the letter. He reminded me that we had met—when I spoke at a meeting to try to keep open the younger disabled unit at Pinderfields hospital at Wakefield because it was threatened with cuts by the Government whose performance we have heard praised by Conservative Members throughout the debate. What I have described is the reality of Government policy. People are being forced into institutional care because domiciliary provision has disappeared in many areas as a direct result of Government cuts.

The Bill's parentage is highly questionable. The motivation behind it is financial and ideological. It is a clear attempt to reduce Government spending. There is deep anxiety about the financial mess that has arisen because of the open-ended income support of private care. The Bill is a deliberate attempt to shift the burden of funding residential care away from the Department of Social Security to the backs of local authorities. The Government continue to regard community care as a cheap option. It is a disgrace that the Bill fails to finance the resource requirements that have been identified by many, including the Association of County Councils. Professional training and resourcing requirements are not being funded in the Bill.

The Bill is ideological because it attacks local authority provision and discriminates in favour of the voluntary and private sectors. That discrimination against local authority is indefensible. They will no longer be able to provide part III accommodation and residential care, which, as everyone knows, is a safety net for people whom the private sector reject.

I support the voluntary sector—I am aware of the many initiatives taken by voluntary groups—but it is patchy and uneven. The many representations that hon. Members receive from such organisations show that they do not want to play the role envisaged for them in the Bill.

There is deep anxiety about the implications of the market forces approach. Experiments in such an approach to private institutional care provide clear evidence that market forces do not lead to improved quality. Problems after problem in the private sector has forced the Government to bring forward the Registered Homes Act 1984 to tidy up the problems faced by people in private homes and the scandals that continue to occur in the private sector.

I find the issue of choice interesting. Genuine choice in residential care would mean leaving vacancies. How many owners of private homes will say, "We believe in choice, so we will leave three or four vacancies"? The idea that choice can be provided in community care is a myth.

In the debate on the Queen's Speech, I said that competitive tendering for care was offensive, and irrelevant to the care that our welfare state should continue to provide.

My time is virtually up. Once again I am at the dog-end of the debate. I seem to manage to have this slot every time that I speak in the Chamber. In Committee, the Opposition will put forward radical alternatives to institutional provision. Let us get away from the legacy of the workhouse. Our alternatives will be to bring about an intensive domiciliary support service, to keep people out of institutional care rather than force them into private homes as the Government have done.

I am proud to boast that I have been personally involved in community care. The community care provisions in the Bill are clearly an afterthought, as was the Secretary of State's reference to it towards the end of his speech. The Bill is a dog's breakfast. It is inappropriate to say that it makes sensible provision for community care. It will compound, rather than correct, the appalling consequences of 10 years of Conservative policy in that area.

9.23 pm

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): I am glad to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe), who always speaks with insight and conviction.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) said that he was here in 1948, when the original NHS Bill was introduced. We know from his speech that he has just had an operation, so he has sampled the NHS many years later. He congratulated my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook)—rightly, in the view of all hon. Members on this side—on his superb speech. He made many points, but he will agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent that the Prime Minister wishes to twist the NHS into something else.

As my right hon. Friend knows, the Bill is greatly disliked throughout the length and breadth of Wales. In an intervention, the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) asked about lithotripters for the treatment of kidney stones. Why do the Government consider that it is permissible for Wales to be without those machines? Why should the people of Wales, who fall prey to kidney stones as much as any other people, not have that treatment? These machines are in Leeds, Sheffield, Bristol, Manchester and Scotland and there are two in London, but none in Wales. Will the Under-Secretary of State tell us whether the Bill will guarantee these long overdue machines for Wales?

The Secretary of State for Wales will not take part in our debates on the Bill, yet this is the most important Second Reading debate in this Parliament. Why has he resolved not to speak? Perhaps he is ashamed of the Bill. Perhaps he dislikes the tinge of commerce that runs through it. Perhaps in Cabinet Committee he lost the fight against hospital trusts in Wales, but his name had to go on the Bill, or he could not stay in the Cabinet. That was the price of high office. This wretched Bill appears to be the price that he had to pay to remain in office. It is regrettable that he is not even in the Chamber for this greatly important debate.

Wales comes at the bottom of too many tables of social indicators. We are the land of low wages. We tend to be at or near the top of any assessment of poverty, ill health and poor housing. Our anxiety is that the Bill overlooks the interests of the average family on low wages. Until now, that family has had the guarantee of a comprehensive Health Service, free at the point of use—a compensation, a buttress and an insurance for families who find it hard to make ends meet. In this Bill we see the first disturbing signs of the erosion of the concept of a comprehensive Health Service. The Bill raises doubts for the retired miner in Tymbl or Blaenavon, the quarryman's widow in a terraced house in Blaenau Ffestiniog and the unemployed steelman in Shotton.

The great Aneurin Bevan in Mr. Atlee's Administration bequeathed the NHS to our people. The NHS was conceived and nurtured in Wales, where in the different communities miners and quarrymen initially banded together to provide basic health care. Many will agree that the NHS has bound us together as a society. It represents the pursuit of a humane and social objective: that the sick should receive treatment of the highest possible quality because they are sick, not because they are rich.

The Bill is irrelevant for Wales. There are barely 13 general practices of the required size. So far, there is not one application for a hospital trust. The plans are deeply unpopular throughout the length and breadth of Wales. That partly explains our magnificent parliamentary election successes throughout 1989. We can say without a shadow of doubt that there is no mandate for the Bill in Wales—none whatever.

The Conservatives are a minority party in Wales. This Bill is a home counties solution to the Health Services problems. It is the socially divisive Cabinet politics of the south-east of Britain. Without a shred of support for it in Wales, it is yet another example of the north-south divide.

The Bill fails to address the problems of health inequalities. The Bill sees the model patient as a person in a health supermarket or in Marks and Spencer, with time and money to spend choosing health care from among the many goods on sale. That is not true of most people who use our health services. The Bill's proposals will make the Health Service less accessible to those most in need, especially the elderly, the disabled and those with mental health problems. The poor already have difficulty in getting the best out of the Health Service. All those people may need to see a doctor more often and receive more treatment in hospital than others.

In Wales we have areas of social and economic disadvantage that are among the worst in Britain. This decade, unemployment, poverty and industrial decay have increased enormously. Those social and economic disadvantages are shown in major health indicators—41 per cent. of Welsh people report long-standing illness, compared with 33 per cent. in England and 31 per cent. in Scotland. In Wales, child health is poorer than in the rest of Britain and there are 5·2 stillbirths per 1,000 live births. The mortality rate among children under one is much higher than in England or Scotland. Such health disadvantages are often a function of the Welsh industrial history. The death rate among men in Wales from bronchitis, emphysema and asthma are much higher than in Britain.

It is also true that Wales is a black spot for heart disease. The Welsh heart health survey, the most comprehensive survey of its kind, found that deaths from heart disease among women increased by 25 per cent. between the years 1970 and 1980. Heart disease accounted for half of all deaths in Wales in the survey year—something like 10,000 men and women. In the Rhondda valley, the mortality rate is 20 per cent. higher than the British average.

Comprehensive health services, within easy reach of all, are absolutely vital to the Welsh people. The proposals in the Bill will not provide those services. Local accountability of the Health Service will also be reduced by the Bill. The number of community health councils in Wales will be reduced from 22 to nine, but the changes to the Health Service will make those councils more not less important. The proposals mean, however, that patients will be more remote from health care. If there are fewer community health officers, there will be less local representation and less local accessibility to the Health Service.

The chairman of the Society of Community Health Council Secretaries in Wales, Mr. Ivor Roberts, has told me that the proposals are incompatible with the supposedly "consumer-orientated" aims of the Bill.

The changes are unwelcome. We know that the aim of community health councils in Wales is to enable people to participate in the planning and running of the Health Service. The proposal to reduce the number of such councils from 22 to nine is a retrograde one. It will mean that the Health Service is less accessible—more distant from, and less responsive to the needs of, the communities that it seeks to serve.

A number of hon. Members have already expressed great concern about community care. The provision of the highest quality community care to our elderly and mentally and physically handicapped is of the utmost importance. Wales has the second highest proportion of elderly people of any part of Britain. Wales has a higher proportion of elderly people in local authority residential homes than the United Kingdom average. The number of severely handicapped adults in Wales is more than double that for Britain as a whole. The Bill's proposals are just not good enough to meet the challenge.

If the Bill is enacted, there will be a problem with travel and access. People may be expected to travel to hospitals in other areas to avoid waiting. However, for those with mobility problems—the elderly, the disabled and the poor—this may be impossible. For everyone, it will be harder for families and friends throughout Wales to visit. The problem will be particularly great in rural areas, where patients already experience longer travelling times than people in other areas. Bus and train services are not as good as they were 10 years ago.

For women, the great users of health services, travel can be a particular hardship in Wales. Difficult and expensive journeys may deter some women from attending clinics for antenatal and post-natal care. Increased travelling costs to more distant maternity units could create financial pressures for those with incomes just above the level of eligibility for financial help for travel. The problems are even greater for parents with sick or handicapped children who need to remain in hospital or return there regularly.

It is no exaggeration to tell the House on behalf of the people of Wales that this measure is of great concern to people with children in hospital, to people who are in great pain who are in hospital for a long time, and to the

[Mr. Barry Jones]

terminally ill. Modern hospitals' care of children relies heavily on the participation of parents. How will that be possible if the hospital is distant from home?

I want to pose some questions which I hope will be answered by the Under-Secretary of State. Has the Bill been costed? What do the changes mean in real terms? Will there be the manpower with sufficient skills to implement the proposed changes? If these supposedly massive amounts of money are available, the nurses in Wales ask this question: why cannot the money be given now for patients' care?

There are no proposals for ballots. The changes will occur over very short time scales. It looks as though there will be greater centralisation of the control of the Health Service in Wales. It is a cheek to push the Bill in Wales. Waiting lists are already a disgrace. We have seen hospitals and wards close and the loss of many beds. The Government have imposed eye test charges. They are increasing the cost of dental examinations. The Government have given well-off older citizens tax relief, should they go for private treatment. Many hon. Members have said what must be the truth—the morale of those who work in the service is very low.

It is no exaggeration to say that in Wales the Health Service is the people's health service. Now, it is free and accessible to all, but the Bill has no support in Wales. No Conservative Back Bencher from Wales will say that it has support. I challenge any of them to say that they will support it. There are no such Back Benchers here tonight. The Secretary of State for Wales is not here. They have run away. They are afraid, and know that there is no support for the Bill. In the Vale of Glamorgan parliamentary by-election, the proposals on the Health Service constituted one reason why the seat was gained by Labour from the Conservatives. We had a great deal of help from the Secretary of State for Health, too. His proposals helped us to win the seat.

The people of Wales are not behind this Bill; those who work in the Health Service will have none of it; the community health councils are critical; patients and voluntary groups are almost universally opposed. Opinion in our country of Wales is that the humane and magnificent aims of the Health Service are under threat and that the Government are up to no good. We all believe in Wales that we shall lose if Government Whips push this measure through against the interests of our people.

The Government have a clear choice: they can abandon dogma or face the loss of parliamentary seats throughout Wales. Even if they will not listen to public opinion, perhaps they will at last listen to their own voters. This Bill should be dropped and Wales should be exempted. I am sure that we shall vote against it next week.

9.41 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Ian Grist): That was a miserable speech, but it was in line with what one usually hears from the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones). I shall be going to his county tomorrow to see the great new hospitals that have been built there under this Government—Maelor Wrecsam and Ysbyty Glan Clwyd. I hope to learn there of the support that we have gained for building the hospitals that the hon. Gentleman so signally failed to build when serving in my position for five years under the Labour Government.

When the Labour Government were in power, expenditure on the Health Service rose by only 6·6 per cent. in real terms, whereas I am delighted to say that, in the district health authority serving Alyn and Deeside, it has risen under this Government by no less than 46 per cent. in real terms. That is the measure of the difference between the Conservative record and Labour promises.

It is remarkable to hear the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside talking about waiting lists, doctors and nurses and the need for greater resources. When he was in power, nurses' pay fell by 20 per cent. in real terms. Hon. Members who were in Parliament then will remember nurses complaining to them. The same applies to the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), who made a heartrending speech about the Health Service, claiming that it was Socialism in action. We do not accept that; nor do the people who worked in the service and suffered under the Labour Government.

Of course we are sorry about the disputes in the service, but they are as nothing compared with the industrial action in the Health Service in the last months of the Labour Government. It is no wonder that the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside and the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent feel guilty when they reflect that, if we had continued nurses' pay at the level at which it stood when we came to office, it would be worth £68 per week less, than it now is. Consultants would be paid £63 per week less and the average remuneration of GPs in Wales would have to fall by £94 per week to bring it to a level comparable with that in the last year of the Labour Government. When the hon. Gentleman had the power to act, he paid nurses, doctors and consultants miserable sums. There was no capital expenditure, there were 7,000 fewer front-line staff in Wales—including nurses and doctors—and the hospital service was treating 400,000 fewer patients every year.

Practice funds have been discussed in today's debate. They will give GPs much greater freedom to be masters and mistresses in their own houses and to deploy their resources in such a way as to enable them to provide patients with the high quality care that they want and need. Hospitals will become more responsive to the needs of GPs and their patients, as GPs will obviously choose those which offer the best quality services with the shortest waiting lists. Practice fund holders will also be able to transfer funds between different elements of their budget. That will provide them with greater flexibility in meeting the needs of their patients. Greater freedom in managing budgets will also enhance their clinical freedom and they will be able to make savings from the fund which can be used to provide improved patient care.

As with National Health Service trusts, we want GPs to be attracted and not compelled towards becoming fund holders. If GPs consider that funds are not in the best interests of their patients, no pressure whatever will be placed on them to accept funds against their better judgment. In addition, before any practice is allowed to hold funds, the Secretary of State will have to be satisfied that the practice has the capacity to manage them efficiently and in the best interests of patient care.

Full discussions will be held with a practice which applies to hold funds so as to take account of its particular circumstances and the composition of its practice lists.

There will be safeguards to ensure that any unforeseen circumstances leading to a need for additional expenditure on patient care can be accommodated. In short, funds will be set up and run in such a way that patients will receive all the care that they need within a structure which provides much more directly for the GP taking into account the wishes of the patient to ensure the best quality care.

The Bill also provides a framework for more effective prescribing by GPs through our proposals for indicative drug budgets, to which several hon. Members have referred. Doctors will be given an indication of what their expenditure on medicines should be, based on the age and range of patients treated. If they spend more, as they may, they will be expected to show that there were good medical reasons for so doing. If they can show such reasons, that will be the end of the matter. Any necessary follow-up on GPs who appear to be prescribing irresponsibly—and irresponsible prescribing damages patients—will be undertaken by senior and experienced doctors whose aim will be to help GPs maximise patient care.

The proposals for indicative drug budgets have been the subject of dreadful misrepresentation. I emphasise that they will be indicative, exactly as they are described. They will not in any way infringe the right of medical practitioners to prescribe all the drugs that their patients need. The scheme will provide GPs with an incentive to examine critically their prescribing patterns and costs. Every patient being cared for by a general practitioner will, of course, always be able to get the drugs that he or she needs, including high-cost medicines, for as long as they are needed. I hope that that meets the fears of my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson) who spoke so feelingly.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth) *rose*——

Mr. Grist: I am sorry, but I will not give way at this stage.

Indicative budgets are not cash-limited and the Bill exactly replicates existing provision about cash-limiting expenditure in the family practitioner services.

I come next to the part of the Bill which provides the necessary framework to carry forward our proposals for community care, about which many hon. Members were extremely interested. Details were set out in the White Paper "Caring for People". The broad thrust of the proposals has been welcomed by many people, including those whom I met on Monday at a meeting with the social services chairmen and directors in Wales. The proposals place a clear responsibility on local social service authorities in co-operation with medical, nursing and other interests, to assess the social care needs of their population and to design and make arrangements for the delivery of appropriate packages of care that will meet the needs of individuals.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton *rose*——

Mr. Grist: No, I am sorry, but I will not give way.

Many people have benefited from the expansion of the independent sector, about which the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) spoke, and nursing home care which has been made possible by massive new expenditure through the social security system. In Wales alone, the numbers have quadrupled, to about 12,000 during the Government's period of office. As the hon. Member for Wakefield said, that care has not always been the most appropriate for individuals.

The present funding arrangements that have created the incentive to place people in private residential or nursing homes, irrespective of whether that was the type of care that they wanted or needed, will end. From April 1991, there will be a phased transfer from central Government to local authorities of resources to enable them to carry out their new role. The details of the resources involved will be determined in next year's public expenditure deliberations. It was extraordinary to hear the champions of local authorities sound off so suspiciously about their colleagues in local government who they suspect will misuse those funds. I include in that my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), who was not too friendly last night either.

In Wales, the new arrangements will build upon the strategies and initiatives that we have embarked upon already in respect of services for those with mental handicap and mental illness, as well as services for the elderly, which have been widely praised by many, including Opposition Members. For example, I think that the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) has praised the efforts that have been made under our mental illness and handicap strategy. I do not think that I would be going too far if I suggested that the Government's approach to future arrangements for community care for the whole of Great Britain may owe something to our pioneering initiatives in Wales. I sincerely believe that they provide the opportunity to develop quality services that will sustain local communities and maximise the independence of individuals. It is the framework that we need to meet the demographic and social changes that we face over the next decade.

I had hoped that the contributions of Opposition Members would have been rather more constructive than they have proved to be. There are objectives underpinning our proposals which I hoped we could all share. The Opposition are making a serious error of judgment in the way that they express total opposition to our proposals. As the debate unfolds during the passage of the Bill, more and more people will understand that the increased pressures to improve services that will be placed on the NHS in the next decade and beyond as a result of increasing numbers of elderly people and other social changes, as well as from the continuing advance of medical science and the growth of available treatments, can be met only by the programme of reform which the Government propose.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Grist: No.

They will see, as many see already, that the Opposition are bankrupt of real ideas for improving the Health Service. Hon. Members who represent Welsh constituencies had a good chance to speak about these matters in the Welsh Grand Committee about three weeks ago.

Mr. Morgan *rose*——

Mr. Grist: If extra expenditure alone——

Mr. Morgan: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order for the Minister to fail to give an explanation of how

[Mr. Morgan]

it is that, in advance of the Bill becoming law, he and his boss have decided already to implement part of it in my constituency since December——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Hon. Members from the Back Benches and from the Front Benches make their own speeches. The debate will continue for 10 minutes more.

Mr. Grist: The hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) has shown that he has not read the Bill and that does not understand what it is about.

Opposition Members have gone on about expenditure. If that alone were the answer, we should not have a problem today. Since 1978, spending on the Health Service in the United Kingdom has increased massively from £8 billion to £26 billion in 1989. I have no doubt that the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside will remember with satisfaction that when he was a member of the Labour Government and a Minister with responsibilities for health, he cut expenditure on the NHS by no less than 23 per cent. in one year. That must be compared with the growth of over 25 per cent. that we have provided in Wales alone this year. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) said, his spanking new hospital was delayed for 10 years.

The Treasurer of Her Majesty's Household (Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones): And mine.

Mr. Grist: Indeed, many of us can say the same thing. It is the reversal of the position which prevailed under the previous Labour Government, which explains why the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) finds it so difficult to understand where all the money has gone. It has gone on new hospitals, new units, new drugs and a vastly increased work force in the Health Service.

I suppose that it is just possible for the Opposition to fool some people about their intentions and their earnestness, but I doubt whether they will ever be able to convince the public that they could manage the economy well enough to create the resources that are needed for the NHS. Even if they were able to do so, would they convince anyone that they would not fritter the money away on the pay of those employees in the NHS who threaten the loudest?

In another sense, resources lie at the heart of the matter. I hope that we can all share the objective or overriding aim of ensuring that we derive maximum benefit from the massive resources that we are investing in the NHS so that we can be sure that every pound purchases the greatest possible amount of direct patient care. We have been accused of pursuing market ideology, but Opposition Members are the ideologues. They are hidebound in the way in which the cling to a structure and an organisation which is monolithic, over-bureaucratic and corporatist. It is too distant from those whom it is meant to serve.

The fundamental aim of our proposals is to make the Health Service more responsive to the needs of patients and to provide a widening choice. We shall do that be delegating responsibility to local level, by developing more patient-centred treatment and care and by increasing the accountability of those in the front line who deliver the patient care and the managers in the authorities providing the conditions in which front-line staff work.

Opponents of our proposals have consistently failed to recognise the crucial and strengthened role of the district health authorities. For the first time, the authorities will be funded on the basis of their resident population. They will have a clear duty to ensure that the health needs of that local population are properly met.

Each health authority will need to carry out a systematic assessment of the health status and needs of its local population. The director of public health medicine in each district will be responsible for carrying out that assessment, in consultation with clinicians in hospitals, with general practitioners and with other interests. Their task will be to identify local needs and priorities and to ensure that people have access to a comprehensive range of high quality, value-for-money services from the hospitals and units judged best able to deliver them.

Complementary to that will be the duty that we intend to place on social service authorities to produce social service plans in collaboration with health authorities, voluntary bodies and the users of services and their representatives. They must set out how they intend to ensure the provision of quality social care for people in their homes and their communities. Taken together, our proposals will lead to a systematic assessment of people's health and social needs and the planning of comprehensive services to meet those needs.

Central to our approach is the need to devolve responsibility for the day-to-day provision of services to local unit level, thereby freeing district health authorities to concentrate on their principal task of assessing the needs of those for whom they are responsible and ensuring that those needs are met by service providers—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Morgan: Will the Minister give way? It will give him time to find his place in his brief.

Mr. Grist: That does not matter—I have plenty of brief.

Our approach builds on the acknowledged success of the progressive introduction of general management at all levels of the NHS—which, of course, Opposition Members resisted so bitterly. Our proposals for new, streamlined health authorities will make them far better equipped to perform those functions. Listening to our opponents' views, I fail to understand what can be so terribly wrong with a system of which the overall objective is to achieve better value for money so that more resources can be released for direct patient care. Our opponents do not like that approach——

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): Perhaps I can help the Minister——

Mr. Grist: Our opponents——

Mr. Powell: I want to help the Minister.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that the Minister needs help.

Mr. Powell: I am thinking about——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Grist: I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would welcome the remarkable new hospital that we built in his constituency——

Mr. Powell: The hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones)——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Powell *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am on my feet.

Mr. Powell: I heard the hon. Member for Watford call me a cheat.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I did not hear that.

Mr. Powell: The hon. Gentleman should withdraw. I would not call him a cheat. If it were anyone else, Mr. Speaker, you would ask him to withdraw. He referred to me as a cheat. I ask you to use your authority to ask him to withdraw his remark. Otherwise, I shall have to take the matter further.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us calm down. Did the hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones) mention that word?

Mr. Garel-Jones: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Please apologise.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I apologise.

Mr. Grist: I think that the hon. Member for Ogmore should be grateful to the Government——

Mr. Barry Jones *rose*——

Mr. Grist: Not again.

Mr. Jones: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. We did not hear the hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones) apologise.

Mr. Speaker: Will the hon. Member for Watford apologise a little more loudly, please?

Mr. Garel-Jones: At your request, Mr. Speaker, I apologise to the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell).

Mr. Grist: I hope that the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside is pleased with that. I am staggered by the opposition of Labour Members, who have so misunderstood and misrepresented the aims and purposes of our proposals. I have twice been in hospital this year, and my wife and younger son have also been in hospital, all of us as patients of the NHS. I cannot speak highly enough of the care, skill and dedication of our health staff. It is to give them more fulfilling careers, as my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) pointed out, and to give even better treatment to their customers—us, as patients—that I commend these proposals to the House. I look forward to the Committee debates, in which they will be examined in detail and when the public will learn precisely what is in the legislation instead of listening to the rubbish that they have heard from Labour Members, their trade union friends, the British Medical Association and many others.

[It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.]

Debate to be resumed upon Monday 11 December.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

LIQUOR DUTIES

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 101 (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

That the Alcoholic Liquor Duties Act 1979 (Repeal of Section 31) Order 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 2098), dated 14th November 1989, a copy of which was laid before this House on 15th November, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

Question agreed to.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

PIGMEAT PRICES

Motion made, and Question proposed, pursuant to Standing Order No. 102 (Standing Committees on European Community Documents).

That this House take note of European Community Document No. 8680/89 relating to pigmeat prices; and supports the Government's intention to negotiate measures which take account of the interests of consumers and pigmeat producers in the United Kingdom.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

Question agreed to.

PETITION

Roads (South London)

Mr. Humfrey Malins (Croydon, North-West): The petition that I present is signed by a vast number of people from all over London, particularly from south London, many of them from the borough of Croydon, which you and I, Mr. Speaker, have the honour to represent. My hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) is here tonight, as I would expect, given his association with this matter.

The petition contains over 10,000 signatures. Greenlink of Croydon and Mr. Delamore are closely involved. It urges the Secretary of State for Transport not to proceed with his plans for major new roads, which would be so damaging to the environment and the interests and welfare of residents not only of Croydon but of London and south London in particular. It says:

> Wherefore your petitioners pray that your Honourable House urges the . . . Secretary of State for Transport to recognise the great concern caused to the community in Streatham by the major road-building options contained in the . . . South London Assessment Study and by other major roadbuilding proposed or planned for South London, in particular the East London River Crossing; and that the manner of recognition should be as follows:-
>
> (1) He should dismiss all options in the London Assessment Studies which propose major building.
>
> (2) He should cancel the plan to build the East London River Crossing.

It also suggests that he should promote investment in a major improvement of the public transport infrastructure.

It ends:

> And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray &c.

To lie upon the Table.

Voluntary Nature Conservancy Movement

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

10.2 pm

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): I asked for this debate because I am greatly concerned about the Government's policy for the nature conservation movement and I am glad to note that my hon. Friends the Members for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael), for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) and for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), who speak for the Labour party on Welsh and Scottish matters, are here for this debate. I know that they share my concern.

There is a mood of great uncertainty within the nature conservation movement, as the traditional financial grants from the Government, via the Nature Conservancy Council, are awarded on an annual basis rather than, as they used to be, on a three-year rolling programme. This reflects the uncertainty over the fate of the NCC, and the most immediate effect is to lower staff morale. A further serious concern of these bodies is the haemorrhage of personnel that they have suffered since the end of the community programme. According to the Royal Society for Nature Conservation, since the change from the community programme to employment training, the number of trainees working for naturalist trusts has declined from 2,300 to 600, and the number of trusts participating from 37 to 30. The implications for conservation work on the ground are obvious.

However, much the biggest concern of the voluntary conservation organisations is the dark shadow that has been cast over nature conservation in Great Britain by the intended dismemberment of the Nature Conservancy Council.

The Conservative party's desperate wish to increase its support in Scotland is behind the ambush, for that is what it was, with even the chairman of the NCC, the body that is responsible for assisting the voluntary movement, deliberately kept in ignorance.

The Tory party's centralising policies have made it deeply unpopular in some areas of the United Kingdom. Thinking that that unpopularity would be mitigated in Scotland if it masqueraded as the party of devolution, the Government have dreamt up a scheme which achieves two of their objectives at once. By dismembering the NCC and weakening conservation, they can encourage their remaining supporters in Scotland, who have forestry and land-owning interests. Simultaneously, they have wasted the genuine opportunity that exists in the Principality for closer co-operation between the NCC and the Countryside Commission by tossing Wales into the melting pot with Scotland and dressing it up as devolution.

The hostility of some vested and landed interests in Scotland to the NCC is well known. Mr. Ian Prestt, the director general of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Europe's largest voluntary conservation movement, with more than 600,000 members, said:

> "What they want is a body which does not stand up for conservation and cannot press the conservation case".

One of the main battlegrounds between those interests and conservationists has been the Flow country of Caithness and Sutherland. Here the Government sold the pass when they accepted the report of the Highland regional council and agreed that a further 100,000 hectares of prime land should be afforested. The NCC was opposed to any further afforestation but it was overruled and, to add insult to injury, the Secretary of State for Scotland decided to change the rules. In future, the NCC was to be allowed to give its opinion on afforestation only where sites of special scientific interest would be affected.

But that was not enough for the landowners of Scotland. According to the publication *Forestry and British Timber*, September 1989, a new organisation was needed which would

> "sweep away the dross created by indiscriminate conservation."

In meeting that demand the Secretary of State for Wales and for Scotland have committed the Government to a political gamble, hoping to increase the measly 16 per cent. of parliamentary seats which they currently hold in those two countries. The stakes are a mitigation of the Government's deep unpopularity in Wales and Scotland on the upside, versus further damage to the Government's bogus green credentials on the downside.

That is how I see the situation, but just in case the Minister does not share my analysis—unlikely, but just in case—let us look at some reactions of the experts to the Government's proposals. We could not do better than to start with the views of a man who has given his professional life to nature conservation and who rose through the ranks to become chief scientist at the NCC —Derek Ratcliffe. He was singled out by the chairman of the NCC in his annual address a couple of weeks ago when he said:

> "his contribution to the conservation of Britain's wildlife, in particular its birdlife, is almost unparalleled and should not be allowed to go unnoticed."

Dr. Ratcliffe's distinguished work as a naturalist and scientist is combined with a level of respect and popularity within conservation circles such as to make his views indispensable to any informed discussion of nature conservation, statutory or voluntary. Writing in *The Times* on 15 July, he said:

> "The Government's proposals to dismember the NCC and amalgamate its functions with those of the countryside commissions in Scotland and Wales are a potential disaster for nature conservation in Britain."

He went on to say:

> "Just when growing awareness of the global scale of environmental problems demands increasing integration of conservation policies internationally, Nicholas Ridley takes the perversely backwards step of pulling apart the national official agency for nature conservation."

Another important figure in the NCC until recently was Lord Buxton. In resigning from the NCC council after 40 years of involvement in nature conservation, he said:

> "I am unable to go along with purely political decisions which in a UK environmental context look trivial and opportunistic. Nor, as a Conservative supporter, do I believe that the proposals will gain anything with the electorate north of the border, whereas they may do serious damage to the party's conservation standing throughout the rest of the United Kingdom."

To those distinguished voices can be added those of senior figures in the Royal Society for Nature Conservation, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, the Council for the Protection of Rural England, the Council for the Protection of Rural Wales, the Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland, Wildlife Link, Scottish Wildlife and Countryside Link, the Ramblers Association, the Open Spaces Society, the British Trust for Ornithology, the Scottish Wildlife Trust Ltd., the Fauna and Flora Preservation Society and the Marine Conservation Society. I could go on and on. The views of those and other organisations represent as complete a rejection of the Government's plans as could possibly be found.

Faced with that, the Government brought out in Scotland what they described as a consultation paper. Perhaps the Minister can tell us why they did not do likewise in Wales. If the Government are concerned to support the voluntary nature conservation bodies in Scotland and Wales—to encourage them, to nurture their work and to improve their morale and increase their enthusiasm—why did they not see fit to consult them?

The groups to which the document was sent were hand-picked, and it might therefore have been expected to be well received. The Secretary of State for Scotland claims that 98, or over 60 per cent., of the responses were in favour. Of course, with such an exercise, it is possible to fix the desired figures in advance with a fair degree of accuracy. The Secretary of State might have obtained 100 per cent. support if he had sent his consultation document only to foresters and their accountants.

Other scrutineers, however, have come up with figures very different from his 60 per cent. claim. According to the NCC trade unions' interpretation, only 14 per cent. of responses were unequivocally supportive; 45 per cent. were equivocal, 39 per cent. opposed and only 2 per cent. indeterminate. I will take their assessment rather than that of the Secretary of State, of whose claim Scottish Friends of the Earth said:

> "Only a statement which clearly recognises the fact that the Scottish Office has not won approval for their proposal to split the NCC would have been credible. Anything else is bald deceit".

Talking of bald deceit, something close to that was practised by the Secretary of State for the Environment when he put out a press briefing to the effect that the Leader of the Opposition supported the break-up of the NCC. That referred to an acknowledgement sent by my right hon. Friend's constituency secretary to the Welsh committee of the Countryside Commission, thanking it for sending a copy of its annual review, which contained a passage welcoming the proposal to establish a countryside council for Wales. Unbelievably, that was presented to the press as my right hon. Friend's welcoming the break-up of the NCC.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) has made no secret of the fact that, as a Welsh Member of Parliament, he is in favour of strengthening nature conservation in Wales. No one who is serious about that goal believes that breaking up the NCC is the way to achieve it, and that is why the Opposition's line—in the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), the shadow Secretary of State for the Environment—is, "Don't dismember the NCC."

My hon. Friend's view is also that of the voluntary conservation organisations, which share my assessment of the political dimension that I outlined earlier. Their concerns stem from the apprehension that the proposal is politically inspired and intended to weaken conservation. Obviously, splitting the NCC will direct its limited resources into duplicating administrative services, and will lead to a reduction in conservation work on the ground by both the voluntary bodies and the NCC.

More seriously, nature conservation in a small island such as Britain needs to be seen from a national or, better still, an international perspective. It is becoming universally recognised that, when it comes to issues of the environment, country borders count for nothing. The Department of the Environment recognises that: it was the Department that said, in its March 1989 document "Environment in Trust":

> "The environment knows no boundaries. Many . . . issues go beyond the borders of individual countries".

According to the director general of the RSPB,

> "A GB approach is absolutely essential. Our islands share so much in common that political boundaries are really irrelevant when considering habitats and species. Of more relevance are the coasts, lowlands and uplands, and a measure of each is found in each country. The SSSI system takes full account of this GB approach. The fact that Scotland has large areas of peatland could lead a Scottish-based body to set priorities which do not take into account the truly international significance of the peatlands. Thus for parochial reasons, a few SSSIs would suffice; what then for the great majority of the Flow Country?"

At the heart of the matter are the responsibilities that the whole of Britain has for our remaining wildlife heritage. When seen from a Great Britain perspective, relatively little remains, so a high premium is put on what is left. When seen from a purely Welsh or Scottish perspective, a much higher proportion of the wildlife assets remain, so sites will tend to be treated as less valuable. That is inevitable, if the country agency is only, as the Government acknowledge, responsive to that country's needs.

The environment is one particular area where devolution of powers is entirely inappropriate, for two reasons. First, the highly complex interrelation of environmental factors pays absolutely no respect whatever to our artificial political boundaries. Secondly, if we possess a dwindling asset which benefits all of us, in Britain and the wider world, it is ridiculous to assess its value only from the perspective of those lucky enough to live alongside. It belongs to all of us, not just those few.

It is precisely because it is natural—or God-given, to the religiously inclined—that we should all have a say in determining its fate. Therefore, the decisions that affect our common heritage must be made at a high level, following common principles. Natural and environmental assets are unique. Therefore, they are uniquely unsuited to devolution. I stress that, in case it be thought that I am against devolution in general.

Even with a unified science base—or a genuinely independent co-ordinating committee, which is a million miles from the farcical body suggested by the Government—there are worrying portents for conservation action. The unified science base is not an end in itself, except in so far as it avoids duplication of effort and maintains consistent standards. It is only a means to objective assessment of scientific value. That is but the first step in the NCC's function, and a first step in the process of nurturing the voluntary bodies that do so much to identify the critical sites.

Equally important is the way in which that science is interpreted, the policy determined, and conservation action then taken. If the whole process is devolved, a divergence of results between the bodies of different countries is inevitable. The country with the poorest track record on conservation will have even greater scope to weaken conservation action on the ground. The Scottish establishment at least gets what it wants.

In case the Minister were to think that it is just the entire voluntary conservation movement and the Labour

[Mr. Ron Davies]

party that are opposed to the plans for the NCC, I should like to give the views of those who actually work for the organisation—those of whom the NCC chairman said in presenting his annual report:

> "The country is lucky to have such a dedicated and hard-working body of people as the staff of the Nature Conservancy Council. With them, dedication is a way of life. The best thank you we can give them is not to let them down."

I have heard that six of their number in Scotland, and six in Wales—12 out of 1,100—support the Government's proposals. Those figures may not be quite right, but what is beyond doubt is that the overwhelming majority are bitterly opposed. Sir William Wilkinson, in his last term as chairman of the NCC, has the support of those dedicated individuals, as they have publicly made clear. He in turn does not want to let them down. He will be forced to do so if the Government persist in their tragically misguided purpose.

I appeal to the Minister to heed the advice contained in a recent Conservative Bow Group pamphlet which said:

> "This change is, with respect, a serious mistake . . . In splitting up the NCC, the Government will be weakening (possibly deliberately) the official conservation agencies. To split up the NCC, as proposed by the Government, would require primary legislation. The Government should not proceed with this, either in the Green Bill or in the Planning Bill".

On this issue, I am happy to let that Conservative pamphlet have the last word.

If the Minister is sincere in his commitment to support the voluntary bodies I have mentioned which are concerned with saving the things that are precious in our natural heritage, and ensuring its protection, then he must announce that he will give them support. The most important way in which he can demonstrate that is by showing that the Government have had a rethink on this matter, which is central to nature conservation.

10.20 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory): I congratulate the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) for securing a debate on Government support for Britain's voluntary nature conservancy movement. I recognise that the hon. Gentleman has taken a great interest in the countryside over the years, and I acknowledge his commitment, although I disagree with much of what he has said this evening.

In the minutes remaining, I shall respond to the points the hon. Gentleman raised about the Nature Conservancy Council, but first, I wish to consider the important role that voluntary organisations play. Generations of people have expressed a love of our natural heritage and, for many years, the voluntary bodies have acted as a catalyst to heighten public awareness and to convert concern into practical activity. For example, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, which the hon. Member mentioned, is celebrating its centenary year.

The voluntary sector has shown that it can educate the public about many issues and harness the necessary resources, enthusiasm and commitment for nature conservation. That has been in line with the Government's philosophy, which is to encourage and enable people to help themselves. For those reasons, we are firmly committed to continue to support voluntary organisations.

I shall show that that support is substantial. It is channelled into many areas through Government agencies such as the Nature Conservancy Council, which runs its own grant programmes. It is also supported directly through the special grants programmes of Government Departments, including my own, and through participation in business sponsorship schemes, which we strongly support.

As one might expect, the NCC, which is funded by my Department, is the chief donor of grants for nature conservation. Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, the council may give a grant for any purpose

> "which, in their opinion, is conducive to nature conservation".

Since the Government took office, they have increased the council's grant in aid, in real terms, by more than 160 per cent. If the hon. Member for Caerphilly is saying that that is too little, then he must be ashamed of the level of funding achieved when his own party was last in office.

Mr. Ron Davies: Do not be cheap.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Next year, the council will have some £4 million more to spend than this year, which is an increase above the rate of inflation. During the next three years we aim to increase funding of the NCC by 21 per cent. I think that the hon. Gentleman will agree that that is a substantial sum, bearing in mind that further money will be available for the reorganisation of the NCC that we are contemplating.

The increase in funding next year will enable the council to increase the already significant amount it gives in grants. It is proposing to increase the funds allocated by almost 50 per cent., from £1·85 million this year to £2·7 million next year.

In general, it is for the NCC to decide how the funds should be allocated, but I understand that in recent years about 80 per cent. of the grants have gone to voluntary organisations.

The hon. Member expressed concern about the effect of our plans to restructure the NCC. He suggested that that would drastically alter the council's activities. I emphasise that there are no proposals to change its functions or powers. It will be an administrative and structural change only, and the new agencies will inherit, among other things, the council's grant-giving capacity.

The hon. Member suggested that there is almost universal hostility to these proposals in Wales. I do not think that that is the case. Indeed, we have had support from unexpected quarters. The hon. Member will know that we have a letter dated 5 November from the office of the Leader of the Opposition, saying that the right hon. Gentleman

> "welcomes the proposal to establish a Countryside Council for Wales."

Mr. Davies: The Minister clearly did not listen to what I said. I referred to that letter and explained that it was from a secretary in the Leader of the Opposition's Office. The letter made it clear that that was a specific reference to the establishment of a new body for Wales. I also stated that the official policy of the Opposition, endorsed by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition, was expressed by our shadow Secretary of State for the Environment. In brief, it is, "Don't dismember the NCC."

That is the official policy endorsed by the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Secretary of State. I hope that the Minister will not try to take us down that diversion for the remainder of this debate.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I understand that there has been a change of policy on the Labour side. This may be another U-turn. The Countryside Council for Wales, which was referred to in that letter is clearly the type of structure that we are proposing to set up. The right hon. Member's initial reaction was favourable.

Others have supported our proposals. The Welsh nationalists do not necessarily reflect all Welsh opinion, but I noticed that the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) said on 17 July:

"we welcome the fact that the Government have established an independent conservation body for Wales which the previous Labour Government failed to do."—[*Official Report*, 17 July 1989; Vol. 157, c. 9.]

The hon. Member for Caerphilly himself said on 21 July, in more grudging tones:

"I recognise that there is some merit in merging the NCC and the Countryside Commission in Scotland and Wales". —[*Official Report*, 21 July 1989; Vol. 157, c. 710.]

I accept that he went on to express major anxieties about that, but his initial reaction was not unfavourable.

We have been, and still are, in discussion with the NCC about the proposals. I draw the hon. Member's attention to a press release issued by the council's distinguished chairman, Sir William Wilkinson, on 13 November, in which he said that there was virtual unanimity on four issues, the most important of which was the first. He said:

"there was agreement that independent, properly resourced . . . Country Agencies with full appropriate scientific back up would provide the required support for nature conservation in their Countries, each reporting to its Secretary of State."

He also called for the establishment of a co-ordinating committee with an independent chairman. We are still considering the suggestion of a chairman, but we entirely agree that a co-ordinating committee should be set up by statute. We agree that the new country bodies should have a strong scientific base—an issue the hon. Gentleman raised. We also agree that there should be appropriate arrangements for handling Great Britain and international issues on a co-operative basis between the new bodies. We shall meet that requirement fully.

The legislation that we are proposing will establish a joint statutory committee to enable the three countries' councils to carry out their statutory joint functions—to provide advice on Great Britain and international issues, as suggested by the hon. Member. We are proceeding with that because we think it right for conservation purposes. We need to modernise the nature conservancy structure. There is widespread support for that. We believe that we can increase the effectiveness of the council at grass-roots level by devolving responsibility to the countries. In addition, that will give improved accountability to Ministers in each of those countries.

In the few remaining minutes, I shall touch on other sources of grant. My Department has substantial special grant programmes which are of assistance to the voluntary organisations mentioned in this debate. We provide under these programmes direct funding to voluntary bodies. In the current financial year, my Department has allocated well over £700,000 to 35 voluntary organisations involved in protecting and enhancing the environment and in environmental education. In Wales, more than £130,000 has been allocated to 21 groups. It is not always possible to continue funding all groups at the same level for ever. We wish to include new groups from time to time. It is not right that all voluntary groups should consider that they have permanent funding from Government sources; in some cases, that may undermine the voluntary spirit which we seek to foster.

We have a good record, not only on maintaining but on increasing funding. The sums are not always large. Some go to modest projects, such as grants to the Irish sea study group which is co-ordinating scientific knowledge of the Irish sea. Other grants are much larger, such as the £68,000 for the Royal Society for Nature Conservation.

Finally, business sponsorship is important. Our role is not just to give grants but to channel funds from other sources into the voluntary nature conservation movement. That is why we launched the concept of business sponsorship of conservation in 1983. That has been highly successful. Government support for the nature conservancy movement has been substantial. We have always recognised the enormous contribution to practical conservation on the ground made by the voluntary sector and we shall continue to do so.

I shall end as I began, by thanking Britain's voluntary nature conservation movement for its energy, commitment and hard work. It will be enhanced rather than damaged by our proposals to reorganise the NCC along country lines.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-eight minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 8 December 1989

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITIONS

Broadcasting (Deaf People)

9.35 am

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I wish to present a petition to the honourable Commons of the United Kingdom, Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled. The humble petition of the people of the constituency of Ealing, North and elsewhere

> sheweth that the broadcasters are not providing complete access for deaf television viewers, for example, with subtitles or sign language; the number of viewers affected are at least 4 million; deaf viewers, as equal members of the general public, are entitled to equal access to television programmes.

The petition is led for my constituents by Mr. A. D. Murray of 15 Courtfield gardens, Ealing, London W.13 and Mr. R. W. Gillies of 59 Argyle road, Ealing, London W.13 with whom I strongly agree that proper provision must be made for deaf people to see and understand television with sub-titles so that they know exactly what is happening in the programmes. They are surely entitled to that.

> Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House will ensure that legislation be passed placing an obligation on television channel operators to make their programmes more accessible to deaf people by using Teletext sub-titles, sign language or other means and to reach complete coverage by a fixed date.
>
> And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

Barking—Dagenham and Redbridge

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): I wish to present a petition on behalf of more than 300 constituents who wish to object to the proposals of the Boundary Commission to disregard the wishes of the London borough of Barking and Dagenham and of the London borough of Redbridge for the division between those two authorities.

The humble petition of the residents of the London borough of Redbridge in my constituency who are affected by the recent Boundary Commission proposals sheweth that

> they object to the Boundary Commission's proposals to transfer their property from the London Borough of Redbridge to the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham.
>
> Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House will ask the Boundary Commission to reconsider their proposals and accept the original recommendation put forward by the London Borough of Redbridge.
>
> And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

My constituents wish to remain in a low-rated area. The low rates are the reason why they bought their property in the London borough of Redbridge.

To lie upon the Table.

Broadcasting (Deaf People)

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): I should like to present a petition regarding the deaf. It is the humble petition of the people of Ilford, South and is also presented on behalf of the constituents of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke). They state that they are concerned because

> the broadcasters are not providing complete access for deaf television viewers, for example, with subtitles or sign language:
>
> the number of viewers affected are at least 4 million; deaf viewers, as equal members of the general public, are entitled to equal access to television programmes.

The petition states:

> Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House will ensure that legislation be passed placing an obligation on television channel operators to make their programmes more accessible to deaf people by using Teletext sub-titles, sign language or other means and to reach complete coverage by a fixed date.
>
> And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

One of the television companies' main arguments for introducing television to this honourable House was that it would enable the deaf to see exactly what was going on. My constituents and I find it extraordinary that those same television companies, which have achieved their objective of getting television into the House, now deprive the deaf of the opportunity of knowing what is going on through the use of subtitles and other means.

To lie upon the Table.

Drugs Misuse

[Relevant documents: Sixth Report from the Home Affairs Committee in Session 1988-89, Crack: The Threat of Hard Drugs in the Next Decade (House of Commons Paper 536), the Seventh Report, Drug Trafficking and Related Serious Crime (House of Commons Paper 370), the Seventh report from the Social Services Committee, AIDS (House of Commons Paper 202) and the Government's response to that Report, Cm. 925.]

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn. *[Mr. John M. Taylor.]*

9.39 am

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Mellor): I am glad to have the opportunity in the early stages of my return to responsibilities at the Home Office to discuss with anxious colleagues the problems of drug misuse.

During my previous incarnation at the Home Office I had the privilege of chairing for four years the ministerial group on the misuse of drugs. One of the best experiences of my time in this House resulted from the genuine goodwill on all sides that we should try to work together to find a common solution. I particularly recall the Opposition's tremendous co-operation in passing the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986. That has been a striking success, but I also take careful note of and welcome the observations of the Select Committee on Home Affairs about the way in which it can be improved.

I do not want to inhibit genuine, legitimate criticism from anyone and I take in good part criticism about the way in which the drug problem is handled. We always need to be stimulated to evaluate what we are doing and to make greater efforts. I hope that this debate will give us an opportunity to renew a shared commitment. We should also recognise the crucial fact that, although it is obviously for Government and elected representatives to give a lead, we alone cannot carry the burden of winning the battle against drugs. We shall succeed only if we galvanise everyone in society into a shared endeavour to deal with the menace of drugs.

I shall be as candid as I can about the present drug situation, informed, I hope, by recollections of my experiences. I shall also say something about the experience of the United States, which is highly relevant to the problem of cocaine about which I have particular concern. I shall also mention the report of the Select Committee on Home Affairs, which by happy chance was published yesterday; we therefore have an early opportunity to discuss it. I cannot give my final view on that report, but because of my previous involvement in these matters I know enough about the thinking behind the report to say some helpful and constructive things about it. I shall also speak about the future development of Government policy. Above all, I welcome this opportunity to listen to what concerned colleagues say and I shall take on board any points that are made.

It is two and a half years since I held any responsibility for drugs policy. As I read myself back into this problem, it is interesting to recollect my fears and hopes during my four years in office. It is interesting to see how things have turned out. Inevitably, if one is realistic, there are good and bad indications.

This year all the figures—I shall give them to the House shortly—show that a greater attempt than ever before is being made by international drug traffickers to bring drugs into this country. That is a sombre and inescapable fact, and it is important that it is ungarnished and is given in the round. It forms an essential background to our debate.

It has not all been gloom during the time I have been away on other matters. I remember the concern felt by everyone in 1983 and 1984 when "chasing the dragon" —smoking heroin—appeared to be on its way to becoming a major activity among mainstream youngsters and not just among the deviant fringe. It appeared that that practice would lead inevitably to a spread of injecting heroin. At that time there was great apprehension about whether that threat to many youngsters would prove to be unstoppable. Although there is no room for complacency in the figures, it is clear that such widespread misuse has not occurred. There is evidence of a much higher level of herion misuse in our society today than any of us can take comfort from, but it has not spread in the way in which some people feared in the early 1980s. We can take some comfort from that.

During the early 1980s I remember saying that there was nothing inevitable about our nation succumbing to the menace of drug misuse. If we can work together on intelligent and sensible policies, it is in our power to prevent that from happening. There is some encouragement from the figures which show that, as a result of the sustained effort made in the Government's anti-heroin campaign, the efforts made by so many hon. Members, by outside elected representatives and by concerned groups in society, a strongly negative message about heroin has come across. Heroin misuse has therefore not become the mainstream youth culture event that many people feared.

When a cross-section of teenagers are asked about heroin, about 95 per cent. regularly say that they would immediately reject an offer of heroin. What is even more important is that that is not a knee-jerk rejection, but is based on informed opinion. When those conducting the survey ask the youngsters why they would not take heroin, their replies are usually based on informed opinion about the known consequences of the drug. That much is good news.

In autumn 1986 I visited Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador and Colombia and I saw the size of the cocaine problem faced by those countries. I appreciated that what we were dealing with were criminal enterprises of a scale to rival the existing Governments of some of those countries. The insolence of the drug barons of Colombia is such that just yesterday they blew up the headquarters of the anti-drug forces. They did not care that they killed 40 innocent passers-by and seriously injured many others. Therefore, one is dealing not with a state within a state, but with a state that rivals the legitimate state.

Near the border between Peru and Bolivia I remember flying over the fringes of the Amazon by helicopter. I flew ove hillsides from which smoke was coming. It was rather like a scene from "Apocalypse Now" and the aftermath of a particularly bloody encounter in the Vietnam war. The smoke resulted from the hurried burning of wonderful trees of the rain forest, which were being cleared so that more and more slopes could be devoted to the production of cocaine.

I was briefed then on the scale and sophistication of the laboratories, which rivalled pharmaceutical laboratories for legitimate purposes, and on the insidious interrelationship between the drug traffickers, with their massive sums with which to corrupt, and the activities of the guerrilla groups who, in return for money, offered protection. That has spilled out in recent allegations of international mercenaries being involved. I hope that it is clear when one reads newspaper articles or reports, but it was even clearer to me when I went to south America that the scale of the problem was such that, notwithstanding the seemingly boundless commitment in the United States to receiving increasing quantities of cocaine because of the extent of misuse there, there was a glut of cocaine being produced and that Europe would be targeted increasingly. I fear that that has happened.

I shall give the latest Customs figures for as recently as last week, which will confirm the scale of the problem with which we have to deal as we all work together against cocaine. Our feelings need not be all doom and gloom. There must be proper understanding of the scale of the problem, and anybody who holds office or responsibility and who tries to underestimate the scale of the problem does the public no service. I always see it as my task to find out the facts and to tell people clearly about them, not so that people feel overwhelmed by the problem, but so that they will sit up and take notice. I have a profound conviction that we can see off this problem if we work together and devise the necessary strategies.

The latest figures from Customs show that, in the period from 1 January 1989 to 5 December 1989, 309 kg of heroin were seized by Customs compared with 211 kg in the whole of 1988. Although that is a high figure, it is not as high as some of the figures that were reached in the mid-1980s. The figures for cocaine are deeply troubling. Between January 1989 and 5 December 1989, 392 kg of cocaine were seized by Customs compared with 264 kg in the whole of 1988. I want immediately to pay a warm tribute to the work of the police and Customs authorities in seizing those quantities of drugs.

However, we all know—and I want to say this before anyone else can—that there is no escape from the drugs problem down the law and order route. Whether society falls victim to a drugs problem turns on the willingness of individuals within that society to reject offers of drugs. In a free society, however professional the police and Customs officers are, there will always be a way through. In a free society, we should not want the erosion of freedom that would follow if every packet was opened, everyone coming through airports was searched or every container was opened; and heaven knows what scale of human resources would be needed.

We are applying the most modern techniques and working through world-class organisations such as the National Drugs Intelligence Unit. There has been an expansion of resources which hon. Members of all parties have rightly called for over the years and they have ensured that pressure has been put on the Government to increase resources. We have a fully professional police and Customs service which seizes an ever-increasing proportion of the drugs that come into this country, although it by no means seizes all drugs, or even the majority.

While I am troubled by the figures of heroin, it is interesting that, although on the face of the figures it appears, as a result of the increase in the number of seizures, that more heroin must be coming in, at street level —and I asked for this to be studied especially in the past few days—there is no evidence of increased availability of heroin, of a increase in its purity or of a reduction in its price. We must not become complacent about heroin peaking at far too high a level, but there is no evidence of an increased amount of heroin being available on the streets. That may lead us to the conclusion that our police and Customs are seizing a greater proportion of heroin, which is a good and valuable development.

Some people are in danger of underestimating the cocaine problem. We have not as yet seen a great influx of cocaine misusers at the drug clinics, but let no one draw false comfort from that. It is a question of time, and one of my central points today is to reveal some of the American experiences. I have toured some of the inner-city areas of the United States and I know that a number of other hon. Members have done the same. In those areas, crack has become a major habit. Even I have not been prepared for some of the shocking statistics that are now apparent in the United States. I say that not to frighten or shock people, but simply to report the evidence from a developed western society which has more than 20 years' experience of cocaine. That experience warns us what may lie in our path if we do not work together to deal with the problem.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): We all realise the marvellous job done by the Customs and police on this problem. Several years ago, I was lucky enough to ask the Prime Minister a question about whether the Customs service had the required manpower to cover the job properly. At that time there had been a serious reduction in manpower. What is the position now? What will be the position in the future?

Mr. Mellor: Those are fair questions. I am happy to say that there has been a tripling of the number of Customs investigators since 1979, and an additional 854 preventive Customs posts, dealing mainly with drugs, were established between 1984 and 1988. I accept that it is a key feature that those numbers should be expanded. They are kept under constant review. We have never said that enough is enough. One cannot expect people to do the job unless we give them the resources to do it.

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): I should like to remind my hon. and learned Friend of one category of Customs officer that he did not mention in his response to the intervention, and that is the increased number of intelligence officers abroad. I do not want to go into detail, but I must say that they are doing a magnificent job of intelligence gathering without which the interdiction in this country would not be as effective.

Mr. Mellor: When I visited the National Drugs Intelligence Unit a few days ago, I was encouraged enormously to see how much that system had developed, with police officers and Customs officers being stationed overseas. As my hon. Friend says, for obvious security reasons one cannot give great detail, but having experienced personnel working alongside enforcement agencies in the countries concerned and welcoming their representatives here, as we are doing, is a way of building a sense of co-operation on personal rather than abstract principles, which is important.

We know that large quantities of cocaine are coming into the country, and we know that there is a time lag between a misuser's first experimenting with the drug and the development of the problem. That is the present position, and let no one be in error about that. As there is the financial incentive for traffickers to bring drugs into the country, they will use every piece of ingenuity to evade the restrictions. As direct routes from the countries of origin

[Mr. Mellor]

are now assiduously searched, traffickers will bring in drugs through two or three other countries and increasingly complicated routes are now being used. I cannot disguise from the House my continued and increasing concern since I was last at the Home Office about the extent to which drugs are being brought into certain other countries in the European Community and then being shipped across to the United Kingdom.

Customs figures show that in 1988 30 per cent. of the heroin seized in Britain—and, even more disturbing, more than 50 per cent. of the cocaine seized—had been routed through a European Community country. Sometimes people are tempted to say that the British Government are being bolshie, difficult and tiresome about Europe when we say, "Hang on a moment" in response to rhetoric about open frontiers. Apparently, to qualify as a good European, one has to say, "Yes indeed. Me too, me too." But in practice we cannot afford to have open frontiers with countries such as the Netherlands because the consequence would be that an increasing amount of drugs would come into Britain.

I hope that this will not become a partisan matter. I hope that hon. Members throughout the House will understand that, while we work faithfully for the implementation of the open market in 1992, we cannot do away with border controls between EEC countries except at our peril, and it is too high a price to pay.

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): I agree with most of what the Minister has just said but the Select Committee report underlined the lack of linguistic skills on this side of the Channel, which is most important. We urgently need police and Customs officials with those skills who can co-operate with their counterparts in other countries to ensure that we have the best possible intelligence. For too long Britain has lacked such skills, and the police simply reflect that fact.

Mr. Mellor: That is a helpful practical point. It is true that we rely heavily on others' ability to speak English, and it is fair to argue that one way of helping international co-operation would be to improve our linguistic skills.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): My hon. and learned Friend referred to drugs coming from south America direct to Europe. Those of us who went to the National Drugs Intelligence Unit at El Paso, where all 10 law enforcement agencies of the United States are represented, were shocked to discover that the centre is monitoring shipments of cocaine and other drugs from south America direct to Europe—especially to Spain and Portugal, because of the Hispanic link, but also to Holland. As my hon. and learned Friend said, the maintenance of our border control is paramount.

Mr. Mellor: Yes. And it is not a matter of politics; it is a matter of common sense. This is a practical problem. The gap between rhetoric and reality apparent in some people's effusions about Europe always distresses me. We are talking about the practical business of putting up shutters as best we can against the importation of drugs.

I should be failing in my duty if I attempted to find a bit of good news about heroin to persuade people that there was not a problem. Nevertheless, it is worth drawing attention to evidence of policies taking effect. It is good news that our drugs branch inspectorate is reporting that there appears to have been a levelling out, if not a reduction, of the availability of heroin in some areas. That leads me to hope that the problem has reached a plateau, albeit at much too high a level.

As with the AIDS figures, the number of addicts reflects what was happening in society some years ago. People become a little involved with drugs, then a little more involved, then they become hooked and satisfy their cravings on the illicit market, then, at a certain point—some never reach that point, but many do—their dependency reaches such a pitch that they turn themselves in to the authorities in despair.

I pay tribute to the work of our many drugs clinics, which work effectively to try to offer addicts some hope. Although the number of addicts is increasing, there are signs that the addict population is aging. That is most interesting. The proportion of new addicts aged under 25 notifed to the Home Office fell from 54 per cent. in 1985 to 48 per cent. in 1988. That may be an early indication of what I hope will be a trend and evidence that the present generation of teenagers is not falling prey to heroin as the previous generation did.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): It is encouraging to think that heroin consumption has reached a plateau and that we have an aging addict population. But there is anecdotal evidence in the inner city to suggest that the pattern of drugs consumption is changing and that communities in which the drug of choice has traditionally been marijuana are now turning to heroin and crack. That is happening on council estates in my constituency, and it is a cause for great concern.

Mr. Mellor: There is much in what the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) says, and I shall be particularly interested to hear her views on cocaine, which I shall be discussing a little later. Sad evidence is emerging that members of the Afro-Caribbean community, who have not previously been involved with hard drugs, are now becoming involved with cocaine, and perhaps that was the trend to which the hon. Lady was referring.

Different drugs are fashionable at different times and we must hope that as heroin consumption reaches a plateau there will not be a tremendous upsurge of interest in cocaine. Nor are we talking about heroin and cocaine alone. The problems of drug misuse in Britain are much more complex than that. Most people's introduction to drugs is via amphetamine-based drugs. If I am not to prevent other hon. Members from speaking, I must be disciplined in what I say and about the length at which I say it. I may not be concentrating on amphetamines, but that does not mean that I underestimate the problem.

There is a problem in key inner-city areas. One cannot generalise. What is true for one area is not true for another, and the balance and extent of drug misuse varies, as does its interaction with other deeply anti-social activities such as alcohol misuse. I regard alcohol misuse among teenagers as every bit as troubling as illicit drug misuse—in some respects, more so. That is why we have devised a system of inner-city drug teams, which we intend to work with the organisations in the community to help to restrict drug taking. We hope to announce the establishment of the first nine of the teams and the central co-ordinating unit in January and to increase the number to 30 over a two year period. We should certainly consider seriously the problems referred to in the constituency of the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): I am somewhat concerned about a remark that the Minister made in response to my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott). He referred to the Afro-Caribbean community and the use of crack. The evidence that members of the Select Committee of Home Affairs saw when they visited America was that crack knew no boundaries of race or gender. Does he agree with me on that?

Mr. Mellor: Oh yes. I hope that that is not the impression that I gave. I was paying a compliment to the Afro-Caribbean community by saying that previously it had not been much involved with hard drugs. As the hon. Gentleman says, cocaine knows no racial boundaries, and it is sad that it seems to have started to affect the Afro-Caribbean community as well as the rest of us. I am not saying that it is a particular problem in that community because it is certainly not, but the increase in its use is a sign of the insidiousness of cocaine, which has attractions that heroin does not have and can involve groups that heroin does not involve. The evidence from America is that 50 per cent. of so-called crack-heads are women. We have never before seen such a large percentage of women being involved in any form of drug misuse.

We must realise that cocaine is not just a different drug posing the same problems as heroin. It is an equally serious drug which, if anything, poses even worse problems. the most pernicious way of taking cocaine—smoking it—is also the easiest. One does not have to stick a needle in one's arm—the ultimate turn-off, especially at a time when AIDS is rampant.

It has always been foolish to inject drugs because the drugs themselves cause damage and people inject amphetamines as well as heroin. Impurities in the drugs add to the health hazards, and people injecting themselves without medical supervision and often not knowing how to do so properly run the risk of all manner of infections.

Self injection of drugs was always ill-advised, but it is foolish beyond belief to do it now and especially to share equipment at a time when we know that the AIDS virus is becoming increasingly rampant among the drug-addicted community in Europe. In Spain and Italy 60 per cent. of the AIDS cases were contracted through intravenous drug misuse. So far in the United Kingdom it is only 4 per cent. but we have nothing to be complacent about because in Scotland over 50 per cent. of the HIV-positive people obtained the virus through the sharing of drug-misusing equipment.

While much attention has rightly focused on homosexual activities, and while much has been done by the homosexual community to change their habits in order to minimise the spread of AIDS as I know from my previous responsibility in the Department of Health, we need to focus on the fact that in Europe the number of AIDS cases resulting from homosexual activity is doubling every 14 months. However, the number of cases contracted through intravenous drug misuse in Europe is doubling every nine months. I need hardly add that as most drug addicts are heterosexual, and whatever so-called commentators in the popular press may say, it is clear beyond peradventure that AIDS can be spread by heterosexual activity. No one should be in any doubt about that. A high HIV-positive rating among intravenous drug misusers is an inevitable bridgehead into the hetrosexual community. That is a crucial matter.

I have already said that the Customs seized 392 kg of cocaine up to last week compared with 264 kg in 1988. Cocaine is a major problem, and we do not just have to look at it in the form of crack to be able to say that. Any form of cocaine abuse is to be deplored. The figures show an increasing problem of crack misuse. There were 12 seizures in 1987, 27 in 1988 and 124 from January to November this year.

Crack is not a magic substance. Any one of us could make it in the kitchen in half an hour if we had cocaine and another readily available ingredient. The greatest buzz, the greatest high and that which causes the greatest chaos afterwards comes from smoking cocaine, and that is because of the immediate impact on the brain. Once cocaine appears in any form in a community, it is inevitable that sooner or later people will turn to the ultimate form of drug misuse—free-basing or crack smoking.

The.drug traffickers take a cynical view and as a result cocaine enjoys a spurious reputation as a champagne drug, although we know that many well-known champagne lifestyles have been greatly damaged by its impact. The fact that someone is a well-known champagne-successful chap gives him no immunity from the destructive effects of the drug. It hits people in high society as hard as it hits people anywhere else. Crack is a shrewd marketing ploy by the dealers because it can be sold in much smaller quantities. People do not need to buy a gramme of cocaine powder and the small quantities of crack usually cost more than anything else. But that fact is disguised by the availability of small quantities.

We must expect the drug taker to gravitate towards crack in search, as many drug users are, of a higher and higher buzz. However, the drug dealers will direct all their commercial pressures to getting people into crack because it is the easiest way to market to the widest community. We must gear ourselves to meet that. Thank goodness the Select Committee on Home Affairs had no truck with the people who say that some drugs should be legalised. Such appeasement is pathetic and is no response to anything. How could one legalise such substances when the figures show that in 1983 the United States Drug Enforcement Agency reported 328 cocaine-related deaths while by 1988 the figure had risen to 1,078.

I should like to deal with current American experience, and in that context I am indebted to Mr. Michael Campbell of the Drug Enforcement Agency in London who provided the figures. The latest assessment for the United States shows that there are 5 million to 6 million regular users of cocaine there and that as many as 22 million Americans have tried it. The United States authorities make no bones about the fact that in the 1970s and perhaps for too long cocaine misuse was not a matter of uttermost concern in American society. It was able to gain a hold and in the 1980s there has been a desperate battle to regain control. That proves that when control is lost it is difficult to get it back.

In 1988, 17,000 people appeared in emergency rooms in hospitals in the United States overdosed with cocaine.

[Mr. Mellor]

Infants exposed in the womb are 10 times more likely to die from cot deaths than babies whose mothers do not use the drug. A recent random study of 36 United States hospitals found that at least 11 per cent. of 155,000 women surveyed had exposed their unborn babies to illegal drugs, with cocaine far and away the most common. The impact of drugs is devastating on people who choose to use them. Who can defend the pictures that we have seen of cocaine-addicted babies whose lives are blighted before they have even begun?

Some hon. Members may have visited Dr. Mark Gold's cocaine hotline. I went there when I was in the United States just over four years ago. Dr. Gold's experience of running that hotline illustrates the pace at which the cocaine problem develops in society and who is caught up in it. When he started his cocaine hotline five years ago he thought that he would get about 10,000 callers a year. He has received 1,000 calls a day every day for the past five years. It is interesting to see the spread through society. Initially his callers were people aged 31 or more. They were mostly white, male Americans and mostly people with a substantial education background who were moving ahead in their careers. Today, only five years on, his callers are less well educated, younger, and mainly unemployed. That shows the spread through society. In 1983, only 16 per cent. of Dr. Gold's callers were unemployed, but in 1988 the figure was 61 per cent. In 1983, 50 per cent. were college graduates, but today the figure is 11 per cent. Last year the average age was 26; in 1983 it was 31.

It is interesting to consider the method of taking cocaine. Free-basing is the inhalation of cocaine fumes. In 1983, 21 per cent. of those who called on the hotline were free-basing, but in 1988 it had risen to 64 per cent. That is inevitable, and that is why we have to take the matter seriously.

Some people say that perhaps one should be able to buy it like cigarettes across the counter. They say "What is the difference?" It is interesting that when Gold analysed people's responses to the drug and the impact it has had on their lives, over 70 per cent. of those who called told him and his colleagues that the use of cocaine was more important than his or her own family. Seventy per cent. of callers said that cocaine was more important than friends, and 90 per cent. said that, although they did not consider themselves addicted, they would use every bit of cocaine in their possession as soon as possible. It is a highly addictive drug, and 37 per cent. of callers had reached the conclusion that their only escape from cocaine abuse was suicide.

The legalisers seem to assume that one can go on being dynamic, bouyant and successful whilst just having a sniff or a smoke or sticking a needle in one's arm, just as one would have a cup of coffee to keep one going through the day. It does not work like that. As Dr. Gold said, 79 per cent. of callers said that, because of their cocaine abuse, they were regularly absent from school or work, and 59 per cent. said that they were high at school or at work. Fifty-one per cent. said that they were beginning to be disruptive and 48 per cent. of the students who called said that they were becoming actively involved as cocaine distributors within their school in order to support their addiction. That is part of the insidious drawing in to criminal activity.

Mr. Vaz: The Minister has now been on his feet for 50 minutes. I do not mean to criticise him as I have listened carefully and he has presented some interesting facts. He mentioned Dr. Gold's crack hotline which was mentioned by the Select Committee on Home Affairs, and I have raised it with other Ministers. What is the Government's view of the establishment of such hotlines in Britain to determine the extent of cocaine use and of publicising the telephone number of the hotlines or helplines in schools and colleges?

Mr. Mellor: We have for some time had drugs and AIDs helplines. My mind is open to whether we should have a specially designated cocaine hotline. Currently a number of drugs helpline numbers are readily available. I am open to persuasion as to whether a dedicated cocaine helpline would help or hinder. Poly-drug misuse is a problem that must be acknowledged. Some people abuse only one drug, but many abuse a great number of drugs, depending on what is available.

Mr. Rathbone: The Government's energy and money would be better directed to supporting local information services under the local drugs advisory committees. In my area of Sussex there is an excellent drugs advisory information service run by the East Sussex county council. It understands the problems. Rather than a national hotline, as suggested by the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz), it would be better for the people concerned if there was a build-up of a network of local hotlines.

Mr. Mellor: My hon. Friend knows that a key part of our strategy is to assist financially a range of local efforts. We have substantially increased the sums of money available year after year to such projects.

I do not want to outstay my welcome, and although I have spoken for only 40 minutes, and not 50 minutes as the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) said, he is right to make me keep my eye on the clock.

It is not piety that makes me say that I always find it enormously encouraging to work with the Select Committee on Home Affairs. I do not know of any Department that has had a more constructive—not cosy—relationship with a Select Committee. It is based on mutual respect for the job that we are all trying to do. I hope that that will continue, and it is in that spirit that I looked at the report.

I was glad to see in the report total opposition to the legalisation of drugs. It says what I have stated until I am blue in the face, that measures to reduce the demand for drugs will be the key. That cannot be said too often.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): Will my hon. and learned Friend accept that he is probably uniquely qualified and experienced in the House to be making this speech with his background in the Foreign Office, the Department of Health and the Home Office?

Experience in America suggests that there is in demand reduction a major role for the private sector working by itself and possible in joint venture with Government. I am thinking of such bodies as the Miami coalition and the campaign for a drug free America. Drawing on his experience, does my hon. and learned Friend think that there is a greater role for the private sector and that regional health authorities and his own Department ought to be working, stimulating and pump-priming the voluntary, charitable and commercial sector?

Mr. Mellor: That is an interesting idea. We have kept faith with the idea of putting specialist drugs experts into education authorities to stimulate curriculum development locally.

Having looked at the drugs projects in Australia devised by the Rev. Ted Noffs and his team, I think that there is plenty of scope for voluntary or other bodies to become involved. It is at our peril that we slam the door in the face of any significant element within society that wants to become involved and help. Unless we harness the energies of all, we shall fail to deal with the problem. None of us has ever wanted the Government, local authorities, the Health Service or other parts of the public sector to dominate. They have a duty that they cannot shirk. I should like to see more involvement from the private sector. That is already possible through the wider drug prevention initiatives of the Home Office, and will be possible through the inner city projects that I mentioned earlier.

Because great minds—or even not so great minds—think alike, we are already doing a number of things for which the Committee asked. When I returned to the Home Office it was clear to me that we should use the Criminal Justice (International Co-operation) Bill to give us the powers to ratify the United Nations convention. I am glad to say that the Bill has been expanded to contain that. The Bill allows us to ratify the 1957 European convention on mutual assistance in criminal matters. I regret the hidebound nature of the legal profession—I admit that I am as guilty as anyone—and the undoubted difficulties of a common law system coming to terms with the rules of a civil law system. It is over 30 years since the 1957 convention and our being able to ratify it. However, it is better late than never as international co-operation is a necessity rather than an option.

We were asked to provide money to meet some of the additional costs of international drugs investigations, including rewards to informants. As a starter, we have made £1 million available.

I looked at what was said about the confiscation powers under the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986. The idea of a working group to look at its operation and to smooth out the difficulties is important. it is good that £22 million worth of restraint orders have been obtained and £13 million worth of confiscation orders have been issued by courts. When taking the Bill through the House, I would have settled for that over two years. However, we still have a long way to go. Plainly, with an innovative piece of legislation, which is what the report called the Act, there will be some problems. The various professional groups involved need to work closely together and, above all, the courts will have to use their powers. I want to look at evidence which shows that some courts are not using their powers as widely as they might.

I shall bring my remarks to a conclusion. Because I know that we are dealing here——

Mr. Vaz: Does the Minister share the criticism of the Select Committee's report that some people may have about his speech? He has spoken for a great deal of time on important matters such as statistics from America. He started to speak at 10.24 about demand reduction. Perhaps the Select Committee and the Minister have not spent enough time looking at this and outlining the schemes that the Government intend to set up. Before he concludes, may we hear a little about that from the Minister?

Mr. Mellor: There was a debate on this matter not long ago, so rather than reiterate the well-known and well-established paths that the Government and others have consistently followed, I felt that it would be better to reflect on the key indicators to stimulate us to greater effort. Demand reduction is crucial. As I have already said, this comes on a number of levels. We are planning a new advertising campaign, which will deal with the problems of poly-drug misuse. The evidence clearly shows that the heroin campaign, which was a challenging campaign, had a key role to play in the number of teenagers who said no to drugs. We were not posturing to them in terms that would appeal to those of us of increasing middle age and saying the things that we wanted to hear about drugs. Instead, we went out and listened to what teenagers wanted to hear about drugs. They did not want to hear, "It is bad for you" or that drugs were illegal and kill. We discovered that we could reach out to them if we said that drugs made one a boring person or ill in a more down to earth way than just killing one off, but equally insidious in terms of one's ability to function as a person. Above all, it made one unattractive to a person of the opposite sex. One may prefer to be able to reach out to people on a different basis, but the evidence shows that that approach works, and we shall build on that with the national campaign.

We also wanted to have regional and local elements because there is no such thing as a British drug problem. There is a whole host of different local problems, which becomes a set of British statistics. Moving down to the regional level, the money should be given to local authorities and other groups to work in their local community. The efforts that we shall make through the Home Office initiative to co-ordinate initiatives more all bear on drug demand reduction. There is also the work being done in schools through curriculum development to ensure that kids, in being taught the parameters of a healthy lifestyle, understand about drugs and understand the problems that they face.

There are international elements in demand reduction. The hon. Member for Leicester, East will know that we have called a world conference on drugs in April, which must be more than a talk shop. It is no good giving people only the opportunity to emote emptily over a problem. It must have a practical outcome. One of the things that we want to do is have a working group on demand reduction looking seriously at the problem with discussions led and stimulated by acknowledged experts. It is no good us all inventing the wheel individually. We must try to reach common strategies on demand reduction.

I may have been long on diagnosis and short on cures to the problem, but that is because I think it is important for us to take stock of where we are. At the outset of the problem the Government identified key approaches to deal with a problem for which there is no one solution—those approaches being to support international action, to reduce the production and trafficking of drugs, to strengthen police and Customs enforcement, to maintain tight domestic controls and effective deterrence, to develop prevention publicity and education and to improve treatment and rehabilitation. As every year, or even as every month, has gone by, a new layer of bricks has been put on the wall. We continue to build the wall. There is no one single answer, but there is a range of useful initiatives that help us to build on. We have no monopoly of insights.

[Mr. Mellor]

We rely on the insights of others—experts in the subject, Members of Parliament, concerned members of the public —to put to us other ways in which we can do this.

I hope that I can take as read that the House will not expect me, although I could do so, to reiterate the many different policy strands under each of those headings. I have had a chance to talk about some of them in reply to interventions. However, I should welcome further suggestions as to how we might refine it. If we are honest, we are all on a steep learning curve with this problem, which has a greater dimension today than it ever has before, in the experience of any of us. We had best work together to get on top of it.

We are a long way from becoming a nation awash with drugs and drug addicts. I hope that we never shall become one. However, it is clear that, although there have been undoubted successes in recent years in the battle against drugs, we are being put to the test even more severely today than ever before. The fact that drugs are not as much in the headlines as they were tells us more about the fashionability of the issues in the press than about the seriousness of the threat. We must not be deterred, because not everybody is hanging on our every word about drugs, from laying down the further strategies that are needed.

We can take some comfort, but not a lot, from the fact that heroin has moved towards its peak; but cocaine will pose the worst threat yet because it is so insidious. I hope that everything that I have said will persuade people of that. When we look at poly-drug misuse and at the range of substances with which some people constantly delight in discovering to abuse their bodies and minds, we must recognise that we must not let our vigilance slip. I hope that the House will join me in renewing our commitment to keep the battle against the drugs problem as a top priority, knowing full well that society will not survive in its present form if we succumb to it.

10.36 am

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): The Opposition welcome the opportunity to discuss the problem of drug misuse and to consider effective ways to tackle this major social problem. I come to the problem fairly freshly in comparison with the Minister, who has returned to it. However, I know something about the problem because I have close contacts with south America, and Peru in particular. As the Minister will know, I also have experience of trying to help an informant who was based near my constituency some years ago. The Minister and I worked together, and realised the limitations of the law then in giving a reward and anonymity to those who help the police with their inquiries. We have some shared experiences.

This is an important day, because this is a most remarkable Select Committee report. If I were marking it in my days as a university teacher, I would mark it alpha plus, because it is an excellent report. It covers all the ground. My only caveat is that it could have built a little more on how we help the peasants who live so close to starvation in places such as Peru that they can grow only coca unless someone supplies an alternative. It is no answer to defoliate and ruin their livelihood. There must be something else for them, and western nations must not just condemn those people. They must take seriously their responsibilities.

The amount of money in international and bilateral aid is piffling. The whole of our overseas aid to South America is £12 million annually. The amount of money needed to solve the problems of drugs, the growing of coca and the destruction of the rain forests puts into perspective the relationship between the rich countries that are the users of the drugs and the poor countries. The rich countries bear the burden of drug misuse but we also have a responsibility to those parts of the world where people have no alternative to growing this crop. I am talking not about the dealers but about those whose livelihood depends on growing something to make a living. With that slight criticism I welcome the Committee's report.

It is vital not to make cheap party points on this subject. I shall make some points, as one would expect from the Opposition, but I shall try not to make them too party political or too cheap. Often on a Friday morning, with fewer Members in the House, we get a better debate, and I undertake to cover this issue seriously.

It is easy to attract attention with alarmist statements about drug misuse and about crack, but we run the risk of increasing interest in that most dangerous drug. Already, there are worrying signs that media coverage in America has resulted in a bonanza that advertising companies would have been happy to achieve for reputable products. Everyone in public life must try to keep a balance. We must avoid hyping up the interest in a drug which, as yet, has not hit Britain to the extent that it has hit other countries, such as the United States.

We must keep the drug problem in perspective. I agree with the Minister that drugs do not produce anywhere near the number of deaths, illnesses, problems with unemployment and social and legal costs that legal drugs such as alcohol and tobacco produce.

Several months ago, the Under-Secretary of State for Health, answering parliamentary questions, said that alcohol-related diseases cost £2 billion a year. Most ordinary British citizens, if they want to preserve life and limb, must avoid not drugs, but our town and city centres on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights because of drunkenness, disorder and violence. We must bear in mind the balance between problems caused by legal and illegal drugs.

Nevertheless, drugs are of great social concern. We have heard a lot about crack, but the real problems at the moment are related to heroin and amphetamines. Heroin was the epidemic of the 1980s, but it has now peaked, and I am glad that the Minister gave figures to substantiate that. The epidemic started in the 1960s and peaked in the 1980s, but it has had a devastating effect on many individuals, families and communities. It is estimated that we now have between 100,000 and 180,000 heroin addicts in Britain. Let us consider the misery that that causes.

Amphetamine abuse is highly dangerous, and we have to find methods to tackle that addiction. Also we have to prepare for dangerous new substances such as crack and ice.

The Minister did not have time to cover all the issues involved but he has visited the United States to talk about the problems, and he mentioned the changed behaviour patterns of people under the influence of some of those new drugs. We must bear those changes in mind.

Some drugs lead to a docile state of mind, but some of the new drugs seem to lead to a paranoid state or one that induces violence. That is the difference between the drugs that we have become accustomed to in Britain and some of the new drugs that may now come into Britain. Behaviour patterns change when people use some of the new drugs and that may have serious consequences for non-drug users, who may become the victims of violence on the streets.

One aspect of drug addiction that has not been given a great deal of prominence is the link between addiction and crime. I do not mean international crime, but the type of everyday crime that we see increasing in the crime statistics year after year. One of the reasons that we do not know a great deal about that link is that the Government have not published the research that they have commissioned in the past. I am not being partisan, but I believe that all right hon. and hon. Members and experts outside the House would appreciate it if the Home Office published as soon as possible the research that it has conducted. Even if the results are slightly embarrassing, we would like to see the Home Office's evaluation of the research into the link between drug addiction, anti-social and violent behaviour and crime.

All we have had is a tantalisingly brief summary in the Home Office research bulletin. From that we learn that Howard Parker's research in the Wirral estimates that the local heroin market is worth £22 million a year.

Mr. John Greenway: I agree entirely with the hon. Gentleman and I want to help him. The link between drug addiction and crime was one of the major factors behind our inquiry into drug trafficking. I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to paragraph 16 of our report. During evidence, Home Office witnesses told the Committee that the National Drugs Intelligence Unit has assigned a section to examine the link between serious crime and drug abuse and trafficking. It is a serious matter.

Mr. Sheerman: I thank the hon. Gentleman for reminding me of that report. People indulge in petty crime in particular, to raise the money to buy drugs on the street. Howard Parker estimates that the local heroin market is worth £22 million, and that is an astonishing figure. Cindy Fazy's research shows that there are more than 1,000 heroin users in Liverpool, and they spend on average £280 a week on illicit drugs, and that they need to raise £7 million a year from the proceeds of acquisition offences.

Wagstaff and Maynard have estimated a total expenditure on illicit supplies of heroin in 1984 of between £111·7 million and £237·8 million. That is a lot of money to be raised by people with a drug habit. Even the most conservative estimate would be that more than half is obtained through theft, burglary and shop lifting. The cost to the victim is much higher, because stolen goods are sold at much less than their real value. One can work out what the value of the goods that are stolen must be.

I look forward to hearing from the Minister that the research will be published in full, because we could learn a great deal from it. Research is vital, and I think that all right hon. and hon. Members will agree with that.

We do not want simple solutions to a complex problem. We want to know of remedies for this plague so that we can apply them and control the problem. There are many questions about the problem of drug abuse for which we do not have any answers. What sort of education campaign works with the young, and with other people? What treatment works? Where should resources be targeted?

The Government have spent very little money on research into drug abuse. I shall table a question today asking how much has been spent on research, apart from on the "Heroin screws you up" campaign and on the evaluation of that work.

Drug abuse is not an easy problem to solve. Unfortunately, there are no easy answers and no instant solutions. One has to be pragmatic, and set priorities to decide where efforts should be maximised and where one can best intervene to break the chain and to tackle abuse.

Clearly there are two ways to deal with the problem of drug abuse. The first is to limit supply, and the Select Committee considered that in great depth. I shall not spend much time on that side of the debate. Like the Minister, I prefer to talk about the second way to deal with the problem—how we reduce the demand for drugs in Britain. The former Home Secretary, now the Foreign Secretary, made it clear that more emphasis should be put on reducing demand. The Opposition welcomed that proposal, and I hope that the new Home Secretary and the new Minister of State will continue to support it.

We must learn from American mistakes, but we must also learn from other countries. In an intervention earlier, I mentioned the lack of linguistic skills of most British people. Sometimes it is almost too easy to examine only the American experience. I have seen recent research from Holland which offers some interesting lessons.

Mr. Mellor: I entirely agree. While whittling away four hours of my five-hour speech, I left out the section on the Pompidou group, which is the Council of Ministers group on drugs. That group conducts many exchanges of research and joint research projects. I shall be happy to send the hon. Gentleman some of the evidence. He is right. There is a European aspect which is not the same as the United States experience. We must not link ourselves only with the English-speaking world.

Mr. Sheerman: I am glad that the Minister and I agree on that as well. My mind has been changed by the Select Committee's report. I approached the subject of legalisation with a fresh mind. Research of the Dutch experience changed my mind on that option. I agree with the Select Committee's recommendation—it would be highly dangerous to legalise any of the drugs that we are discussing this morning. I emphatically agree with that. I am attempting to draw conclusions on the basis of research rather than prejudice or badly-researched evidence.

We go to the United States to learn from some of their mistakes. The Reagan Administration poured millions of dollars into attempts to cut the supply of drugs to the United States, but to very little effect. It is not entirely unreasonable to draw the analogy of building a dam to withstand a massive tidal wave. It will never be possible to stop up every means of getting drugs into this or any other country—demand will ensure that supplies get through.

It is important not to follow the American line. The United States has been one of the least successful countries when it comes to dealing with drugs. That must be borne in mind. There is growing recognition there that their balance of priorities has been wrong for several years. There are, however, improvements that can be made in our

[Mr. Sheerman]

attempt to curtail supply. It may be more cost effective for the police to concentrate on middle-market dealers based in Britain who prey on communities and make a fortune out of drugs rather than on the big international dealers who are extremely difficult to catch. Breaking the chain in the middle is important and would be helpful.

The Select Committee on Home Affairs this week published its report on drug trafficking. At paragraph 110, the Select Committee comments approvingly on the Broome report and the stratified model there for dealing with traffickers. It describes three levels of traffickers—local, distributor and importer. Those tiers are dealt with by the local police, the regional police and Customs and Excise respectively. I understand the recommendation, but there has been a survey of more than 400 serving police officers at all levels of the criminal investigation department and the drugs squad. It shows that serving officers feel that the three-tier system does not work, that the market is more flexible and is not organised like that and that it would be better to have one general agency for drug enforcement. I understand that this project report to the Police Foundation for the Association of Chief Police Officers has been withheld from publication. It would be helpful to have that report so that we can make an informed decision. If information has been gathered and research has been done, such is the importance of this basically non-political subject that it can only add to our knowledge and the level of debate.

The Select Committee recommends on page 23 of its report that the proceeds of drug trafficking should be put into a central fund administered by the Home Office. I have already mentioned the bizarre situation in which I found myself when I tried to get an award for an important drug informant. I was told that the authorities would like to reward his useful information but that there was not a budget with which to do so. There was a long struggle to ensure that things turned out right. I campaigned in a general way for just such a recommendation, so I warmly approve of it. I hope that, if the funds are divided between enforcement agencies, the division will not be simply the basis of success at arresting traffickers, but rather on the basis of supplying and sharing good quality information. It would be too easy to give enormous plums to, perhaps, the Metropolitan police or some other force that makes arrests, but it is much more important to encourage all forces to provide all levels of information that add up to a sophisticated operation.

I would like some of the proceeds—perhaps this is a moral point—to find their way to a fund for treatment facilities so that the profits of drug trafficking help to treat some of those whose lives have been wrecked by buying this disgraceful merchandise.

The Criminal Justice (International Co-operation) Bill is to start in another place, and we shall see it some time in the new year. I have some worries about the clauses on precursor chemicals which are used to make illicit drugs. I welcome the clauses, which enable Britain to ratify the Vienna convention, but information has been passed to me about the controls of precursors. This is a good example of how good policies can have disastrous and unforeseen consequences. It is suggested that, as the controls on precursors have begun to bite, manufacturers have started to use other chemicals which are not monitored so tightly. They have moved on from making amphetamine sulphate to metamphetamines, which can be injected and are more dangerous. I hope that that will be investigated as a matter of urgency.

In general, I believe that a system of priorities for precursors should concentrate on chemicals which make class A drugs. It is also important to establish a set of priorities for drug seizures. I believe that effort should be concentrated on class A drugs—those highly damaging drugs such as heroin and cocaine. In the Metropolitan police area, in 1988, 90 per cent. of seizures involved cannabis and 83 per cent. of seizures on the streets involved cannabis. When there are scarce resources and scarce staff, I would like more attention to be directed towards really dangerous drugs. That is not to say that I believe in decriminalisation. I believe that concentration of effort is important against those most dangerous drugs.

The most party-political part of my speech concerns the demand for drugs and ways in which to reduce that demand. I detect a great deal of hypocrisy in the Government's comments about stemming demand. Some of the clearest information to come out of research into drug misuse is the link between drug addiction and poverty. The heroin epidemic of the 1980s has been concentrated in the most deprived inner-city areas. That is not to say that others do not touch drugs, and nor is every inner city affected—the supply lines work in a much more complicated way than that—but where heroin reached, it was concentrated amoung unemployed youth in poor areas.

Research which is to be published in the new year will reinforce that view and show how addiction is concentrated among the most deprived citizens of our country—people who are becoming detached from society. The beginnings, may I say, of an underclass. The Prime Minister has suggested that drug addiction is a problem of prosperity. I believe that her comments are unfortunate and a million miles from reality. For an international comparison, we have to look only at the ghettos of north America.

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest): I have listened to the hon. Gentleman's speech with great interest, as I did to the speech of my hon. and learned Friend the Minister. I am sorry to part company with the hon. Gentleman for the first time this morning, although he admits that this is the only controversial part of his remarks. Surely neither that which he has represented nor his brief and, I suggest, less than wholly accurate description of the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is the basic truth. Drug taking is not the result of affluence totally and it is not the result of poverty totally. The hon. Gentleman's approach is hardly consistent with his earlier comment that a habit is likely to cost about £15,000 a year to sustain. Does that square with his assertion that drug taking is likely to be more prevalent among an underclass? Surely drug taking is the result of aimlessness, hopelessness, lack of direction and lack of feeling of a place in society. Surely these are the greatest social causes of drug misuse, and are likely to span the entire economic and social spectrum.

Mr. Sheerman: I am sorry to disagree with the hon. Gentleman. He is right, however, to say that drug addiction touches all parts of society. I suggest that research shows that drug addiction is rooted mainly in deprivation. There is the image of the yuppy sniffing cocaine, for example, but the real problem of heroin addiction is to be found in poverty in the inner cities and in unemployment. When I spoke of the cost of addiction I went on to say that those who are unemployed and living on the margin have to steal or engage in violent crime to sustain the habit.

The Government's proposals for demand reduction is to set up nine drug prevention units. That must be welcome, as every such initiative must be, but the Government have fallen into the same trap as they fell into with the safe city programme. Once again, they have ignored local authorities and opted for a rather gimmicky initiative. As with crime prevention generally, local authorities have a key role to play in the improvement of the environment, housing, education, leisure and recreation for young people and the social services. All these services have a part to play. Local authorities have a unique responsibility and an ability to bring services together. When we consider the way in which the prevention units are set up, the local authorities should be given a key role in the partnership that must be formed. We want a partnership that involves every sector of the community. I believe that the local democratically elected role is a key one and that the Government should not shirk from acknowledging that. Failure to use the skills and the range of work that is undertaken by local authorities is disastrous to effective prevention.

I am interested to know what the units will look like and how they will function. I have not found anyone who is involved in the prevention of drug misuse—I have talked to many about these matters—who has any idea how the units will operate. Everyone is waiting and saying how pleased he or she will be when the Minister says exactly how the units will operate and make their contribution.

The running of education campaigns is part of an agreed policy between the Opposition and the Government. It is important to target campaigns on groups that are especially at risk. I am encouraged by the work of the "fast forward" project in Edinburgh, which will be described in Crime Concern's forthcoming handbook on youth crime prevention projects. I compliment hon. Members on both sides of the House who have a great deal to do with Crime Concern. The "fast forward" project works directly with young people in youth clubs. It uses the peer group approach. Young people aged between 16 and 25 years educate other young people. Similar projects in the United States, such as the one in Boston, have been extremely successful.

It was interesting that the Minister did not say too much about this, but the press has been full of suggestions that he might consider a new scare advertising campaign on crack that will be similar to what we believe to be the rather useless "Heroin screws you up" campaign. In our view, scare advertisements do not work. They do not relate to the experiences of young people who are beginning to experiment with drugs. The rather effete young man in the heroin posters became a pin-up for some young girls. The Home Office commissioned an evaluation of the campaign, and I understand that it concluded that the campaign was a waste of money. It must not be repeated.

Mr. Mellor: The allegation that the young man became a cult figure has never been proved. It was a mere assertion by someone which has never been substantiated. The young man appeared in one of a series of advertisements. I am not afraid of being wrong. When I am in error, I am proud to admit it. When in uncharted seas, there is no shame in having turned the tiller the wrong way. The evaluation confirmed the success of the campaign—I regret that it has been attacked by some—and I shall send the hon. Gentleman a copy of it. It is not a shock-horror approach to show someone looking listless, spotty or run down as a result of being on drugs. It would be a shock-horror approach if we showed a dead person and implied that everyone on drugs would die. We rejected that approach. It will be difficult to decide how best to tackle the cocaine and crack problem through advertising. I stand by the decision of my predecessor that we shall not launch immediately into that advertising. I shall certainly not rule out advertising against crack. I think that it was John Wesley who said, "Why should the devil have all the best tunes?" If people's minds can be affected by advertising on every other issue, why not on this one?

Mr. Sheerman: I take the Minister's point. I understand that when he made his decision he acted with the best of motives and on the best advice. I am saying that time has passed on. The evaluation that I have seen of the success of the campaign would not lead anyone to the conclusion that the Minister has reached. Some time will elapse between the campaign to which I have referred and the next one, and I hope that he learns from the previous campaign. We must all learn from it. I do not want to make cheap party points. I merely say that we must have the right campaign. We are talking about a lot of money. I would rather see millions of pounds being spent on treatment centres, on putting the subject into the curriculum and on getting it into schools. When I am the Minister responsible for these matters after the next general election, I shall be tempted to go home and say, "Look at my television campaign. Isn't it wonderful." That must always be a temptation, but let us not have another campaign unless research tells us that it will be effective. I think that the Minister and I can come to some form of armed truce on this issue.

Mr. Norris: In the co-operative atmosphere of the debate, I wish to comment on the nature of the message. I have no doubt that the hon. Gentleman will be aware that for a long time the Home Office spent a considerable amount of money on crime prevention campaigns. For many years it concentrated on messages such as, "Watch Out, There's a Thief About" and, "Lock It or Lose It". It was pretty standard stuff and it went in one ear and out of the other. When the same amount of money was expended on a campaign that introduced the slogan "Crime—Together We'll Crack It" there was a tremendously greater degree of response. Apparently, there was a measurably different response when crime figures were examined. I have every sympathy with what the hon. Gentleman says but I want to know whether he is suggesting that we should lessen the advertising element of our fight against drug trafficking or that the message should be altered.

Mr. Sheerman: I am suggesting that both things should happen. We have to learn, and there are sophisticated ways of evaluating what message will get through. We shall have to evaluate advertising campaigns and consider whether it would be better to spend the money on a different approach. I do not rule out the campaigns that the hon. Gentleman suggests, but they must be evaluated carefully.

[Mr. Sheerman]

I have been much involved in transport and safety matters, and I know that it is difficult to get the message right. Drug misuse is a much more difficult area than transport, for example, in many respects.

Mr. Mellor: As my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) says, this is a co-operative debate. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for allowing me to intervene. I do not do so in any spirit of rancour. The campaigns that we have run have been market researched. That research led us to put in the wastepaper basket messages such as, "Heroin Kills" or, "Heroin is Against the Law." A company which is separate from the one which produces the advertising evaluates the campaign. A report from a non-governmental source made a number of criticisms. Our research, which comes from a completely independent company, makes it clear that we have reinforced the anti-heroin message by producing reasons why people should be against heroin. It was not merely a straightforward no, prompting someone to say, "Why?", only to be told, "I don't know." Reasons were given. That is my approach. Had the results been different, I would have changed it.

A relatively low-key—but, I hope effective—campaign will begin on television in a couple of months. There is no monopoly of wisdom in this matter, and if the hon. Gentleman has any ideas about the campaign he might like to let me have them. I do not think of it as the Government's campaign; it is a campaign that the Government are sponsoring on behalf of a whole range of concerned people, of whatever political view.

Mr. Sheerman: I shall send my suggestions to the appropriate Minister.

In spending money on campaigns, we must remember that education can take other forms. Many of the delivering agencies have been undermined by the Government. The youth service is decimated and teachers, general practitioners, social workers and probation officers are demoralised by frequent criticism. It is hardly a sound basis for a major educational initiative when so many of those on whom we rely to deliver the message believe that the Government do not think them to be quite the right sort of people and not quite up to the job.

Treatment and rehabilitation are crucial parts of a strategy to tackle drug misuse. I recognise that the Government have increased expenditure in that area—something not often said from this Dispatch Box. Many good projects have been established and are in operation throughout the country. However, expansion has only just kept up with the increased number of users, let alone with the additional worries about AIDS and drug use.

There is also concern that many projects have been financed by pump priming money to regional health authorities, which continually have to find the funds themselves from other parts of their budgets. Pump priming is all right; it is good to have new initiatives. However, when the pump priming runs out, and what to the public eye might appear to be a more attractive proposition arises, the competition is very tough. The Minister must play a positive role in ensuring that that pump priming does not mean that the many schemes that look good on the surface last for only a short time and then disappear, thereby disappointing the staff involved and not delivering the continuing service that is needed. Drug addicts may lose out to more popular groups of patients, especially when hospitals control their own budgets or opt out of regional health authority control.

We need a continuing expansion of treatment facilities to meet the needs of the tens of thousands of young people addicted to drugs. One particular area of concern is that current treatment facilities rarely meet the needs of black addicts. Evidence shows that few people are treated at such centres and that there are very few black staff. The Minister should pay particular attention to that problem.

In one highly important area of the system, treatment is woefully and dangerously inadequate, and that is in the prisons. I know that it is a shared responsibility between two Ministers, but I hope that they get together on this problem. An increasing number of addicts are finding their way into prison as a result of their offending, yet only minimal treatment facilities are available inside prisons. Drug addicts in prison take part in the most dangerous form of drug misuse—intravenous injection with dirty needles. It is well known that some young people, who have not previously experimented with drugs, become addicted while inside. Many young drug-takers will go straight back to offending to finance their addiction on release. It is of great concern that our prisons do not have the right level of treatment for young people and others who go to prison because of drug addiction, which has led to crime, which means going to prison and so the cycle goes on.

Society must tackle that, and we need a two-pronged policy to do so. First, we need to divert as many young drug takers, as safely as we can, from prison and into alternatives to custody schemes specialising in dealing with drug addiction. The Government acknowledge that in their Green Paper "Punishment, Custody and the Community". It states:

> "The chances of dealing effectively with a drug problem are much greater if the offender can remain in the community and undertakes to co-operate in a sensibly planned programme to help him or her come off drugs."

If that is to be achieved, we need a radical expansion of such programmes.

Indeed, it would be useful if, at every stage of the criminal justice process, major agencies were aware of the need to get drug offenders into treatment. In Southwark, for example, when the police caution drug users they give advice on referral to treatment projects. By next year, it is hoped that six to eight of these schemes will be operating throughout the country, with the support of the Institute for the Study of Drug Dependence.

Secondly, we must improve treatment facilities within prisons for those who must be imprisoned to protect the public. That links to the major health risk already mentioned by the Minister—that of AIDS. It is no exaggeration to say that prisons may be a bridgehead to the spread of AIDS into the heterosexual community. That is because of the high-risk behaviour that takes place within prison such as injecting drugs and homosexuality. Drug users who are injecting while in prison will have to share dirty syringes among many inmates, with a great risk of spreading the HIV virus.

Homosexual activity is more widespread in prison than in the outside community because some men who are usually heterosexual take part in homosexual activities in prison. Those men are then released and can spread the virus. The Home Office, having developed a training package for prison officers and prisoners, has become remarkably complacent about AIDS. We need research to discover the extent of high-risk activity in prisons and ways to tackle the problem. It is no good burying one's head in sand because homosexuality is deemed to be illegal inside prison and because drugs should not be getting in. That is nonsense. One has only to talk to prison governors and officers to learn the reality.

I have visited prisons while carrying out my responsibilities and I have been told that drugs are a very real problem. Indeed, a prison officer who recently took me around a prison said, "How do you think we could keep the lid on this place if it were not for drugs?" That statement shook me, but it is one that will be made by any candid and honest prison officer. If there is a danger of prisons being a bridgehead to the spread of AIDS in the community, what happens in prison cannot be forgotten. We cannot pretend that it does not exist. High standard treatment facilities for drug addicts would be highly beneficial to minimise illicit use.

I want to conclude by dwelling on the real problem of AIDS, which has a profound effect on the way that the drugs problem is perceived in this country because of the link between AIDS and shared syringes. It is now widely accepted by bodies such as the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs that the threat from AIDS is greater than the threat from drugs. It has become vital to stop drug-users injecting. The advisory council produced two important reports on AIDS and drugs in 1988 and 1989. So far, the Government have failed to act on its proposals. Indeed, they are yet again displaying remarkably complacent attitudes to that major threat.

The Health Education Authority's AIDS education unit has been closed and research on sexual behaviour has been halted. We understand that that was at the personal direction of the Prime Minister. We cannot, as a society, afford such a negligent approach. The threat of AIDS means that we must act urgently to provide effective treatment for drug-users to minimise the risk of their behaviour and to co-ordinate the work of all agencies and all Ministers to deal with the HIV virus. The need for action to tackle drug misuse has never been more pressing.

The Minister emphasised the importance of the problem across parties, organisations, sections of society and indeed nations. Opposition Members concur with that, and hope that we shall see action to deliver the necessary policies in the coming year.

11.19 am

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): I welcome the opportunity to draw attention so early to the seventh report of the Select Committee on Home Affairs, which was published yesterday. As my hon. and learned Friend the Minister said in his opening remarks, the debate is very timely. I have no doubt, however, that he instigated it, which is, I think, a tribute to his commitment to the fight against drug trafficking and drug abuse.

I am sorry that my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler), the Select Committee's Chairman, is unable to be present today. He sends his apologies, for, having considered the problem in such a close and detailed fashion, he too welcomes today's debate. Let me also pay tribute to the Clerk of our Committee, Mr. Colin Lee, who, I believe, is listening to this discussion. He has contributed some sterling work to the preparation of not only yesterday's report, but our earlier report on crack.

The Select Committee report follows several months of investigation, including a visit to the United States in June. It makes no fewer than 49 recommendations, but I shall have time to highlight only some of the more important. An essential question posed in the report is, "How serious is the drug problem in the United Kingdom?". Quantifying the extent of any illicit activity is difficult, but quantifying that of drug abuse and drug trafficking is notoriously so, as we point out in our report. Section II details recent evidence of seizures, which my hon. and learned Friend has brought up to date this morning; it also describes police intelligence work and money-laundering activities. That information convinced the Committee that there could be no doubt of the seriousness of the drug problem in the United Kingdom, both actual and potential.

The hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) spoke of the link between drug abuse and AIDS. That is undoubtedly a serious problem, especially in prisons, but what is so frightening about the use of crack and free-based cocaine is that it is not associated with the use of needles. Research suggests that young women who smoke, particularly in the United States, are more likely to smoke free-based cocaine and to use crack.

There is no doubt that law enforcement has a major role to play in countering the problems of drug abuse and drug trafficking. In recent months it has again become fashionable to suggest the legalisation of drugs as an answer, but that idea must be strenuously resisted. In section III of our report we advanced some of the many arguments against decriminalisation, and the Committee's interim report—the sixth report, entitled "Crack: the Threat of Hard Drugs in the Next Decade" and published in July—drew attention to the horrific and deeply disturbing effects of drug abuse on social behaviour in the major cities of the United States. My hon. and learned Friend mentioned some of those effects, and I should like to mention others; there may be some overlap.

There has been a 400 per cent. increase in reported cases of child abuse in the United States over the past two years, and three quarters of the children who were battered to death last year had cocaine or crack-using parents. It is estimated the last year in the United States 375,000 babies were born to mothers with drug-related problems: that is 10 per cent. of all births in that country. Drug related emergency admissions to American hospitals have increased by 120 per cent. in three years, with crack addicts especially experiencing chronic chest pains, brain seizures, eating disorders such as anorexia, heart attacks, strokes and even death. That is the horror of cocaine—in a country where in 1976, just 13 years ago, President Carter's drugs adviser told the people that cocaine was a harmless middle-class drug. What irresponsible stupidity; what stupendous madness. That cannot be what we want for this country.

Many serious drug-related crimes of violence are a direct consequence of the effects of drugs. We have already heard today about the different effects created by some of the new amphetamine-based drugs—feelings of paranoia and irritability, a false sense of physical strength leading to violence and assults with weapons, child abuse and even murder. Those crimes have nothing to do with sustaining

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a habit, and everything to do with the debilitating influence of drug taking: they would clearly continue if drugs were legalised.

Another argument is that, as drug law enforcement is costly and difficult, it would be better to spend the money on health care for addicts and on preventive and educative measures for everyone else. It seems a colossal contradiction, however, to say that we could persuade youngsters of the evils of drug-taking if we had just legalised drugs. As I mentioned in an intervention on the speech of my hon. and learned Friend, we have evidence from surveys done in South America; and we know through intelligence that there is no shortage of drugs—particularly cocaine—being supplied to Europe by those countries. If those drugs were more freely available, there could be only one consequence: there would be more drug users, and drugs would be used more frequently.

Our report advances a further argument, which I found to be increasingly held in the United States. It was succinctly presented in the recently published "National Drug Control Strategy" from President Bush. That argument is that health considerations would undoubtedly necessitate heavy regulation of any legalised drugs to restrict availability. Substantial excise duties are already imposed on alcohol and tobacco, and they are supported increasingly on health grounds. Legalised drugs would be subject to a massive tax addition in an effort to reduce and restrict consumption.

Habitual addicts, robbed of personal dignity and social stability by the degrading influence of drug-taking, would thus be unable to pay for their drugs, and would be just as likely to commit petty crime as they are now. Legal drugs would be expensive, and links between drugs and crime would not be severed, whether those links were forged by the habitual addict funding his addiction or by trafficking in the black market. Certainly we could not countenance the sale of drugs so cheap that children could buy them with their pocket money.

I shall quote directly from our report only once. Paragraph 25 states:

> "The tragic social consequences and the enormous costs of the misuse of addictive drugs are so damaging that to risk increasing their misuse by legalising them would be the greatest folly. On health grounds alone, we cannot support the wider availability of addictive drugs or other illicit drugs. We therefore restate our outright opposition to any proposal to legalise the use of any currently illicit drugs."

I speak so forcefully not because hon. Members on both sides of the House do not agree about this matter, but simply because I am worried about a growing trend. I thought that that was an argument for decriminalisation. The debate provides us with an opportunity to answer those suggestions.

What should be the Government's strategy for tackling drug abuse and drug trafficking? Drug trafficking is an international problem and demands international action. The Committee examined several aspects of international co-operation. They are detailed in part IV of the report. The Committee concluded that the 1988 United Nations convention against illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances represents an important milestone in international co-operation. Ratification of the treaty is a priority. It will require amendment of section 24 of the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986 so that United Kingdom law on money-laundering complies with article 3 of the convention. I am pleased that the Government intend to include the necessary amendments in the recently published Criminal Justice (International Co-operation) Bill. I hope that hon. Members on both sides of the House will support the Bill when it comes to this House from the other place.

The Criminal Justice (International Co-operation) Bill will also enable the United Kingdom to ratify the European convention on mutual assistance in criminal matters, thereby pre-empting another of the report's recommendations. During our inquiry a number of witnesses drew attention to difficulties in conducting international investigations into drug trafficking. Attempts to gain evidence from abroad for prosecutions in Britain reply upon obtaining commissions rogatoires under a statute of 1873. The delays that result from this antiquated procedure are unacceptable in today's world of international drug barons and the action we need to take against them. I welcome the Government's prompt response to the clear need that emerged during evidence for urgent changes to be made.

My hon. and learned Friend paid tribute in his speech to the work of the Home Affairs Select Committee. He seemed to suggest that the Committee co-operated with the Home Department more readily than with some other Select Committees. One reason why I believe that is so is that the Committee always seems to be able to find a subject where clear Government policy and additional effort are required. We inquire into what needs to be done and find during our deliberations that the Government recognise that more needs to be done. On the basis of the evidence that we have gathered, changes are made. For example, before we had published our forensic science report about a year ago, the Government gave a clear response to it. As two of our reports are being discussed in the debate, that is a trend that other Select Committees might follow. That would be greatly to the benefit of Government policy and would lead to action being taken on important social issues, on which the country rightly demands action.

Further changes to the law relating to money-laundering must also be considered. Part V of the report shows how the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986 has proved to be a successful weapon in the war against drug trafficking. That Act followed the Home Affairs Select Committee report on drugs in 1985.

To gain further successes in tracing and confiscating the assets of drug traffickers, it is essential that police efforts to seek restraint orders are not thwarted by suspects being able to remove funds from their banks before those orders are granted. The issue of restraint orders needs to be speeded up. The Committee believes that that would happen if the police were able to obtain restraint orders from the district registries of the High Court.

A further important change to the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986 would be to allow a confiscation order to be varied to cover interest earned, or any appreciation in value, between the time the order was made and the time that it was ultimately satisfied.

Urgent consideration must also be given to the significant threat to the well-being of Britain's financial institutions from the sheer scale of money-laundering activities. The national drugs intelligence co-ordinator at Scotland Yard estimates that there could be at least £1·8 billion of illicitly obtained laundered money in the United Kingdom banking system. That is a frightening statistic.

There have been remarkably few prosecutions for money laundering offences under the 1986 Act. Despite consultations between the Association of Chief Police Officers and the Crown Prosecution Service, which also involved the National Drugs Intelligence Unit co-ordinator, the Bank of England and the Committee of London and Scottish Bankers, no clear consensus as to how the law could be strengthened has emerged, yet the threat to Britain's financial institutions is of such magnitude that the United Kingdom is regarded in the United States as an offshore banking system. At the very least, the Government and the Bank of England should undertake an urgent inquiry into the scale of the threat to the banking community that is posed by money-laundering, with a view to establishing what legislative or other changes are needed to counter it. I urge the Minister to look at that as a matter of priority.

As to the use that is made of money and assets that are seized from drug traffickers, the Committee strongly believes that the proceeds from drug profit confiscation should go to a central fund to be administered by the Home Office. That would allow additional money to be allocated to specific aspects of enforcement. The idea has the support of more than 100 right hon. and hon. Members, and it is the subject of an early-day motion. If the money were to be used by the Home Office, it would overcome objections to the direct use of such funds by police and Customs. It would enable the money to be spent where it is most needed, in the fight against drug abuse. Apart from law enforcement, that would involve education, prevention of drug taking and rehabilitation.

I shall refer briefly to the other three parts of our report. Amendments to reinforce the law will be successful only if they are supported by effective law enforcement. We spend over £4 billion each year on the fight against crime. Customs is spending another £200 million. It is essential that the organisation of enforcement should ensure that the money is well spent. A national drugs enforcement agency is not required, but urgent improvements need to be made to the co-ordination and coherence of law enforcement by strengthening, for example, the drugs wings of regional crime squads. I welcome the Home Secretary's recent announcement that 51 additional officers will be appointed to regional crime squads next year to reinforce their drugs wings.

The report also recommends the setting up of joint task forces by regional crime squads and drugs officers. Professional language training for police and drugs squad officers is needed. We need better resourcing of payments to informants.

Perhaps the most provocative recommendation in our report affecting the criminal justice system is that we need a review of the guidance issued to police officers on the law of incitement and matters relating to unconventional operations against drug traffickers. There is no doubt that the use of sting-type operations in the United States has proved extremely successful in tackling the problem of drug trafficking, especially at street level, but there is a major case for saying that in terms of international drug traffickers we need to ensure that our rules and regulations on the use of incitement are brought up to date so that the police can operate under cover. Drug trafficking involves sophisticated criminals and we need sophisticated techniques to deal with them.

The report also stresses the importance of intelligence to effective law enforcement. We should like to see an enhancement of the role of the National Drugs Intelligence Unit at Scotland Yard. We should also welcome an increase in the number of drugs liaison officers, some from police forces and some from Customs, who do such invaluable work abroad to ensure that our police forces have the most up-to-date intelligence available.

The Governments of the countries in which the drugs are produced rightly emphasise the importance of reducing the demand for drugs. That is one area of the fight against drugs abuse on which we did not spend a great deal of time in our report because, as the title of the report makes clear, we were concerned to look at drug trafficking on an international scale and its relationship with serious crime. Nevertheless, it is clear to all hon. Members who served on the Committee—I believe that the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) wishes to speak on that point later—that major demand reduction programmes need to be put in place. A dinner was held in our embassy in Washington to advise the Committee on what to do, at which were gathered all the best drugs enforcement brains in the United States. In that informal setting, I posed the question, "What constitutes an effective demand reduction programme?" That sparked the most intense debate and argument. Suffice it to say that no one really knew the answer. This is an area in which we have to learn and to research. We must look at all sensible suggestions, but reducing demand for drugs must be the key.

The United States authorities admit to having paid too little attention in the past to education and prevention, so we must not repeat that mistake. Therefore, as I have said, proper emphasis must be given to a demand reduction programme and to rehabilitation and treatment. General practitioners should be given more advice about how to spot and deal with the problems of drug abuse.

In the war against crime, there can be no greater prize than the defeat of drug trafficking and the scourge of drug abuse. Only a wide-ranging, comprehensive and balanced strategy has any chance of success. Our report sets out clear and precise ways in which that strategy can be improved. I commend it to the Government and the House.

11.43 am

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): Drugs are the menace of today and the monster of tomorrow. The evil that they represent is so clear that we as legislators would be failing in our duty if we urged caution in dealing with this agonising problem that already causes misery to millions of people throughout the world and to thousands of our fellow citizens.

Like the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway), I, too, have the privilege of serving on the Select Committee on Home Affairs and I, too, commend its sixth and seventh reports to the House. The facts revealed at the publication of the report yesterday, that just under £2 billion from the profits of drugs is laundered through the banking system of our country, shows the enormous scale of the problem.

In all the work that I have done as a Member of Parliament, nothing has been as worthwhile as serving on the Committee and looking at the way in which drugs have engulfed American society. If we want to know what life will be like in Britain in a few years time if we do nothing in the war against drugs, we need only look at America.

I listened carefully to the account given by the Minister of State and have little to disagree with on the facts and

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figures that he gave. The Americans themselves estimate that 70·4 million people—37 per cent. of the population—have tried an illicit drug at least twice in their lifetimes. The report notes that there are now 9 million regular drugs-users and 10 million heavy users—that is, people who use drugs over 200 times per year.

The crack problem is clearly an epidemic in America. It knows no racial, class or gender distinctions in terms of those who use it. However, the Minister is right to say that of all drugs perhaps this is the one most used by women. Crack is five to 10 times more addictive than other forms of cocaine. The worrying thing that we noted was that crack is almost instantly addictive. In all the reports that we read and in all the evidence we considered, we have yet to discover a single case of a person who has recovered from being a crack addict. Although millions of pounds are spent on treatment and rehabilitation, there is no known researched treatment that actually works. That is the terrifying consequence of the crack epidemic.

Available widely in almost all the states of the United States, it is a drug that affects people of all social demeanours. A year ago I visited Milwaukee, a state in the mid-west which is known as the "dairy" state. It is not the kind of state that one would identify as having a great number of drug users. I had dinner there with a middle American family—in that mid-western state in the middle of America—and spoke with the son of the family, a young man with great promise. He had a brilliant career ahead of him, but the money that his professional parents had allocated for his future education at school and university was having to be used to help him get rid of his drug habit. The family have switched their resources from education to social services and to health to save their child from death.

The Minister was right when he said that the striking feature about crack is that it is so cheap. When the Committee visited America we saw crack changing hands for about $2 or $3 a piece. The hon. Member for Ryedale has already mentioned the effects of using crack—the chest congestion, brain seizures and the other illnesses that eventually lead to death. It is also right to point out the connection between crack and petty and violent crime. Last year 50 per cent. of all arrests in New York city related in some way to the crack epidemic, and 60 per cent. of those arrested in Washington DC were tested positively for the drug. Violent crime in Washington DC is closely connected with the drug and there is strong evidence to connect all 400 or so homicides in that city with the problem. Statistics show that 47 per cent. all users of the drug have been involved in a physical fight.

Hon. Members are right to draw attention to the link between the use of that drug and child abuse. The Committee's report mentions that we saw a young man aged about 12 being arrested because of crack. We have all read in the newspapers the harrowing story of the mother in Los Angeles who sold her daughter for the purpose of sexual abuse to satisfy her craving for the drug. Last year in America 375,000 babies were born with drug-related problems. The crack babies are causing massive problems to the American health service. The Committee mentions that $500,000 has been spent in trying to protect and to treat 11 babies suffering from crack.

The expression of grief that exists in America is reflected in a statement from a senior Congressman, Mr. Ron Dellums, who met my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) on a recent visit to Washington. He said that in America babies were having babies, that mothers were crying and children dying. We must not repeat that experience in Britain.

The American mistakes are there for all to see. We mention them not because we want to gloat, but because we want to learn from American experiences and failures. The first point to note is that the Americans underestimated the level of the crack addiction and the speed with which it would spread. The Committee mentions a previous visit to America in 1985 when the use of crack was not prevalent. Within four years, however, that drug has engulfed most young American people.

The Committee was concerned at the lack of co-ordination between the enforcement agencies. Thirty-seven federal agencies 40,000 local forces, the FBI, the CIA and the Drug Enforcement Agency are involved. That problem of co-ordination resulted in the President appointing a "drug czar" who is responsible for co-ordination, at a crucial executive level, of the war against crack. That appointment, however, came far too late.

Not enough money has been spent on demand reduction. In 1985, $950 million was spent on demand reduction, but $2,936 million was spent on supply reduction. That imbalance has not only affected speeches of hon. Members today, but the way in which the Select Committee report was written. The Committee also noted that America has not spent enough on the treatment and rehabilitation of those with problems.

We have seen the future in America and we do not like it. The Minister has already said that the situation here is getting progressively worse. He has already told us that, in 1987, there were 12 crack seizures in Britain. I am grateful to him for giving us the current figures. From information given to me in parliamentary answers it is clear that the crack addiction and supply is worse in certain areas. Up until October there were 48 seizures in the Metropolitan police area and that is a matter for concern. In Greater Manchester, there were seven seizures, in Merseyside, there were five, in the West Midlands, there were nine and in Avon and Somerset, there were nine. Even in places such as Nottinghamshire, there were seizures of crack, although I am happy to say that there were none in my home county of Leicestershire.

The value of the crack that was seized is also of interest. Although the Minister did not give us the latest figures, I know from parliamentary answers that in 1987, the street value of the crack that was seized in Britain was £800, which does not seem much, but by September 1989, the figure had reached £21,000. That may not seem a tremendously high figure, but it represents a 200-fold increase in two years, which is enough to make us feel extremely worried. Similarly, the amount of crack that has been seized by Customs has increased from 35 kg in 1984, to 309 kg, the figure that the Minister kindly gave us today.

I note the work that is being done by the ministerial group on the misuse of drugs, and my remarks on this are said in a friendly spirit. The Minister and I have been getting into a relationship that is affecting my political orientation. We seem to be having to agree on many issues.

Ms. Abbott: Shame.

Mr. Vaz: It is. We agreed on all the important issues and almost hugged each other during the passage of the Children Bill. I say to the Minister in all friendliness that we want to agree with the initiatives that he has taken. I have looked at the reply that he gave me only yesterday about the number of times that the ministerial group on the misuse of drugs has met. It may be as a result of the fact that the Minister was away from his portfolio at the Home Office and that he was at the Department of Health, that there does not seem to have been a tremendous increase in the number of times that the ministerial group has met. It has met 39 times since 1984. It met four times in 1984, six times in 1988 and six times in 1989. Is it a coincidence that it met previously on 16 October, but met this week only two days before this debate?

It is important that the group, which brings together senior Ministers, meets far more regularly. With the increase in seizures and other figures, I should have thought that there would be a corresponding increase in the number of meetings of the group. I take the Minister's point that there is no point in the group meeting just to have coffee and sandwiches, and to talk about the problems, and that we need effective action. I make the friendly suggestion that the group should meet more regularly.

The Government are not spending enough money on research. I had a reply recently from the Minister for Health who, in response to a question that I had tabled on whether the Home Office or any other Department was hoping to fund research into the patterns of use of cocaine and crack, said that she and the Home Office were "hoping to fund" a study that would cost around £300,000 over a three-year period. I am sorry that, because of constituency commitments, I cannot wait until the end of the debate and I apologise for that. However, I hope that when the Minister replies to the debate, he will tell us that it is not merely a matter of the Minister for Health "hoping" for that research, but that she is promising that there will be research.

There is a problem of co-ordination. The Metropolitan police central drug squad, 52 local police forces, various wings of the regional crime squad, the National Drugs Intelligence Unit and HM Customs and Excise are the principal agencies dealing with the problem. I do not wish to cast aspersions on a report that, in effect, I co-authored, but when I read it again after its publication, I wondered whether we were wrong not to have been more forceful in our suggestion that we should have a national enforcement agency to co-ordinate the various functions. I realise that that is one of the roles of the intelligence unit, in the sense that it gathers information, but I wonder whether we should have taken into account American experience and learnt from American mistakes. The Prime Minister has a long list of consultants. Perhaps we should have a drugs consultant at prime ministerial level, with the same high profile as the "drug czar" in the executive office of the American President.

Mr. John Greenway: The Select Committee report recognises the importance of the National Drug Intelligence Unit and its co-ordinator. I think that we went part of the way towards answering the hon. Gentleman's question in our recommendation that the national drugs intelligence co-ordinator should have stronger executive powers to call for intelligence and evidence from other police forces—powers which it does not yet have.

Mr. Vaz: The hon. Gentleman is right that we made that recommendation but the Government may wish to go a step further.

.What is the solution to the problem? How can we learn from experience and reduce demand? The Minister made an able speech which contained a great deal of useful information. My criticism of it is that he spent the vast majority of his time outlining the problems. I believe that the hon. Member for Ryedale also touched on the fact that in a sense the Select Committee has done the same. We have spent far too little time talking about demand reduction and preventive action. We discuss the issue in a positive and constructive way but we do not say how we think the problem should be eliminated. Our primary task should be to take preventive action to eliminate the customer before the customer is eliminated by addiction. If one removes the market, one removes the ability to exploit people. Such action would immediately affect the profit made by those who sell drugs. It is to the victims that we should address ourselves. The bottom line is greed. People sell drugs at a profit because they want to satisfy their lust for money. We must eliminate the method by which people make those profits.

It is essential that the Government consider urgently the establishment of specialist crack lines. The Minister spoke of the crack hotline established by Dr. Gold and made available to the House the useful information to be obtained from the specialist cocaine line. I realise that drug helplines are widely publicised, but we should not wait until the problem reaches epidemic proportions in Britain as it has in America to establish more lines and target schools and colleges with their telephone numbers. It is important that young people in particular should be aware that they can ring up—that they can report to the relevant authorities the fact that they have been approached by people wishing to sell them drugs or seek help and medical assistance anonymously, which they could not if they went to their GP. The Government will then be able, at a stroke, to target where sales of crack are increasing.

We also need a sustained public awareness campaign. I welcome the Minister's commitment that an advertising campaign will be launched. I hope that he will take into account the information given and the concerns expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) and that he will seek to involve young people in the public awareness campaign. There is a view that if we discuss an illegal activity or one that is seen to be banned there is a risk that young people will automatically engage in it.

A similar argument was put forward by people who suggested that sex should be taught in schools. It was said that if young people were taught about sex they would want to indulge in various activities. The answer to the problem lies in telling young people the exact consequences. If we prepared a video that showed the effects of crack and cocaine that have been described by me and other hon. Members, there would not be many drug-takers among our young people. The Minister will know from the effects of the AIDS awareness campaign that such a campain affects the way in which people behave.

I should like to see the Government doubling the amount that is currently spent on research. I know that £300,000 sounds a great deal but when compared to the amount being spent on the privatisation of water and other

[Mr. Vaz]

nationalised industries, it is a small amount. Money spent on researching the health and welfare of our young people is money well spent.

We have to look at four local areas. First, we need to make sure that there is a teacher in every school who is properly trained to deal with drug issues. He should understand the problems arising from crack and be aware of the ways in which they can be dealt with. That could be done in the same way as teachers are designated in schools to deal with other socially-important problems. Secondly, initiatives must be publicised not just in schools and colleges of further education but in sports and leisure centres and youth clubs—places to which young people have ready access. Thirdly, the family is an important weapon in our campaign against crack, and parents should be given the information that they have not been given in the past. The workplace is the fourth area where we can gain by telling employers and by co-operating with trade unions in ensuring that information is readily available.

I should like to see the development of a local drug prevention panel in the same way as we have a crime prevention panel. It would contain the people that my hon. Friend the Member for Huddersfield mentioned—elected councillors, officials, representatives of the local education department and health authority and even people from the recreation and leisure departments of local councils. That is important.

We need more co-ordination. Regional crime squads are far too big to deal with the problem. I commend the statements by the chief constable of Nottinghamshire. Although the figures show that there were only two seizures of crack in the whole of Nottinghamshire in 1989, at least he realises that there is a potential problem. I should like to see county forces working together in a much more localised way. In the midlands I should like to see the chief constable of Leicestershire co-operating with the chief constables of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire to try to deal with the problem.

At the moment the Government budget for treatment and rehabilitation is £17·5 million. That budget should be increased. I should like to hear what the Minister has to say about acid house parties because I do not think that he mentioned them in his opening speech. That form of drug abuse results in our police officers chasing down the M1, and M6 and other motorways to try to head off revellers who are all the children of the revolution that has occurred over the last 10 years and who clutch their mobile phones trying to find the nearest acid house party. Let us hear some positive and constructive proposals from the Minister about the matter. Who knows, some of them may even live in Putney.

Our task is to break the necklace of terror that may strangle our society. It links drug abuse with violent crime and the destruction of families and communities and leads eventually to the breakdown of society and those essential services upon which we depend—the police, the Health Service and the education services. If the Minister and people ask, "Where are the resources to be found?", my reply is that they simply must be found. The price that we will have to pay if we do not do enough will be one which the American experience teaches us can neve be paid. I urge the Government to act, and to act now.

12.10 pm

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): I am pleased to speak after the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz); I agree with much of what he said. His plea to the Government to increase the amount of money spent on research bears repeating. I echo to the skies his accent on the need to reduce demand. I shall take up three—I think minor—points in his speech. The hon. Gentleman should be wary about advocating the appointment of a "drugs czar" similar to Mr. Bennett in the United States. The truth is that, sadly, despite all his efforts, Mr. Bennett has not been able to co-ordinate Government policy and he has no co-ordinating function or power within the Cabinet. Newspaper reports say that he is already looking upon it as a lost war.

As I said during an intervention in the Minister's speech, I believe that the hon. Gentleman should be wary of advocating national telephone lines. The existence of local lines is more effective, not just because of the locality but because the people answering the calls know more accurately the problems of their area. However, I endorse his suggestion about local drugs panels. Such panels exist in many parts of the country. An excellent example can be found in my area of East Sussex. The East Sussex drugs advisory council is a good blueprint for the hon. Gentleman in setting up such a council in his area.

I welcome back to the Front Bench my hon. and learned Friend the Minister. As one of my hon. Friends pointed out, he is uniquely suited to supervise the co-ordination of the Government's activities. I welcome what must be his initiative in having this debate today. It is remarkable that this is the third major debate on drugs misuse that we have had in as little as four or five months. That shows the Government's and the House's concern about this enormously complicated and horrifyingly threatening problem.

Other hon. Members have identified various aspects of the problem and others were touched upon in recent debates. However, I should like to confine my remarks to three or four areas. I shall start by mentioning Colombia.

I was lucky enough to be a guest of the Colombian Government only a few weeks ago, and I went there specifically to study the problems of drug trafficking. The House and the Government should bear in mind certain factors when planning how to tackle drug trafficking from this part of the world. It is necessary to remind the House that Colombia is not an illegal drug-producing country; tragically, it is in the forefront of illegal drug production —that is processing—and trafficking. As we are reminded in our newspaper reports day by day and week by week, the violence, bombings, shootings and bribery are a threat to the Government of that extraordinarily beautiful country. It is a country with a proud record of 100 years of democracy, so this production and trafficking are a threat also to the continued proper operation of the judicial system.

I spoke in an intervention of the job being done by our drug liaison officers, and that applies throughout south America. Proper intelligence gathering is essential, both inside and outside countries. Such basic items as proper secure communications networks for the Government and the security forces are imperative. It is good to know that Britain is helping in the supply of such equipment, and that that equipment is much appreciated. I have never visited a country where, in every meeting that I had, with Ministers, officials, politicians and business men, there was greater or more emphatic appreciation of what this country is doing to help that country in the task that it has set itself. Praise was heaped on the hard work and understanding of our ambassador to that country, Mr. Richard Neilson, and his staff. The depth of understanding that he has shown and the warmth of the relationship that he has established with his opposite numbers have helped us to help Colombia.

Intelligence is essential not only to helping the operation of the Colombian security forces, but to the international effort to fight narcotic traffickers. We have to bend our endeavours to interdict their drugs and confiscate their earnings along the long line of distribution from Colombia to the United States and into western Europe. There is admirable co-operation between forces. However, I ask my hon. and learned Friend the Minister to confirm that international agreements exist, particularly with all producer and transit countries, for the exchange of intelligence of all kinds as it bears on illegal drug trafficking, and especially of the agreements that exist between the security forces of the United States, the United Kingdom and Russia, including the CIA and the NKVD. The accent on the importance of security underlines those agreements, and we cannot re-accent it enough this morning.

I was glad of the previous Home Secretary's assurances that border inspections and immigration controls within Europe would continue to the extent needed to meet the drugs menace. I hope that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister will elaborate on his emphatic mention of this, just to confirm specifically that the position taken by the former Home Secretary still holds. It will become more and more important as the single European market becomes a fact, because sadly some European countries are less committed than others to the gathering of intelligence on drug trafficking and to taking action on the intelligence that is fed to them. They do themselves no service by such attitudes or inaction, but they also put the people of other European countries at risk.

Perhaps the efforts of our own Customs and police, the new initiatives by the Association of Chief Police Officers to improve co-operation and co-ordination between British police forces, the establishment of the first joint national investigative unit between the police and Customs, and the new Bill which seeks to improve international co-operation, will all help international pan-European action to cope with the threat from drugs in our continent.

Recently threats have been made to the Colombian judiciary. There is the threat by fear, so often referred to as the promise of lead, and the threat of bribery, which is referred to as the promise of gold. We provide Colombia with basic security equipment. I hope that we can also draw upon our considerable experience to offer and communicate basic advice to members of the judiciary and their families to help them to minimise their exposure to risk. It was tragic that a member of the judiciary was shot down on a street corner outside his house recently. He stood there at the same time every morning, waiting to be picked up by the same car. A knowledge of the most basic security or counter-terrorist activity might have saved his life.

I wonder whether there will be an opportunity for us to help the Colombian judiciary to do its job as well as possible in the difficult circumstances that it faces. We could offer advice and training in court administration, criminal investigation and in prosecution and preparation. There may be room for initiatives from the Lord Chancellor's Department, from the Bar and from the Law Society. I would like the Minister to bear that in mind, even if he cannot give specific assurances on those matters, because he knows the law infinitely better than I do.

I am sure that such help from professionals to professionals would be much appreciated, and represent good value for effort and for money. I suggest that the British Council could provide a ready-made channel for such assistance.

Also, it is crucial that we do all we can to help Colombia in its Herculean task. There is always a risk that the time, effort and cost required may erode its national commitment to deal with the problem. We must minimise the risk of that happening, and we must get other countries to help.

Only yesterday we saw newspaper reports about 50 people who were killed in a bomb explosion in Bogota. It might be appropriate for the House to send a message of condolence to the families of those people who lost their lives, and our good wishes to General Maza Marquez, who is the chief of the Colombian forces who are responsible for fighting drug abuse and drug trafficking.

It is worrying that the cocaine barons feel that they can blackmail the Colombian Government and, at the moment, the Senate, to agree to a referendum on whether extradition should be disallowed, because it is difficult, if not impossible for politicians to stand up and give counter arguments.

Our activities are not confined to Colombia. We must continue to support United Nations' efforts to ratify the United Nations convention against illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, and to seek ratification from other countries. We must continue to support United Nations' work through various agencies and the United Nations fund for drug abuse control, which is the agency that is most actively involved in the crop substitution programmes which are so important. Those agencies need and deserve extra resources, both from direct national support and through larger allocations from the United Nations budget. I sincerely hope that the Government will support such additional resources being made available, especially during the special General Assembly session on drugs next February.

The House may be interested to learn that, only yesterday, the Western European Union Assembly in Paris resolved unanimously that the supply of arms and industrial goods with military applications must be prevented, that this is essentially a Government responsibility, and that administrative and financial difficulties should not interfere in that responsibility because, as we all accept, internal and external security is the prime task of any Government.

In response to an intervention, my hon. and learned Friend the Minister drew attention to the work of the Pompidou group, which is presently under British chairmanship. It continues to work positively, although I have heard worrying reports that there may be dissent in the French Government about its future activities. I wonder whether one might call them jealous disagreements about to whom the Pompidou group and its activities should be reporting in the French Government—the President or the Prime Minister. It is all the sadder to hear such reports when we see in yesterday's *The Times* a minor headline:

[Mr. Tim Rathbone]

> "Crack becomes chic on the Paris Métro circuit".

That should bring back to everybody in France the importance of the Pompidou group's work. I ask my hon. and learned Friend the Minister, in conjunction with his colleagues in the Foreign Office, to wield whatever power and influence they can to ensure that the French Government maintain their commitment to the excellent work that the Pompidou group has done.

We must ensure ever greater vigilance regarding the destination and end use of exported armaments, which all too easily can stray to Narco terrorists, and of precursor chemicals, which are essential to the manufacture of cocaine. I welcome the Government's plans to do both of those things and to change the legislation where necessary. Without arms, the violent rule of drug barons cannot be maintained. Without the chemicals, much of the drugs they peddle cannot be produced.

Whatever we do to improve international controls, countries such as Colombia must still wage their own war. Their economies must be sustained to enable them to do that. By comparison with that of many other countries, Colombia's economy has been buoyant. Historically, it was based on gold, emeralds, rubber and coffee. More recently, it has had coal, a growth of tourism and increasing exports of flowers. It is now the world's second largest flower exporter. Nevertheless, the trading blocs of the developed world must try to expand their trade with Colombia and other developing countries in south America. The European Community and the United States must bend their energies to obtain co-operation from Brazil and other producers for a viable new coffee agreement. Without a strong economy, Colombia and other countries in south America cannot do their best in this war, which is crucial to us all.

These best efforts will not solve the world problem of illegal drugs without even greater energy and money being applied to reduce demand. It is interesting that President Barcos knows that, not least because he recognises a worrying growth of demand in his own country. We should not be tempted into the trap—people still are tempted into it—of dividing countries between producers and consumers, because the producers consume and the consumers produce. We in the developed world must appreciate that all our efforts to tackle the problem will be ineffective unless we can be sure that more people will not be attracted to drug misuse. I fear that President Bush did not show sufficient appreciation of this in his otherwise admirable anti-drug initiatives. It is to be hoped that the first international conference on demand reduction, which is to take place next April as an initiative of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and under the Government's sponsorship, will add greater urgency to prevention everywhere.

As the prevention effort increases, I draw the attention of the House to the uses that can be put of the assets that are confiscated as a result of preventive actions. As my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) said, there is an early-day motion on this matter which has 129 signatories to date. It suggests, as the Select Committee on Home Affairs endorses, that confiscated assets that were gained as a result of drug trafficking should be used to establish a central fund specifically to help finance schemes to reduce the demand for and the supply of illicit drugs. The motion requests Ministers to make the necessary arrangements urgently. I hope that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister, as the co-ordinator of all of the Government's activities in this area, will bend his energies to that.

Unfortunately, as my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale said, some see the task of fighting the drugs misuse battle as so great that they have lapsed into the argument for legislation, to the consternation of many. It seems that the legalisation campaign has two main arguments. The first is economic in nature and was outlined in an excellently written but, I believe, completely falsely based article in *The Economist* recently. Broadly speaking, it is that drugs are dangerous and so is the illegality that surrounds them. In legitimate commerce their sale could be controlled, taxed and supervised. The dangers could be proclaimed on every packet. In this way drugs would poison fewer customers, kill fewer dealers, bribe fewer policemen and raise more public revenue. In summary, it is said that the cost of legalisation is less than that of prohibition.

The second argument is advanced by some producer countries and by some who are concerned with reaching addicts for treatment. According to this argument, our political, judicial and medical systems are being undermined by the illegal activities of the drug traffickers, who are merely meeting demand. I fear that these people have accepted the use of drugs as a permanent feature of society, with legalisation or decriminalisation as an alternative to prohibition, which they consider to be costly, ineffective and an obstacle to demand reduction.

The Select Committee's report and the tenor of comments made in the House this morning correctly argue in the opposite direction. The frustration of legalisation proponents, especially those dealing with the effects of drugs in the United States and countries such as Colombia, is understandable but their proposal is not. Aside from the array of legal questions which would accompany, if not prevent, implementation—the questions are myriad—the arguments are based on poorly founded assumptions. In consumer countries, for instance, users and addicts will continue to rob and steal to fund their habits. They will continue to depend on illicit dealers for the supply of drugs of higher potency than those administered in legal doses. In producer countries, neither price nor terrorism is likely to decrease. With their monopoly of production and distribution and the $6 billion profit that it brings yearly, the cartels will use their resources to maintain their control of the market and their profits as well.

I believe that legalisation would undermine the education efforts that are now under way to prevent drug misuse and would make drugs more attractive by removing the legal inhibition on those who do not like acting illegally.

The Home Affairs Committee report correctly states in paragraph 22:

> "Even if legalisation were to affect at the margin the extent of criminal activity surrounding the drugs trade, it would almost certainly increase drug addiction and the social evils attendant upon it."

We should, as a House, this morning endorse one aspect, even if we endorse no other, of that report, and it is paragraph 28 which states:

> "We therefore see effective law enforcement as a basic weapon in the reduction of supplies of drugs available on the streets and as an essential disincentive to those likely to trade in, sell and misuse drugs."

I endorse the report almost 100 per cent. My only rider is on the section relating to demand reduction and rehabilitation. Paragraph 169 states that

> "it became clear that demand reduction and treatment and rehabilitation are of vital importance to the fight against drug misuse."

I endorse that 100 per cent. However, paragraph 175 refers to President Bush giving

> "some indication of the requirements of the sort of comprehensive and co-ordinated demand reduction policy which we believe is urgently needed in the United Kingdom."

The report has it wrong.

The Bush Administration, in an attempt to contain the horrifying growth of drug misuse in that country, have launched a mammoth programme that is almost entirely concentrated on interdiction of drug trafficking. As the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) said, it pays far too little attention to the reduction of demand. It should be noted that the Bush Administration have replaced the Reagan Administration cuts in the Federal budget to fight drug misuse, but they have not yet replaced the Carter Administration cuts, so they are a long way removed from establishing the same sort of accent and financial support for the fight against drug misuse that were established by the Nixon Administration. We should not give a wrong impression, either to the United States or to ourselves, that we believe that sufficient is being done on either that side or this side of the Atlantic to reduce demand.

Mr. Nelson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who has done so much as chairman of the all-party drug misuse group to tackle these problems. Does he agree that one of the problems with demand reduction, both in the States and in this country, it that there is not wide enough understanding of what works? What is desperately needed, and it was recognised by the Home Affairs Committee, is more research. Perhaps that is something that the international drugs conference next April could start quickly. It should devote urgent funds and impose a short time scale for really good empirical and analytical studies of what works, so that the necessary funds can be applied in the most effective way.

Mr. Rathbone: I am immensely grateful to my hon. Friend and neighbour, who, with his normal perspicacity, has anticipated one of my closing remarks. It is essential that we build a better body of knowledge and understanding of what goes on in the minds of people who are tempted into drug misuse—through, among other things, more fundamental, frontier-breaking research into the genetic influences that bring about a propensity to misuse not only drugs but alcohol and other substances.

My hon. and learned Friend the Minister mentioned the life education centres established in Australia by the Rev. Noffs. Those centres have been emulated in various parts of this country, and, as my hon. and learned Friend knows, I have urged the Government to give far more support to this marvellous method of instilling—especially in young people—a better understanding of the values of good health. I refer hon. Members to our previous debate on this subject, in which I developed that view.

I fear that, whatever we do to try to stop drug trafficking and production, the continually changing patterns of drug misuse will circumvent any rules that we draw up. Misdirected human ingenuity will invent new drugs; misdeveloped natural resources will provide the raw materials. The development of cannabis, heroin, valium and LSD will no doubt continue, as will the processing of crack from cocaine and—in a roughly equivalent process—the processing of amphetamines into ice, the newest drug from the west coast of the United States. In any event, we require a better understanding of the problem through better research and better health education, particularly among the young. We also need improved treatment, because we want to stop people from returning to the world of drug misues.

I have described an aspect of the battle against drug misuse that is neither glamorous nor the stuff of party political points. It is not likely to imbue members of any Government with a warm and successful feeling, but it is none the less the most essential part of our continuing task, and even our own Government must give it increasing emphasis. I am certain that, under the guiding hand of the new Minister in charge of Government co-ordination, they will do so.

12.42 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I intend to adopt a somewhat different approach from that of other hon. Members. First, I shall direct my remarks towards the possible legalisation of certain drugs; secondly, I shall make an exceedingly brief speech. While the former may not commend itself to hon. Members, perhaps the latter will.

I do not accept the implication by the hon. Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) that the legalislation of certain drugs would necessarily lead to a progression to more dangerous drugs, any more than I believe that someone who drinks a glass of sherry at lunchtime ends up as an alcoholic. The central question is just how damaging drug taking is to health—and, of course, that depends very much on the drug that is taken.

Many—perhaps most—drugs are about as damaging to health as alcohol or nicotine, and it is probably indisputable that more people die of smoking-related diseases than of diseases related to the use, at least, of drugs. It could probably be argued that more die from the effects of criminal activities associated with the supply of and demand for drugs than from drug-taking itself.

Not all drugs are destructive of health. Marijuana cannot be classified with heroin, and cocaine derived from coca has been taken by Andean Indians for generations as a protection against cold and famine. The materials that are mixed with cocaine—for example, baking soda to produce crack—are the most dangerous element.

It is not desirable to use drugs. It is not particularly desirable, either, to over-use alcohol or to smoke. However, people do all three. Controls are needed, but at different levels. Control over demand as well as control over supply must be strict.

What concerns and alarms most people on both sides of the Atlantic is the criminal activity surrounding the use and supply of drugs rather than the damage that certain drugs can do to health. To treat all drugs in the same way is rather like treating low-alcohol beer as though it were neat alcohol. The Dutch have adopted a different approach. They deal with different drugs in a different way. They are selective. According to the statistics, few youngsters in Holland die of drug abuse, and hardly any of them contract AIDS after using infected needles.

Mr. Rathbone: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Banks: No. I said that I would make a short speech, and that is exactly what I intend to do.

I do not say that drug-taking should be made legal because I do not know enough about the subject. I read the article in *The Economist* and a previous series of articles that it carried. There have been articles on the subject in *The Sunday Times*, which I have also read. Neither of those newspapers is popular with hippies. The reports did not reflect a rabid, Left-wing, Socialist point of view. The case was well argued and the articles were written by responsible journalists. I ask the Government to consider some of the arguments that they advanced and to acknowledge the growing concern that we are not dealing effectively with the problem.

I hope that the Minister will consult scientists, psychiatrists social workers, the police and doctors and obtain their views about the problem. If we are not tackling it succesfully, should there not be an objective, impartial assessment of drug taking, especially of soft drugs? The case should be put before Parliament when all the facts can be given. If the evidence clearly suggested that we must prohibit the use of all drugs and criminalise the supply and use of all drugs, I should be prepared to accept the evidence. We should not adopt the single approach that has been advocated so far in the debate. There should be a broader assessment of the problem so that the evidence can be put before those of us who still remain to be convinced.

12.48 pm

Mr. Chris Butler (Warrington, South): I apologise in advance for the fact that I shall have to leave the House before the end of the debate in order to keep an important constituency engagement. Unfortunately, the Government have not yet spent the money that they have announced they intend to spend on the improvements to the M1 and M6, which would have enabled me to reach my constituency in good time after the debate had ended.

Once upon a time the United Kingdom suffered a severe balance of payments problem and resorted to skulduggery of a dubious moral nature to cure it. That problem concerned China. In 1729, the Emperor of China, in an early attempt at narcotics control, banned the sale and smoking of opium. In 1729 the British merchants were importing about 200 chests of opium into China a year. After that date the British, aided by the United States, drove the opium trade until 1860, when opium imports reached 60,000 chests per year.

At about that time the balance of payments began to swing back in favour of the United Kingdom. Inscrutably, the Chinese complained about that because in return for their silks they were getting a drug-addicted population. We retaliated by engaging in two wars against them, killing as many of them as we could, beating them and forcing them to legalise the trade in and consumption of opium. We also forced them to discontinue the use of the word "barbarian" to label those blessed western people who had introduced the trade to them and addicted such a large proportion of their population.

The interesting thing about this is that for 30 years after the legalisation of opium in China, opium imports rose rapidly. Legalisation did not undercut the market. Since then the United States and the United Kingdom have been reaping the whirlwind of their misdeeds. We heard earlier about how the countries that we used to regard as supplying countries have become consuming countries themselves, feeding on their own poison. The potted history that I have given shows that legalisation, argued for so seductively by experts of both the Left and the Right, does not work. In my view, it would lead only to an increase in drugs abuse, and the state having to pick up the cost of broken lives and broken families. If one country legalised drugs before others, there would be a massive increase in drug abuse in that country as seedy junkies from all over the world congregated like flies to a honeypot——

Mr. Tony Banks: Or like Members of Parliament.

Mr. Butler: The current debate about drug abuse seems to divide people into two factions—the decriminalisers and the enforcers. However, enforcement alone is not the answer because of the enormous numbers of people who are already taking drugs and because of the enormous profits that are made from the drugs trade. Those profits would increase if the drug was made more scarce.

Even in the USSR, with all the totalitarian instruments at its disposal, there are 40,000 registered drug addicts in Moscow alone. It is estimated that there are 300,000 drug abusers in the United Kingdom. If we were to arrest them all tomorrow, they would fill our gaols six times over. The drug enforcement agencies in New York last year arrested 90,000 people. Goodness knows how the criminal justice system there deals with all of them.

Enforcement alone cannot be the only answer and legalisation does not work. However, as I tried to develop in the debate on 9 June this year, there may be a third possibility. If complete prohibition and liberal availability do not work, the controlled availability that we had with heroin until the 1960s might be made to work again, at least for heroin. Until the 1960s there were only 500 heroin addicts in this country, compared with what was already a complete disaster in the United States in terms of the number of heroin addicts.

However, if controlled availability is to work, it will need both carrots and sticks. The carrot would be a positive offer of controlled unadulterated drugs for those addicts currently using the illicit market and alienated from the drugs agencies that already exist. The stick would be even more rigorous enforcement of those users—and even more, the pushers—who still remain in the illicit market. The law and the community would need to be persuaded of the advantage of forcing drug users into a controlled space.

Mr. Mellor: When we tried that in the late 1950s there was a haemorrhage of drugs from the so-called licit market —those who had the drugs prescribed to them by doctors —on to the illicit market. That is the inevitable consequence of making drugs available under such circumstances.

Mr. Butler: My hon. and learned Friend was unable to be present on 9 June when I dealt with that particular point. I do not want to be diverted on to that argument now. There was an illicit supply of drugs to the United States when some dubious doctors over-prescribed. I do not believe that my suggestion would necessarily lead to such dubious doctors behaving as they did in the 1950s. That problem could have been solved, but it was decided that many of the drug services available at that time should be withdrawn. That decision forced the drug-using community into the black market. Perhaps my hon. and learned Friend could look at my contribution on 9 June.

In 1987 a drug watch centre was founded in Chester by a young barrister, Brendan Anderson. It has proved to be extremely successful. The police admit that Chester has a deep-rooted heroin problem. The aid from a spectrum of voluntary organisations and the backing from local industry has enabled the drug watch team to act as a warning beacon to the community of the dangers of drug use and of pushing. It encourages public assistance to the authorities in detaining those who push drugs in the community. That centre is almost an extension of the neighbourhood watch concept. It makes the community alert to the dangers of drugs and it makes it more difficult for pushers to operate. It has raised a lot of money and has recycled it into educational projects against drugs. It has also opened a telephone line through which information can be passed confidentially on a 24-hour basis to the drug squad.

The drug watch concept is slowly spreading. I initiated one in Warrington, which is under the chairmanship of Mrs. Lucy Morris. I hope that those centres will spread further and I hope that the Home Office will encourage that trend by giving guidance to those new organisations and perhaps a small amount of seed-corn money to help them set up.

Drug watch effectively means that the problem cannot be swept under the carpet. That must not happen because the problem, already horrifying, is getting worse. There are already 300,000 drug abusers in Britain. Seizures of cannabis by weight went up by a factor of three last year although I accept that that might be due to more rigorous enforcement. Heroin addiction seems to have reached a plateau, although a distressing one. We have all heard of the large increases in the seizures of cocaine by Customs and Excise, but that must be related to the increased imports that are getting through. We have also heard of the great increases in the number of crack seizures, a large number of them in my general region of Greater Manchester and Merseyside. Those areas, apart from metropolitan London, are particularly badly affected.

The use of drugs seems to correlate with the crime wave that we have recently experienced. Of the drug addicts and offenders arrested in Cheshire 79 per cent. of them already had a conviction for some other offence. One third of prisoners on remand are cocaine and heroin users. If crack takes off we must beware. This year parts of Miami experienced a 30 per cent. increase in robberies. The local police blamed crack and the "rob till you drop" syndrome. Some of those guys are so desperate that they will engage in 15 or more robberies and will then race back in between to get more crack.

Given that general situation it is remarkable that people still say that it cannot happen here. Nothing is more conducive to the spread of the problem than the attitude, "Sweep it under the carpet. Don't talk to the children about it." How wrong can one be!

Experts in the United States and in the United Kingdom now agree that preventive education must play an important role, but education is not the responsibility only of the state. The most important vehicle for education is the family. Dr. Maura Daly, senior policy analyst on the drug abuse prevention staff of the United States Department of Education says that the number one factor preventing drug abuse are familial, community and religious values. The Hazelden Foundation has found that one of the most important factors in keeping children off drugs is the amount of concern that they believe that their parents would feel if they were taking drugs. That is a comfort to those parents who believe that all their words go in one ear and out the other. Their words do sink in and do make a difference. The genteel approach of believing that we must not talk about something nasty to the children simply does not help.

We have as a warning the experience of the United States where it was believed for many years, "It can't happen here." In 1982, the *Scientific American* said:

> "Use of cocaine is probably no more addicting than eating peanuts or potato chips."

Americans told themselves that and many of them believed their own garbage. The problem was that it takes a relatively long time to become addicted to cocaine—up to 18 months—and by the time that the Americans found that out, there were 12 million regular users of cocaine in the United States who had a bit of a problem, to say the least.

Crack was unknown four years ago. It is far more addictive than cocaine; 75 per cent. of users become addicted after the third smoke and there is no known cure. In 1986, many Americans outside New York were saying, "Those crazy New Yorkers with their funny accents are all nuts. Crack will never come out of the ghetto." It is now the major drug of abuse in 49 out of 50 American states.

The hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) took the line that drug abuse can be correlated with deprivation, but that is not true of crack. Bob Stutman of the drug enforcement agency, when speaking to the Association of Chief Police Officers, emphasised that crack was now a major drug of abuse in the heart of conservative middle America. He said that it affected rich, poor and in-between, that it had left the ghetto in the United States and that it had gone on to suburban America.

Road blocks were set up in the inner city and cars were stopped when going in. Last year, 1,000 cars were seized in seven months. Bob Stutman said that 80 per cent. of the 1,000 cars were driven by white kids from the nice suburbs who were coming in to buy crack and who had taken their daddy's car. Crack is the equal opportunity drug which affects all classes, all races and, as we have heard, women as much as men. That is sad because one of the last vestiges of family life in the American inner cities depends on the matriarchal element and Americans are now finding that those last vestiges are disappearing as a result of the violence and the personality changes that crack causes to its victims.

My mathematics is not very good, but I made a quick calculation. I reckon that seizures of crack in this country increased by 450 to 500 per cent. this year compared with last. I heard experts for whom I had considerable regard say recently on television that we should not sensationalise the issue of crack because we might add glamour to it and, therefore, increase usage. However, the history of the United States shows that the Americans severely underplayed the issue.

Bob Stutman gave a ringing end to this story in his speech to the chief police officers. I must add, incidentally, that I found it hard to obtain a copy of his speech because the Association of Chief Police Officers wanted to sweep it under the carpet, but I managed eventually to arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library and I urge all hon. Members to read it. Stutman warns:

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> "I will personally guarantee you that two years from now you will have a serious drug problem because we are so saturated in the United States with cocaine, there ain't enough noses left to use the cocaine that's coming in. It's got to go somewhere and where it's coming is right here."

1.5 pm

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): Hon. Members on both sides of the House listened with interest to the Minister, who rightly recounted his own experiences and told us of his visits to south America and elsewhere. The story that he told was sad and sombre and, unfortunately, true. We wonder whether the problem is getting out of hand in many parts of the world, and we realise that many harsh decisions will have to be made to combat drug misuse.

In my view, the situation is very grim in this country as well. I am delighted that hon. Members on both sides of the House are united in their determination to try to conquer drug misuse. If we all unite—Government, people and especially parents—we can make a significant effort to put an end to drug misuse by the early 1990s.

I shall concentrate on three of the key issues in the United Kingdom, although I know that there are many more. The first is information. In only a very few places are any professional attempts made to collect information about drug misuse. The Government's information comes from convictions and referrals to hospitals, but those figures are only the tip of the iceberg. We need databases in every area so that policy decisions can be based on up-to-date information. We need more schemes whereby general practitioners, voluntary agencies, the police and others combine to provide information to a central source. Where that happens, the provision of services is more cost-effective and more effective in saving lives.

Another of the key issues concerns education support grants. We must ensure that young people are given the message that they must say no to drugs. It is vital that local authorities should continue to employ teachers to train others to carry the message into schools and youth clubs. In the past 10 or 15 years we have learnt much from our campaign to persuade youngsters to give up smoking. It would be interesting to find out how many people in Britain do not start smoking at an early age. I believe that eventually youngsters will respond in the same way to the campaign against drugs.

Local authorities are struggling to retain staff that they appointed three years ago because the Department of Education and Science has reduced its grant from 75 per cent. to 50 per cent. Although fourth-year funding continues at that reduced rate, no commitment to fifth-year funding has been forthcoming from the Government. That is a danger. If the Government are serious about this matter, proper funding should be given as soon as possible.

My third key issue is the National Health Service review. Some of the Government's proposals will lead to a poor deal for drug users. Will general practitioners want to take on drug users? Such people take up much time and form a high HIV risk group. They also cost the National Health Service a gread deal.

If hospitals become self-governing, what will happen to specialised services? Will they be provided in only a few locations or not at all? Drug budgets will be formulated on basic list prices, but an addict may need a more effective option because of his addiction. He may not get it if the doctor has to watch the local family practitioner committee's ability to reimburse pharmacists.

I shall now deal with HIV and AIDS. The latest statistics show that a growing number of intravenous drug users are HIV-positive. Department of Health figures show that, of the 11,218 HIV cases, 1,678 are intravenous drug abusers. In Thailand, in 1987, 1 per cent. of drug users were HIV-positive. Three years on that has risen to 40 per cent. of drug users. I have been told that by many general practitioners that in terms of drug abuse the United Kingdom is sitting on a time bomb and that the biggest problem is in Scotland. The Government must act quickly and get away from representing AIDS as a homosexual problem. They must recognise the link between drug users and the heterosexual community.

All pilot needle exchange schemes have been successful and such schemes reduce the spread of diseases and especially HIV. They also lead to contact between the agencies and drug misusers, uncover hidden problems, and lead to better habits. However, in the United Kingdom, only 1 million needles are exchanged each year and there are 27 million injections. That means that a ninefold increase in needle availability is needed to avoid needle reuse. The Government should increase funding in order to extend needle exchange schemes into every area.

My party recognises the extent of the problem, but the Government do not even begin to comprehend it. I said earlier that we are sitting on a time bomb. I am afraid that the fuse has almost burned out and that the impact is just about to hit us. We need more information and better education for our children. The Government must not go ahead with the National Health Service review. We must recognise that the AIDS crisis will affect everyone. We need a Government who will act, and act now, on the recommendations of the Select Committee. I am grateful to members of the Committee for their recommendations. The Government must give extra funding wherever it is required in order to combat drug misuse.

1.13 pm

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest): It is always a pleasure to take part in packed House debates on a Friday morning when the number of hon. Members in the Chamber is exceeded by the number of attendants, never mind the number of visitors in the Strangers' Gallery. The debate has the intimacy of an Adjournment debate, but it is none the worse for that except that we are debating a most important subject. I listened to every word of the debate, and it is a great shame that many other colleagues are not here. I do not blame them for not wanting to make a contribution but they should listen to the debate and get a flavour of the extent and nature of the problem in the United Kingdom. Every speaker, including the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells)—but particularly the two Front-Bench spokesmen—have shown a degree of unanimity with just a few understandable differences of view that are to be expected. They have shown one of the few shafts of light in this whole scenario by their willingness to be broad-minded, accept suggestions and agree that this is an issue that will require funding and intensive investment in our community if we are to crack the problem.

Unlike the Select Committee, I did not go the United States in the summer to look particularly at drugs. However, I did go because, as the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) mentioned in his speech, between being the hon. Member for Oxford, East and then the hon. Member for Epping Forest—in the period that we actors call resting—I formed an organisation called Crime Concern which is the national crime prevention body that specialises in trying to encourage voluntary crime prevention. We invited the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) to become a member of the advisory board, and I am delighted that he accepted. Conservative Members have a special affection for the hon. Gentleman for reasons unassociated with any of his parliamentary qualities.

The Crime Concern study involved visiting the National Crime Prevention Council in Washington with which we went on visits in Washington, Baltimore and elsewhere to see how the United States is combating crime by crime prevention initiatives in the community. Incidentally, this is now an even lonelier debate than an Adjournment debate.

Mrs. Llin Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): That is no reflection on the quality of the speech.

Mr. Norris: I am grateful to the hon. Lady. I do not know whether it is a rule in the House that the quality of the speech must always be in inverse proportion to the number of people listening to it. That may be the case.

In the United Kingdom we are worried about shoplifting and theft from vehicles, but in the United States people are worried about death from drugs and guns. Their prevention activity is devoted to trying to stem a wave that seems—as many hon. Members have pointed out—to have got completely out of control. In America there is a vivid poster showing a family of young black children taking a coffin down the church steps after they have been to a funeral service. The banner underneath says, "This poster is brought to you by a young drug abuser with a gun". That sums up the terror and hopelessness of the position there.

Drugs are a problem not merely of abuse by individuals, but because of their relationship to crime and criminality. In the great trinity of supply, demand and price, the greatest is demand. The need to do something about supply is important, and I agree with my hon. and learned Friend that the need to police borders reinforces the need to regard with caution some of the more optimistic assumptions about 1992 and the abolition of frontiers. There may be a place for grower subsidies in south America, but I am cynical about anything that we can do in that area. In view of the scale of the economy of drug production in south America, anything that we could do would be dwarfed by the vast national budget-style scale of the economy there. We have to concentrate on what flows from restricting demand—a reduction in the price, to drive the coca farmer to look for a more suitable form of agricultural lifestyle.

If reducing demand is the key to our success, how do we do it? I do not believe—and this stems from the experience that we have had in looking with Crime Concern at work with young people—that we have had anything like enough investment in the young people who are the vulnerable audience for drugs and crime. The peak age of offending was, until recently, 14 for females and 15 for males. That is not among youth offenders but among all offenders. It is a tragedy that, because of the changes in the cautioning system, the figure has risen to 18 for both sexes.

That statistic shows where the pressure has to go. Simply to talk in numbers of policemen, courts, sentencing and all the traditional vocabulary—often uttered stridently by my hon. Friends—is to have an inadequate picture of the solution. We have to do a great deal of work with young people to change their attitudes, and to do something about their approach to each other. Both my hon. and learned Friend the Minister and the hon. Member for Huddersfield spoke about the importance of trying to engender an atmosphere in which young people simply see drugs as past—not hip, not funny, not clever and not smart any more. That is the kind of image of drugs that we shall have to create if we are to do something about the problem.

I am concerned by the comment of the hon. Member for Huddersfield that it is merely a problem of poverty. I may be doing him an injustice because he did not say quite that, but he did try to establish a link between income and social poverty. Sadly, the truth is closer to what my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler) adduced, which is that drug crime spans all of the economic spectrum. It is perhaps identified by an absence of parental interest and involvement in the family, whether that is at the level of the very rich—the brats taking cocaine—or the very poor over whom there is little parental influence.

We need a partnership not just with the conventional social agencies and the Department of Education and Science but, as the hon. Member for Huddersfield said, with the local authorities. We cannot deal with this without the help of the local authorities. They are a vital force, and we should be engaging them directly, as we engaged them in preventing crime, to do something about the problem in their communities. There must be an immense collaborative effort, and I should like to see a great deal more effort and money being put into stimulating measures for young people, in the community and by the community, to do something about the problem.

We have not said much about alcohol misuse, but that is clearly germane to the subject. That, drug misuse and football violence are not capable of solution by situational means. It is not a question of locks, bars, bolts or policemen at every corner. The problems can be resolved only by social intervention, by social change that brings about different attitudes in the minds of the young and the potential drug abuser and offender.

I am a trustee of the Broadway Foundation, which runs a treatment centre for those who are victims of drug and alcohol abuse. As such, it receives almost no funding from the health authorities or the Government. It receives a little, but remarkably little, and that is a lacuna in our provision. In 1986, the Social Services Committee examined not the criminal background to drug misuse but the medical impact of it. With that Select Committee I went to a number of hospitals and spoke to a number of experts. I found it extraordinarily moving that it is very easy to get off drugs. It is simply not the dreadful, appalling year-long experience of banging one's head against a padded wall in a cell that it is sometimes portrayed as being.

Detoxification, even after years of heroin abuse, can take weeks and sometimes days. However, if one simply

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returns people to the same environment after taking the drugs from their bodies, to the same friends, pubs and life of inactivity, they will be abusing drugs again within days. One has done nothing for them other than perhaps giving them a temporary respite—prolonging their life but precious little else.

Clearly we need to invest more heavily in genuinely detoxifying abusers and making a permanent alteration in their lifestyle. There are some simple ways in which we can do that—for example, by providing housing, good social conditions, and finding them jobs. Those are all important, but high on the list must be a recognition of the importance of in-depth treatment centres, such as the Broadway Foundation. Then we can give people, regardless of income, therapy over a period of months, which will give them back their self-respect and make them realise that they can be individuals within the community and that they do not need the crutch of drugs. If we bear that in mind, we will do a great service in the community.

In his opening speech, my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State said that he was willing to listen to almost any initiatives and that he acknowledged the scale and extent of the problem. It is impossible to underestimate the scale of the problem in society. I know that my hon. and learned Friend meant what he said, and I hope that he will bear in mind the importance of intensive therapy in the rehabilitation of drug abusers. Then we will be able to assist in the process of converting a whole section of the community away from a regard for drugs and towards a more healthy attitude to life.

1.32 pm

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Few subjects are more frightening or more emotive than drug abuse. Those hon. Members who have had the opportunity to travel to America, and to talk to community leaders, legislators and politicians there, know that drugs, and the social problems that they cause, have forced themselves to the top of the political agenda. In New York, Washington and other inner cities, drug abuse and the associated criminal problems are threatening a mini holocaust to those communities.

Earlier contributors to the debate have mentioned the problems of violence, crime and the particular threat that drugs pose to young people as consumers and mini entrepreneurs. The most upsetting and frightening feature of the current wave of drug abuse in the United States is the way that drugs are eating away at, and destroying, the family and the social structure. One lesson that we can learn from the American experience is that the Government and the politicians should not leave their actions too late. The clock is ticking away.

However, there is also a danger of arousing too much hysteria or of myth-making, and that stops people getting to grips with the real issue.

British cities will not face the same problems of guns and shootings in five or 10 years' time, as American cities do, simply because Britain has different gun controls and laws. However, the economic devastation wrought by drugs is a threat to Britain.

No group of people are more fearful about the problem, or more anxious to know what the Government intend to do, than those who live and work in the inner cities. If drugs and drug abuse is a rifle pointed at society, it is pointed directly at inner-city communities. Such communities have a vested interest in effective Government action against this scourge. I think, therefore, that I speak for everybody in the community that I represent, and many others in inner cities elsewhere in the country, when I say that we need a war on drugs that enlists and involves the community, not one which leaves the community feeling that it is under threat and being alienated. It must be recognised that an effective war has to move away from the myths and deal with the often frightening realities.

We have had much sensational coverage in the newspapers during the past couple of years of yardies, the so-called black mafia who control the drug trade in Britain. There is no doubt that there are people of Jamaican origin who are involved, just as there are people of all other communities involved in the trade. I speak on behalf of the whole Jamaican community here and abroad when I say that we resent strongly the sensationalist and exaggerated reports which imply that there is a Jamaican mafia which provided the key actors in the drug trade. That is a slur on millions of law-abiding Jamaicans here and abroad. Most are law abiding and want to be involved in the fight against drugs. We resent the smears against our community.

In the debate on drug misuse, there is often a suggestion or inference that the problem is to do with race and involves black communities. Crack knows no colour. It and other drugs are equal opportunities scourges. They hit high and low, regardless of colour, gender or class.

My community wants an effective war on drugs. We have to put the issue in its social and economic context. If the American experience has shown only one thing, it is that a way against drugs should not be solely a matter of law enforcement. Law enforcement plays a key role, but any war on drugs that is perceived solely as a law enforcement exercise cannot succeed. Rather it will lead to escalation, money and men being poured in to solve the problem, but still families and communities being devastated.

There is no doubt that, if we are to have a serious war on drugs, we must attack it on several fronts. We must tackle money laundering, as the Select Committee on Home Affairs has done so ably in its report. I was in the United States a few months ago talking to bankers about many subjects, and money laundering by drug barons arose. The regulatory authorities there said that, when they were first asked to seek records and interfere with the workings of the banking system, they were reluctant. One said that, when he spent time living and working in Florida near Miami, which is one of the centres of the drug trade, and he saw the devastation being wrought by the drug trade, especially among young people, black and white, and he walked into banks where they could not close the safe doors because so much money which could not be accounted for was piled into them, he saw in moral and community terms that the banks had to involve themselves in regulation to stop laundering. If the drug traders cannot bank their profits or use them, that must be an important component of the war against drugs. I urge swift and effective action by the Government and regulatory bodies on money laundering.

We need also real research into patterns of drug abuse and the changes that take place. It is not enough to peddle myths or anecdotes. It is not sufficient to talk of where the problems might be or where those involved might be found. Much more research is needed. I join those of my hon. Friends who have called for a considerable increase in the moneys that are devoted to research. We must obtain the necessary information if we are to move effectively against drug trafficking and drug misuse. At present, the information is incomplete, patchy and distorted. It does not provide the base for effective political and social action. We need better co-ordination and an end to the rivalry between the police and the Customs and Excise.

Above all, we must improve education. Education must not be confined to glossy and expensive poster campaigns. If we want effective education against drug abuse, we must consider who is best placed to provide it. There is no doubt that young people throughout the world in all strata of society are somewhat opposed to suggestions. Education from some quarters can be rather less acceptable to them than from others. If we are serious about producing information, educating our young people and thereby changing the opinion of young people towards drugs, we must be clear and creative when considering the way in which education programmes are organised and who we use to reach young people.

We must bear in mind the role of the youth service generally. There is the role of the Churches, and not only the Anglican and the Catholic Churches. Some of the smaller Churches, such as the Pentecostal Church, have tremendous force for good in the inner cities. If the Government are serious about dealing with drug abuse and providing education, they should be thinking of the education and information packages which can be made available beyond formal avenues to community organisations. These will include the Churches, local groups, tenants' associations, community groups, domino clubs and youth clubs. As I have said, an education programme needs to be more than an expensive poster campaign. It must begin at the grass roots and work upwards. People whom young people respect, must be used and they must give them the information that they need.

It is necessary to work with local authorities in the housing sector. There is no doubt that boarded-up flats and derelict accommodation in estates are being used by some of those who are involved in the drugs trade. Only if we have the closest co-operation with local authorities and housing associations can we make a co-ordinated attempt to root out some of the activity that is going on in estates.

There must be support for clinics and rehabilitation centres, and financial support for the clinics, voluntary groups and rehabilitation centres that are working with drug abusers to rehabilitate them and bring them back into the community. A strategy against drugs must not be restricted to law enforcement and detoxifying the individual. It must detoxify the community and take away the structures, attitudes and ignorance on which drug abuse feeds. A genuine war against drugs would not merely detoxify individuals.

The issue must be seen in the broadest possible context. No one pretends that poverty causes drug abuse. There are millions of poor people who do not touch drugs and who would not dream of doing so. Undoubtedly where there is drug abuse, poverty and despair, there is the recipe for a particular type of social and cultural holocaust. The importance of dealing with the wider issues of poverty and unemployment in our community cannot be overstressed if we are serious about fighting drugs.

We have read about sending arms and money into Colombia and other countries. If we are serious about stopping Third world countries such as Colombia in central America and the Caribbean from growing drugs as a cash crop, whether they be cocaine or marijuana, we must examine generally our relations with these countries and the terms of trade. How can we say to a Colombian peasant, when the price of coffee has dropped through the floor, that we intend to take his livelihood from him? If we are serious about discouraging such countries from trading illegally in drugs, we must study our terms of trade, commodity prices and how we can help to support their economic infrastructures. It is not enough to go in with arms and threats.

The inner cities want and would welcome a war against drugs. However, we also want a war against poverty and a war against hopelessness. Drugs, poverty and hopelessness are the Three Horsemen of the Apocalypse. We want a war against drugs somewhat different from that suggested by Conservative Members, who merely talk about law enforcement and more police. We want a war against drugs in which the grandparents are the guerillas, the churchgoers the commandos and the whole community the ground troops. We want an effective war against drugs that enlists the help of the community in the interests of the community. We do not want a Government who engage in rhetoric and will not make available the necessary resources. We do not want a Government who isolate the law enforcement problem and refuse to consider the wider social problem.

Above all, the inner cities want a war against drugs because, by looking across the Atlantic to the United States, we recognise that the survival of our inner-city communities depends on an effective war being waged now. The time to start that war is not a minute too soon.

1.42 pm

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): I am delighted to have the opportunity to speak in this debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Has the hon. Gentleman read the motion before the House?

Mr. Leigh: Yes, indeed I have. I also listened with great care to the opening speech of my hon. and learned Friend the Minister. I attended the whole of our debate in June on the subject. They are important matters and all hon. Members should be prepared to take an interest in them and speak in our debates. As the previous Home Secretary said, we are facing an epidemic of drugs. The Government must be prepared to take urgent action. There is no more important threat to our society than that posed by drugs.

As I said during our debate in June—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) would just sit and listen rather than murmur from a sedentary position—and he has just come into the Chamber—he might hear something. I have taken an interest in these matters for some time. It is too important a matter for mere party politics. We should take these matters seriously.

As I said during our debate in June, we canot consider the problem from an isolated viewpoint. The drugs barons have wielded such power in the economies of south America that they are almost as powerful as the Government agencies. We are indebted to my hon. and

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learned Friend for his work in alerting this House and the nation to the threat to western society posed by the enormous power wielded by the drugs barons. There is a message for us all. Why is that power wielded? Why is there an impetus towards drugs traffic? Is it because there is just an appalling imbalance in terms of poverty——

Ms. Abbott: I am very interested in what the hon. Gentleman has to say, but there is an interesting Adjournment debate to follow this debate. As we have already had a very good debate on this issue, we do not want to be unduly delayed in reaching the Adjournment debate.

Mr. Leigh: I am sure that the hon. Lady would like to speak on many issues, but our present debate is due to continue until 2.30 pm, and it is the right of every hon. Member to take part in it.

We must establish what resources we in the western democracies are prepared to give Latin-American Governments, for there is ample evidence that they have not the resources to deal with the problem unaided. As relatively wealthy nations, we must be prepared to make sacrifices to help them.

Mr. Sheerman: Early in my own speech, I said that it was the responsibility of western nations to provide concrete help for South American peasants who have no alternative to coca-growing, and my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) agreed. Dramatic action is needed, over and above what the Select Committee recommended. We put only £200,000 into the United Nations fund for international aid, and the entire overseas aid budget for South America consists of some £12 million for bilateral aid. Is it not about time that the Government took the matter seriously, and did something to help the South American peasants?

Mr. Leigh: The hon. Gentleman, who probably considers me to be on the Centre-Right of my party, may be surprised to learn that I have long been an enthusiast for overseas aid. I am prepared to accept that the Government could perhaps do more on that immensely important front, although I do not think that we should be ashamed of our record in any respect: Governments must always balance resources and priorities, and there are urgent priorities in our own country.

I do not believe that the problem of drug misuse can be dealt with simply by law and order methods. We must view it in two fundamental ways. First, we must ask ourselves what economic impetus has allowed this trade to grow up in relatively under-developed countries. Are we prepared to help those countries to meet the threat, as I believe we must—and as the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) recommended in what I considered a fair and worthwhile intervention? Secondly, we cannot bury the problem in our own minds, assuming that tougher deterrent sentences will deal with the relatively small minority who have been misled by drug pushers. Although tougher sentences may well play a part in solving the problem, I feel that it goes far deeper than that: it involves society as a whole.

I strongly believe that the way in which our welfare system has sometimes been constructed—with the best of intentions—has sometimes given impetus to a mechanism that has broken down certain parts of society and created the conditions in which drugs can be introduced. The problem is much more serious in America, where the gearing of the social security system has destroyed society's ability to resist the appalling pressures exerted by the drug trade—which is itself based on the economic imbalance between the developed and the under-developed worlds.

We cannot think of this as a Government problem. It is a problem for all of us. Nor can we see it as a south American problem, for it is a world problem. Our approach must be three-pronged: we can consider both the possibility of tougher deterrent sentences and the help that we may be able to give south American countries, but we must also look to our social security system and ask ourselves whether, now and in the past, we have made the right decisions to ensure that society has the strength to resist such a major threat.

1.49 pm

Mr. Mellor *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Does the Minister have the leave of the House to speak again? Mr. Mellor.

Mr. Mellor: I am grateful to the House for giving me leave to respond to some of the points that have been made in the debate. I have sat through all but a few minutes of what I found to be a thoroughly enjoyable debate. Inevitably, and rightly, there has been some sharp criticism. Hon. Members have suggested that there is room for improvement in the Government's response to the problem. However, the interesting and significant factor in the debate has been the broad measure of agreement on how to tackle it.

There was nothing in the speech of the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) with which I could not wholeheartedly agree. I do not know whether that shocks and dismays the hon. Lady, but she was absolutely right about the threat that drug-taking poses for the inner cities and to say that there is no escape from the problem in the law and order route. There have to be strict law and order policies to deal with drugs, as the hon. Lady acknowledged, but if we are to beat the problem we have to educate people and build up people's resistance to the seductive appeal of the drug peddler. It is important to help people who, through no fault of their own, live in areas where the problem is particularly acute. I acknowledge that the taking of drugs affects all sections of society and all racial groups. It is no part of my case that any particular group is more greatly involved in drug taking than others.

The speech by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) provides an important starting point for my reply. He suggested, perfectly properly, that we should question the need to prohibit all drug-taking. I would object, having considered the evidence, to making legal the taking of certain drugs that cannot be taken legally. People say that it is all right to smoke or to drink alcohol, but I wonder whether we would permit the use of those drugs if they had been invented yesterday. Most people can drink alcohol and not become dependent upon it, but we know that many hundreds of thousands of people depend on alcohol and that many crimes are alcohol-related. The hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) said, quite properly, that the best way to put oneself at risk late on a Saturday night is to be outside a pub or other place of entertainment in which certain youngsters have drunk too much and have become violent.

We do not underestimate the impact of alcohol abuse. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West was absolutely right when he said that many more people die from smoking and drinking than from illicit drug-taking. However, this generation inherited drinking and smoking from previous generations. We are trying to do something about it by asking people to drink sensibly and to stop smoking. We must not wish on succeeding generations the problems caused by drug-taking, should we be foolish enough to legalise the taking of certain drugs.

Mr. Sheerman: An interesting parallel can be drawn between alcohol and drug-taking. Part of the law of the land for a very long time has been a legal minimum age for drinking. The Opposition have long been saying that it is high time that the Government enforced the law regarding the availability of alcohol to people under 18. Advertisements are directed at young people in which they are cajoled to drink well before the age of 18. They are drinking at 14, 15 and 16, which is well below the age at which they should be drinking alcohol. The law should be strictly enforced.

Mr. Mellor: I agree with all that. It is important that under-age drinking should be stamped out as far as possible. Whatever the protestations however, one cannot help thinking that there are far too many advertisements for alcohol and, whatever is said in their defence, they are aimed at a particular category of 17 to 24-year-old young drinkers. On either side of the legal age for drinking, there is a real problem group. It is worth pointing out that the strong beers available now did not exist 20 years ago. If we have a generation of lager louts, to a considerable extent we have wished that problem on ourselves. I am glad that there is agreement across the Floor of the House on the importance of those facts.

I turn now to the question of the legalislation of illicit drugs. Heroin and cocaine have a much higher basic addictability than any of the so-called "legitimate" drugs, and there is clear evidence that when cocaine is smoked in the form of crack, it is highly addictive. My hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) said that some American research has suggested that three out of every four people who have abused crack have become addicted to it. The hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) has had to leave for a constituency engagement and I understand why he cannot be here. He, too, used his experience in the United States to portray the problems caused by crack. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West was wrong to say that they are caused only by pollutants—they are caused by the drug itself.

We have had a test of what happens if one turns a blind eye to cocaine abuse. As my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale said, an adviser to President Carter suggested that cocaine was a recreational drug of no particular significance, which allowed cocaine to become much more widespread without enforcement in the United States in the 1970s than it might otherwise have been. America has now reaped the whirlwind. With the greatest respect to the House, I must point out that there is no compromise with these substances, but that does not mean that a solution can be found only by stamping out drug abuse oppressively. We need a range of policies across the spectrum, including law and order policies and prohibition, but also including a whole host of policies for demand reduction. I hope that the debate has established that the Government take that point seriously.

The hon. Members for Huddersfield and for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington, among others, mentioned help for specific inner-city areas and our drug prevention initiative. I want to make it absolutely clear that it is not rhetoric but a fundamental principle when I say that there is no point in having a drugs policy if one seeks to keep out of it those people who have a great deal to contribute. A drugs policy that is to work in society must embrace all, so I welcome the enthusiastic involvement of the local authorities and the local authority associations. In our new drugs prevention initiative, which will start in nine inner-city areas and spread to 30, we want the full-hearted co-operation of the local authorities. We shall shortly be consulting the local authority associations about how best our initiative can blend in with what is already happening.

The hon. Member for Leicester, East talked about local co-ordinating groups. As a result of action taken several years ago, every area should have multi-disciplinary groups, bringing together experts to talk about the particular problems of that locality. The aim of our initiative is that an additional three or four people will be engaged in each area to co-ordinate that area's response to its drug problem, having regard to the fact that there is no common base for the drugs problem. It has different manifestations in different areas. For those groups to be effective, a keen awareness of local circumstances will be required. I want the local authorities to be involved. It would be sad if every initiative did not have the full-hearted approval of local authorities. We want them to participate as the groups are not intended to be a substitute for local authority action, but part of the ongoing work.

We are committed to research. I assure the hon. Member for Huddersfield that there is no question of the Home office suppressing any research. As far as we are concerned, all research should be made available, but it is not always up to us to publish it. Publication often depends on the researchers. We have no interest in suppressing such research. Although no one would suggest that research alone, especially over a long period, is a substitute for action, it is an essential part of our policy. The Government have decided to commission a major prevalence study starting early next year to investigate and report on the extent of cocaine misuse, its pattern and its effect on individuals. It will be a three-year study which will generate a great deal of valuable information. The House will appreciate, however, that we cannot wait three years for the outcome before we start to make decisions about cocaine.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) has been a constant assistance to me in all the years I have been involved in this matter. By his chairmanship of the all-party committee on drugs he has done a tremendous amount to promote the basic consensus approach that we have adopted. My hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Huddersfield mentioned south America. When I visited Pakistan in 1985 it was clear that we in the affluent West could not simply tell the subsistence farmers of the north-west frontier to stop growing opium, especially as that was the only crop for which anyone was prepared to

[Mr. Mellor]

pay them and the only way in which they could try to maintain their families. It was clear that we had to help them find an alternative crop. We have put a lot of money into crop substitution schemes and, when coupled with enforcement, those schemes have been strikingly effective. The success was due to favourable economic circumstances as the differential between one cash crop and another made it possible to operate an effective crop substitution policy.

Alas and alack—would that it were otherwise—the scale of the problem in south America and the amount of money to be gained from growing coca compared with any alternative crop is such that it would be unrealistic to think that crop substitution schemes could be effective. I regret that, but it is just another sign of the magnitude of the cocaine problem. There is no easy alternative. I visited a United Nations fund for drug abuse control—UNFDAC—crop substitution scheme in Bolivia, and I should like to believe that such schemes are the answer. However, although we must continue to experiment, I doubt whether they are.

Mr. John Greenway: Those advocating crop substitution schemes should remember that the crop production element in the street price of drugs is small. Even if crop substitution schemes were operating it would be all too easy for the drug barons to up the price to the producer. That is the problem with attempting to introduce such schemes.

Mr. Mellor: A piece of information which has most troubled me since my return to the Home Office is that the opium poppy has now been grown in south America. One of President Carter's wiser advisers—not the chap who underestimated the addictive qualities of cocaine—said that the trouble was that the opium poppy could be grown almost anywhere. It is important to remember that demand generates supply. The fact that one can move cultivation from one part of the world to another shows how difficult it is to regard crop substitution as the answer, although I do not reject the suggestion.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lewes asked what we were doing with Colombia. I should make it clear that we are trying to give practical assistance by making use of what we know about policing, security and intelligence techniques because for a variety of reasons, we have as much expertise on those matters as any other country. The United Kingdom's package of assistance consists of training and equipment. Items include protective clothing for security forces, judiciary surveillance and computer equipment, inflatable boats to assist in access to some of the more remote areas, training in bomb disposal—in which, for our own tragic reasons, we have considerable expertise—scene of crime investigations and Customs techniques. I shall not repeat what we are doing in various other countries.

We try to be concerned with output and not just with input. In these debates, it is easy to say that we should double the money. We have doubled, trebled and quadrupled the money in a range of research projects on drugs, but I beg the House always to be concerned with output and not just input. We are concerned to ensure that the money we spend is useful and helpful, and that it deals with the important points.

This has been a useful debate. It might have been helpful if more hon. Members has been present because this is a major social issue, but those who have been present and who come to this debate with a range of experiences, have shown a spread across the political spectrum. I can think of some issues that we could have debated on which we should have had a fair old set-to. I am not being pious when I say that it is a valuable feature, which we lose at our peril, that whatever our disagreements, we can come together as a House and continue to talk in a civilised way, which is to the advantage of Parliament's reputation, about a fundamental social problem. Whatever our differences, they were as nothing compared with the consensus. I hope that we can continue to work together effectively on the problem. I assure the House that we shall develop our policies and carry them out with all the more vigour as a result of the quality of advice that we receive on occasions such as this.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Tuesday 12th December—

(1) the Motion in the name of Sir Bernard Braine relating to War Crimes may be proceeded with, though opposed, for three hours after it has been entered upon; and, if those proceedings have not been previously disposed of, Mr. Speaker shall, at the expiration of that period, put any Questions necessary to dispose of them;

(2) if proceedings on the above motion have not been completed before Seven o'clock, the Private Business set down by direction of the Chairman of Ways and Means for consideration at that hour shall stand over until the conclusion of such proceedings; and

(3) the Private Business may be proceeded with, though opposed, for three hours after it has been entered upon.

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Wednesday 13th December, Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the Motion in the name of Mr. Secretary Brooke relating to Education Reform (Northern Ireland) as if in line 18 for the words 'one and a half hours' there were substituted the words 'three hours'.

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Thursday 14th December, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Orders Nos. 14 (Exempted business) and 15 (Prayers against statutory instruments, &c. (negative procedure)),—

(1) the Motions in the names of the Prime Minister relating to Community Fisheries Arrangements for 1990 or Mr. Paddy Ashdown relating to Sea Fisheries may be proceeded with, though opposed, for three hours after the first of them has been entered upon; and, if proceedings on the first Motion have not been previously disposed of, Mr. Speaker shall, at the expiration of that period, put any Questions necessary to dispose of them; and no further such Motion shall then be made;

(2) the Motions in the names of Mr. Secretary Ridley and Mr. Neil Kinnock relating to Monopolies and Mergers may be proceeded with, though opposed, for one and a half hours after the first of them has been entered upon; and, if proceedings thereon have not been previously disposed of, Mr. Speaker shall, at the expiration of that period, put the Question already proposed from the Chair.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

SITTINGS OF THE HOUSE

Resolved,

That—

(1) this House do meet on Thursday 21st December, at half-past Nine o'clock;

(2) notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph (2) of Standing Order No. 17 (Questions to Members), no Questions shall be taken, provided that at Eleven o'clock Mr. Speaker may interrupt the proceedings in order to permit Questions to be asked which are in his opinion of an urgent character and relate either to matters of public importance or to the arrangement of business, statements to be made by Ministers, or personal explanations to be made by Members; and

(3) at half-past Three o'clock Mr. Speaker do adjourn the House without putting any Question, provided that this House shall not adjourn until Mr. Speaker shall have reported the Royal Assent to any Acts agreed upon by both Houses.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

EUROPEAN LEGISLATION

Ordered,

That Mrs. Margaret Ewing be added to the Select Committee on European Legislation.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

PROCEDURE

Ordered,

That Mr. Stan Crowther be discharged from the Procedure Committee and Mr. Graham Allen be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

Sapper Kirk Sancto

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

2.7 pm

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): Sapper Kirk Sancto died in a boating accident in Port Stanley harbour in the early hours of 9 June 1985. He was 19 years of age. It is with great reluctance that I have sought to bring the facts of this sad case to the attention of the House this afternoon, but after nearly two years of correspondence and meetings with Ministers I have failed to resolve to the satisfaction of my constituents, Mr. and Mrs. Sancto, two matters that have exacerbated their sadness at the loss of their son Kirk.

The facts of the case are that Sapper Sancto was operating a kind of waterborne taxi service, on a voluntary basis, across Port Stanley harbour on a dark night, using a fairly fast motor launch called a dory. He was operating the boat throughout the evening with his friend Private Catherall and most of the trips across the water were between the coastels, the floating hotels where our garrison was then housed, and Navy point, where a party was being held in the diving section bar. During the middle part of the evening, Sapper Sancto and Fusilier Catherall attended the party for part of the time and there is conflicting evidence on what, if anything, they drank. When the party ended they resumed their voluntary taxi duties, which had been sanctioned by the bosun of the joint services water sports club who was responsible for the water launches and who had previously tested both soldiers to see that they were competent to carry out those duties.

Soon after midnight, on one of its journeys back to coastel 3 with five passengers the dory collided with a much larger vessel known as a Kiwi or K3 New Zealand class launch made of steel and weighing about 30 tonnes. After the impact, the passengers of the dory, which was being driven by Fusilier Catherall, discovered that Sancto had received severe head injuries. They returned quickly to coastel 2, from which Kirk Sancto was transferred to the British military hospital where, sadly, he was found to have died.

My constituents were visited later that day by the padre from sapper headquarters in my constituency and a major, also from headquarters, who informed them that their son had died from head injuries received in an accident at about 1 am that day but that they had no further details.

Then followed a period of months during which my constituents received no further information about the circumstances of their son's death. The administration of his affairs was carried out quite properly by those charged with such matters at the Ministry of Defence. That included the distribution of his modest estate and the return of his personal effects to the family. The Army properly held a board of inquiry into the circumstances of the accident but the family were asked neither to attend it nor to contribute any information. Nor were they told of the outcome. The information was forwarded with the report of the post-mortem carried out by the professor of military pathology, Lieutenant Colonel Menzies, to the Oxford coroner. Because the remains of service men are brought back to the United Kingdom and landed at Brize Norton or Lyneham, inquests on service men killed while overseas are carried out by coroners in Oxford and

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Wiltshire. I shall refer later to that because it was a source of dissatisfaction in this case. The Army sent the information to the coroner in 1985, six months after the accident and the post-mortem and three months after the conclusion of the Army's inquiry.

After much prodding by Mr. and Mrs. Sancto and their solicitor, the coroner finally wrote to Mr. Sancto on 3 January 1986, almost a year after the accident, to say that he was convening the inquest for 16 July. The court duly sat on that date at 10 am. Evidence was taken from many of the relevant witnesses, but Fusilier Catherall failed to turn up until 2 pm, by which time the inquest had had to be adjourned sine die and the witnesses who had given evidence were discharged.

After the adjournment, Mr. Sancto requested from the Ministry of Defence the full report of the inquiry. On 4 August 1986, he received a letter from a section of the MOD telling him that

> "during the inquest all the Army information concerned with the tragic death of your son will be available to you but, if you feel you still wish to know more about the circumstances involved I can, exceptionally, send you a full account based upon the Army Authorities' reports as soon as the inquest has been completed."

The inquest was reconvened on 10 September and Catherall was brought under escort and duly examined, although, of course, in isolation from the other witnesses. Because of the delayed inquest, Mr. and Mrs. Sancto were put through needless strain and a good deal of extra inconvenience and additional costs were incurred. The Sanctos had determined with their solicitor that, because the Army had been so unforthcoming with information, they needed the services of counsel, who had to be retained for the resumed hearing at additional expense. The outcome of the inquest was a verdict of accidental death.

After further prompting by the Sanctos, it was suggested in a letter from section AG Sec 2 that a mutually satisfactory offer to reimburse the Sanctos' costs involved in the inquest would be made and they were invited to send

> "full details of your costs preferably covering both visits to Oxford"

so that suitable arrangements could be made to resolve the situation to the mutual satisfaction of the Sanctos and the Department. Mr. Sancto submitted a claim for almost £700, including the cost of counsel. The MOD offered £53·80 saying that the Sanctos' costs for the first day of the inquest and the cost of counsel were their affair and that only the costs incurred directly as a result of Catherall's non-appearance could be set against MOD.

Further prompting of the MOD by the Sanctos finally elicited on 31 December 1986 a three-page narrative summary of the Army's inquiry. It included a highly controversial piece of hearsay, which suggested that

> "Kirk consumed a number of cans of beer and a couple of glasses of strong punch and . . . became very merry and boisterous and was obviously enjoying himself dancing with the girls."

Fusilier Catherall also admitted drinking four cans of lager. The paragraph finished:

> "throughout the evening, Kirk and Fusilier Catherall were ferrying the Dory".

Lieutenant Colonel Menzies's post-mortem report is quite spoecific that there was no trace of alcohol in specimens of Kirk's blood and urine. He later confirmed that the specimens had been properly taken and maintained to ensure that no changes took place before the samples were examined. That clear conflict between the narrative account and the distinguished pathologist's report has never been satisfactorily explained, despite repeated attempts by Mr. Sancto and latterly by me. There are other inconsistencies between the narrative report and the evidence at the inquest. Those unsatisfactory discrepancies have convinced Mr. and Mrs. Sancto that for its own reasons the Army, supported by the MOD, has been less than frank and has sought to cover up either negligence or misdemeanour by personnel acting in its name, and that that negligence or misdemeanour caused or contributed to the death of their son.

The MOD has consistently and directly refused to allow Mr. and Mrs. Sancto to see the full transcript and evidence of the Army board of inquiry and they have not allowed them to see it through Ministers or me, and that has maintained the Sanctos in their scepticism. The narrative account has in effect been amended by subsequent corespondence, and that only increases the Sanctos's suspicions.

The Under-Secretry of State for Health, my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman), examined these matters minutely when he was an Under-Secretary at the Ministry of Defence. He eventually offered reimbursement of counsel's fees for the second day of the inquest, although the Sanctos still think that their modest claim of £700 should be met in full by the Ministry of Defence. The fact that section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947 has been repealed in the intervening period but not retrospectively heightens the Sanctos's sense of injustice.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kettering also sought to defuse the issue of whether Kirk had been drinking and concluded that alcohol had not been a contributing factor to the accident. My hon. Friend, who behaved throughout with his customary courtesy and sympathy, did not feel able to let the Sanctos see the full Army report. His successors have maintained that stance to this day. I hope that when he responds to the debate my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to grant the two aspirations which may relieve my constituents of some of the agony of their loss.

Kirk Sancto died in a boating accident and there can be nothing classified about that because his duties that evening were voluntary and in no sense operational. His parents have seen photographs of his body, so that the Army is not protecting them from the realities of his severe head injuries. The pathologist makes it clear that Kirk Sancto was not the worse for drink. Who or what is the Army protecting by its refusal to release the full report?

The conduct of the inquiry and the passing of information to the coroner, the inordinate delay in convening the inquest and its adjournment because of Catherall's non-appearance, the manifest inconsistencies between the narrative report and the evidence at the inquest, the apparent agreement to pay the inquest costs of my constituents and then the decision not to and, perhaps most of all, the refusal to share the full facts of the inquiry are all unsatisfactory facets of the case. That makes me wonder whether those charged with resolving the facts of the tragic death of this young man while he was serving his country have been as diligent or as thoughtful as they might have been.

The loss of a son in such circumstances must necessarily be a terrible experience. It behoves those of us who may have a part to play in trying to heal the wounds to do everything in our power to give the bereaved family every support. That has not happened in this case, and I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to try to remedy that.

2.18 pm

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Alan Clark): My hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) has raised a matter of great concern to a family in his constituency whose son, Sapper Kirk Sancto, was killed when serving in the Royal Engineers four and a half years ago in a tragic accident in Port Stanley harbour. I add my sympathy to those of all hon. Members for the family that suffered such a grievous loss.

As is normal in such cases, the Army authorities convened a board of inquiry into the circumstances of the accident. The board took evidence from witnesses and others involved. Sapper Sancto's body was returned to the United Kingdom and it was also obligatory for an inquest to be held in this country. That was held in two stages in July and September 1986 and recorded a finding of accidental death. Mr. Sancto confirmed in November 1986, after the inquest was completed, that he would like a summary of its proceedings. That was sent to him at the end of the following month.

I must emphasise that my Department has at no stage wished to withhold any of the facts, or the nature of the board of inquiry's findings. I certainly have every sympathy for the frustration felt by Mr. Sancto that more than a year elapsed before he could receive the full account from the Ministry of Defence of its own inquiries into the accident. As the House will appreciate, the timing of inquests is a matter, not for my Department, but for independent judicial officers. Mr. Sancto did, however, have the opportunity, which he took, of hearing what witnesses and others involved said at the inquest. Indeed, as he is perfectly entitled to do, he employed legal representation so as to have the opportunity to put the questions that particularly concerned him directly to those witnesses.

It may help if I say a few words about the status and purpose of boards of inquiry reports. The Army derives its authority for holding boards of inquiry from the Army Act 1955, statutory rules made thereunder and Queen's regulations for the Army. Boards of inquiry may inquire into all manner of things. Generally, their primary purposes are to investigate and report on the facts about the matter referred to them by the convening authority, and to make recommendations aimed at preventing a recurrence of an accident.

It is of the greatest importance, particularly in cases of injury or death, to establish as quickly as possible the true facts. Lives may depend on that. It is essential, therefore, that witnesses appearing before a board of inquiry should give evidence in a full and frank manner. One must remember that some of the witnesses will be young or of very junior rank. They may be required to give their evidence in difficult circumstances. They may have to criticise the actions of fellow service men, their close comrades even, or of their senior officers. They may themselves have made mistakes which contributed to an incident, about which, for the good of the services, we would want them to be candid.

Board of inquiry procedures have, therefore, been designed to do everything possible to encourage witnesses to come forward and to be absolutely candid when giving their evidence. To this end, boards of inquiry are conducted as internal investigations. They are not disciplinary courts. Unlike courts-martial, they are not held in public. The rules under which boards are conducted provide that evidence given by a witness may not be used against him in any subsequent disciplinary proceedings. The report of the board of inquiry is regarded as confidential to the service and the Department. Only those within the service and the Department with a strict need-to-know requirement will see it.

If the records of board of inquiry proceedings and evidence were to be made public, witnesses before future boards could not be sure that the confidence in which they were asked to give their evidence would be respected. Concern that their statements to the board might become general knowledge both within and outwith the service might make them more cautious and prevent the full facts from coming to light.

Board of inquiry reports may also contain classified material, evidence of a highly specialist, technical nature or material of a medical nature which next-of-kin might find distressing. For all those reasons, it is not our practice to allow access to service boards of inquiry reports.

Equally, I must emphasise that it is not the wish of the services to deny those with a genuine and valid interest their right to know what happened in a particular incident. My hon. Friend's constituent clearly has such a right in this case. It is, therefore, my Department's practice to make available on request a narrative summary of the Department's investigations, which contains all the material facts. As I have explained, this procedure was followed in Mr. Sancto's case following the completion of the coroner's inquest.

I appreciate that someone who has suffered a loss such as Mr. Sancto's will find it difficult to feel satisfied until he has seen all that has been written and said about the tragedy. I fully understand, too, why it is that they may feel that something is being kept from them. In this case, I must repeat the assurances given by the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces in his letters of 28 January and 19 July 1988 to my hon. Friend—that the facts relating to his son's death have not been concealed from Mr. Sancto. I hope that my hon. Friend will accept that assurance.

I am afraid that I am unable to accede to Mr. Sancto's request that he should be allowed to see the full report of the Army's board of inquiry. As my hon. Friend will know, we have acknowledged that the summary of the report that was sent to his constituent was not as clear or as precise as it should have been, particularly as regards the exact course of events in the succession of boat trips that preceded the final, fatal journey in the early hours of 9 June 1985. We have acknowledged, too, that the references made in the summary to the part that alcohol was thought, by some witnesses, to have played in the circumstances of the accident, did not take sufficient account of specialist medical evidence. This evidence, made available to the inquiry and to the inquest, showed that Mr. Sancto's son did not have alcohol in his body at the time of death.

The record has been set straight on these, and on other issues raised by Mr. Sancto, in correspondence with my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman). I should like to take this opportunity to state quite clearly that, from my examination of the papers in preparing for

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this debate, I have seen no evidence to suggest that the accident sprang from lack or care, or the consumption of alcohol, by Sapper Kirk Sancto.

It is not the practice of my Department to meet either personal expenses, or legal costs arising from attendance at inquest hearings. A decision to attend an inquest is a private decision on the part of the individual concerned. It is not the practice for the next of kin to be reimbursed for such costs. We would not expect to pay such costs except where these had been incurred either on the Department's behalf or as a result of negligence. The same considerations apply to the cost of legal representation. It is not unusual for a family to decide to be legally represented at an inquest; but the consequence of such a decision is that the family should bear the cost involved.

In this case, however, while the general timing of the inquest was a matter beyond our control, most regrettably the hearing had to be further adjourned because a key service witness failed to appear on 16 July 1986. I, and my colleagues with whom my hon. Friend has corresponded, accept that the Ministry of Defence has some responsibility for this. I take this opportunity to apologise personally. Mr. Sancto has been offered, on an ex-gratia basis, reimbursement for all the costs that he incurred as a result of the holding of the second part of the hearing on 9 September 1986. This offer was extended both to his personal travel and incidental costs, and to the extra cost of employing legal representation for the additional period.

This subject is properly the concern of my noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces. I am replying on this occasion because my hon. Friend has raised the matter in this House, but I have examined the papers personally, with the greatest of care, and I have listened to the points made by my hon. Friend. I shall report back to my noble Friend and ask him to reconsider the case in the light of what has been said this afternoon. I feel sure that he will be writing further to my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham shortly.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-eight minutes past Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 11 December 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

WALES

Nature Conservancy Council

1. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what organisation will take over the responsibilities of the Nature Conservancy Council in Wales when the council is abolished.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Mr. Wyn Roberts): Subject to parliamentary approval, it is intended that, with effect from 1 April 1991, the responsibilities in Wales of the Nature Conservancy Council and Countryside Commission will be undertaken by a new statutory body, the Countryside Council for Wales.

Mr. Stern: Will not this announcement be widely welcomed throughout the Principality, as it shows the extent of the Government's commitment to the environment and conservation in Wales?

Mr. Roberts: I am happy to tell my hon. Friend that the announcement was warmly and widely welcomed in Wales. It is an improvement. The two advisory committees of the Nature Conservancy Council and the Countryside Commission will be replaced by a single executive committee.

Dr. Thomas: The Minister will remember that I welcomed his decision in the House on behalf of my colleagues. Will he assure the House that the Welsh and Scottish Offices will not surrender to the sort of campaigns that are being mounted in England? The future of the NCC in England is a matter for the English, but the decision is to be welcomed in Wales.

Mr. Roberts: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his support. We have consulted a number of bodies. The chairman of the NCC committee for Wales and the chairman of the Countryside Commission committee for Wales both welcomed the proposal. We have had discussions with the Council for the Protection of Rural Wales and the chairmen and chief officers of the national parks and there has been a general welcome for the scheme. Matters affecting Scotland and England are the concern of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

British Rail

2. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he next expects to meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss transport infrastructure in the Principality.

19. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he next expects to meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss British Railways' operations in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend last met the chairman on 12 December. He hopes to meet the present chairman and the future chairman in the early months of 1990.

Dr. Marek: Is the Minister aware that the European Commission is prepared to pay, through grants, 75 per cent. of the cost of electrifying the north Wales main line from Crewe to Chester and to Holyhead? Does he agree that such a sum of money—perhaps £30 million—should not be turned away lightly, as the electrification of the line would be a valuable addition to the infrastructure of north Wales? If he agrees, will he do what he can to persuade the Secretary of State for Transport that, if British Rail applies for permission to electrify the line, it does not dock money equivalent to the grant for infrastructure developments elsewhere?

Mr. Roberts: The electrification of the north Wales line, and any other line, is a matter for British Rail. I doubt whether the hon. Gentleman's assumption about the European regional development fund grant is correct. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has announced that spending on railways will be about £3·7 billion during the next three years, which is 75 per cent. more in real terms than has been spent over the past three years. There does not seem to be a shortage of finance.

Mr. Bennett: When my hon. Friend sees the chairman of British Rail, will he draw his attention to the continuing anxiety of people in Pembroke about the decline of rail services west of Swansea, the type of trains used and the number of trains operating on Sundays? There are now no trains west of Swansea before 3 pm on a Sunday, and that is not good enough.

Mr. Roberts: We shall take up various issues with the present chairman and the new chairman of British Rail. We shall discuss services in west Wales, especially Pembrokeshire, and other areas.

Mr. Alex Carlile: When the Minister next meets the chairman of British Rail, will he take him on an unannounced journey on the Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth line so that he can witness the decimation of stations, the lack of staff and lavatory facilities, the overcrowded and miserable trains and the general air of neglect that are causing many people to complain to me about the state of that line?

Mr. Roberts: The hon. and learned Gentleman paints a somewhat dismal picture of railway services in mid-Wales and, by implication, elsewhere. There has been substantial investment in the mid-Wales and Cambrian lines. We no longer hear talk of the closure of the Cambrian railway, as we did a few years ago, so things have improved. Nevertheless, I dare say that there is scope for further improvement.

Mr. Raffan: When does my hon. Friend expect British Rail to be able to increase from 70 to 90 mph the maximum speed of trains on the north Wales line? Will he ensure that overcrowding in trains is reduced and safety is assured before that happens?

Mr. Roberts: I am sure that British Rail will not permit a maximum of 90 mph on the north Wales line until it is absolutely safe.

Mr. Denzil Davies: Is the Minister aware that the Channel tunnel could have serious consequences for the economy of south-west Wales, especially as firms in the congested south-east might be tempted to go to the French end of the tunnel and supply the island from the continent rather than come to south Wales? Will the Secretary of State, with local authorities and British Rail, start planning a fast rail link from south-west Wales to the Channel tunnel, bypassing London?

Mr. Roberts: The right hon. Gentleman is well aware that British Rail has been charged with producing a plan before the end of this year. I understand that its publication is imminent. To judge from what I know of what may be in it, I do not think that the people of Wales will be disappointed.

Mr. Adley: My constituents in Dorset might think Wales quite well served by railways. Will my hon. Friend bear it in mind that there is no direct relationship between the Government's quite proper pride in increasing capital investment on the railways and reducing the public service obligation grant which, in the case of the lines from Cardiff to Crewe and from Cardiff to Portsmouth, means that Sprinters are overworked, clapped out and, as one railwayman recently told me, being worked into the ground? Will he ensure that, in discussions about railway investment, PSO grant is recognised as separate from capital investment and essential?

Mr. Roberts: I shall bear in mind what my hon. Friend said, but I assure him that my information is that new Sprinters are being introduced, or are due to be introduced, in several parts of Wales.

EC Funding

3. **Mr. Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had with Community officials about the funding of infrastructure projects.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Peter Walker): I am in constant touch with the negotiations with the European Commission on Community support frameworks. Officials of my Department are playing an active part in discussions with Commission officials on this issue.

Mr. Anderson: The Secretary of State will be aware of my interest in the cross-valley link from Hafod, in the lower Swansea valley, to the Pentrechwyth bypass. Is he aware that, at last, tenders for it are to be invited this week? The assessment of infrastructure grants affects the whole of Wales. Will there be a transitional period before the new regime comes into effect? Has the right hon. Gentleman been successful in his lobbying in Brussels?

Mr Walker: Negotiations with the Commission continue. There is considerable pressure from all member states as there is widespread European interest in the decisions taken. We have not been sastisfied with the Commission's proposals, and negotiations continue.

Mr. Morgan: Will the Secretary of State come clean with the House about what has been happening in the negotiations between his Department and the European Community, following the recent statement by Bruce Millan, the responsible Commissioner, at the conference in Cardiff that there will be no further grants for highway infrastructure projects in areas such as Wales? If that is so, was that loss of grant, which will probably amount to £40 million, and was caused by his Department debarring county councils such as South Glamorgan and West Glamorgan from applying for grants, the reason why he has had to cut the capital allocation to areas such as Cardiff by £40 million in the next financial year?

Mr. Walker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, who kindly always prefaces his questions to me by releasing them to the newspapers the morning before. One can read the nonsense in advance in the papers. What he has just said is equal nonsense. There is no link between capital expenditure in Cardiff and that in South Glamorgan. His previous allegations about Welsh Office blunders with respect to grants are also wrong. I suggest that, in future, he checks the facts before he makes press releases.

Mr. Barry Jones: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that one of our problems in Europe is that the Prime Minister is in a disturbing minority of one? Will he take her aside and tell her to stop damaging the interests of our country? Is it not the case that rather than leading Britain in Europe she is humiliating us and that the interests of Wales are also being seriously hurt?

Mr. Walker: I welcome the conversion of part of the Labour party to Europe. As the Commissioner involved in the negotiations is a former Socialist Cabinet Minister responsible for regional policy, I hope that his proposals will suit Britain in Europe.

Pupil Assessment

4. **Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress his Department has made in implementing its policy for assessment of school pupils.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The School Examinations and Assessment Council is making good progress in the development of assessment measures and advice to support the national curriculum in England and Wales.

Dr. Thomas: Is the Minister satisfied with the relationship between SEAC in Wales and the Welsh joint education committee? The entire operation of assessment in Wales is organised on a part-time basis with one official who commutes. Is that satisfactory in view of discussions in the Standing Committee when I proposed a SEAC for Wales, just as we have a curriculum council for Wales?

Mr. Roberts: I am satisfied that the relationship between SEAC, Welsh Office officials and the Welsh joint education committee is satisfactory. That is shown by the progress that we are making on standard assessment tasks.

Dr. Kim Howells: Is the Minister aware that the assessment of school pupils depends in the first place on teachers having the appropriate time, facilities and funds to carry it out in classrooms? Is he further aware that morale among teachers, at least in south Wales, is low and that many teachers are looking for jobs outside the education system? What will he do about making more resources available to teachers in Wales?

Mr. Roberts: Teachers have an important part to play in the assessment of pupils. Their assessment continues throughout the period when the child is at school, whereas standard assessment tasks are carried out when the child is seven, 11, 14 and 16. The teachers whom I have met in Wales are doing a marvellous job, and I believe that that is true of the majority.

Mr. Raffan: Is my hon. Friend aware of the widespread anxiety among teachers, not only about the amount of time that assessment will take in classes of 30-plus, but that too much emphasis on assessment has an adverse effect on pupils and that assessment at seven is too early? Will he assure teachers on those two points?

Mr. Roberts: Testing at the age of seven will be different from testing at later stages. I know that there is some anxiety about the time being devoted to assessment, but I am sure that after it is introduced the task will be eased.

Wages

5. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentages of Welsh *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time workers are currently earning wages below 68 per cent. of the average British wage.

Mr. Peter Walker: Information is not available in the form requested. Between 1988 and 1989 average earnings of full-time workers on adult rates in Wales increased by 9·9 per cent., a figure higher than in six of the other nine regions of the country.

Mr. Flynn: Had the information been available, the Secretary of State would have discovered that Wales has fallen further down the low wages ladder and that tens of thousands of Welsh workers have been conscripted into junk jobs that pay dirt wages. Is he aware that thousands of Welsh workers once earned above-average wages whereas now they are at the bottom of the nation's average wages? Is he aware that there is a higher percentage of low-paid, male workers in Wales than anywhere else in Britain and that Dyfed has the lowest average male wages of any county in Britain? Will he answer the question put to him by my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones)? Does he agree with the Prime Minister that clause 5 of the European social charter, which seeks fairer remuneration for workers, is of no value? Is he content for Wales to remain the low-paid capital of Britain?

Mr. Walker: The figures used in the hon. Gentleman's question were taken from a remarkable Council of Europe report which has not been endorsed by any member state.

Mr. Flynn: That is not true.

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman complains about the level of wages in Wales. In 1979, the average adult wage was £87 a week, whereas now it is £216 a week. That is a massive increase in real terms.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the greatest tragedy of unnecessarily high wages would be a halt in the creation of new employment? He is to be congratulated because since the general election unemployment in Wales has fallen by 70 per cent. Can he tell the House by how much unemployment in Newport has fallen in the same period?

Mr. Walker: At the time of the general election unemployment in Newport was 100 per cent. higher than it is now.

Mr. Barry Jones: What is the right hon. Gentleman doing to persuade the Prime Minister that the European social charter will help the poorest in Wales best of all? Does he agree that the Prime Minister's stubborn style in Europe hurts the prospects of the lowest paid in Wales? Does he further agree that if we are frozen out of Europe, Britain cannot play a leading role to help the lowest paid in Wales?

Mr. Walker: I am glad to say that what is substantially improving earnings in Wales is the Government's enormous success in getting inward investment into Wales. It is probably a more successful region than any other in the European Community. I am delighted that this massive creation of good jobs in Wales is taking place. It is a great pity that, by their noise this afternoon, Labour Members show that they do not appreciate what is going on.

Local Government

6. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met local government associations in Wales; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Peter Walker: I met representatives of the Welsh counties committee and the Council of Welsh Districts at a meeting of the Welsh consultative council on local government finance on 2 November to discuss local government finance matters.

Mr. Murphy: Is it not time that the Secretary of State stopped blurring the picture about what will happen in Wales when the poll tax hits us next year? Will he admit that individual poll tax payers in Wales are likely to pay an average of £200, not the figure that he has predicted over the past few weeks? Why has he been so reticent about the fact that of the 100,000 business premises in Wales, at least 70,000 will be worse off as a direct result of his business tax? Cannot he see that the Welsh people regard him as the architect of this wretched tax as much as they do the Prime Minister?

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman read that out beautifully. I only hope that he rehearsed it before delivering it.

Mr. Murphy: The right hon. Gentleman will read his answer.

Mr. Walker: No, I will not read the answer. The community charge in Wales will provide only 15 per cent. of all local government expenditure. As a result, community charges in Wales will be at least £100 lower per person than in either England or Scotland. It is time that the Welsh Labour party stopped being so churlish on this issue.

Mr. Rogers: Does the Secretary of State accept that local authorities in Wales are grossly underfunded? People are not getting the municipal housing, social services and care for the elderly that they enjoyed 10 years ago. Does he acknowledge that next year after the introduction of the poll tax the position will be even worse?

Mr. Walker: Government grants to Wales, in terms of the statutory requirements regarding house improvements, will be unlimited in the current year. Our pursuit of such a policy for 10 years is doubtless why so many houses in the Rhondda have been improved.

Mr. Livsey: Will the Secretary of State admit that the Welsh Office has hopelessly underestimated the poll tax figures? The Welsh Office says that the figure for Brecon and Radnor should be £130 per head, but the local authority treasurers say that it will be nearer £200. Does that mean that the Welsh Office accountants are not wizards but dunces?

Mr. Walker: No, Sir. What the hon. Gentleman said is not true. The increase in the total standard spending grant is sufficient to allow the average charge of £174 to be set. The expenditure demands of the local authority associations are, in my view, overstated. There is also room for efficiency savings. All councils, especially high-spending authorities, should seek to contain their budgets within affordable levels.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Has my right hon. Friend discussed the actions of councils such as the two Cardiff councils, which have given up any pretence of fixing a community charge to match their spending and instead have already determined the level of their community charge, with the result that they are now scrabbling round to find spending to soak up the revenue? According to my right hon. Friend's calculations, the charge in Cardiff should be £163, but my constituents will have to pay £250. What will he do about it?

Mr. Walker: There have been some remarkable increases. For example, this year Cardiff is planning a capital spending programme of £60 million, an increase of 35 per cent. on the previous year and the year before. Cardiff is using all its receipts and reserves for the year, with the result that recently there were some remarkable newspaper articles on the topic.

Illegal Discharges

7. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many incidents of notified discharges into rivers in Wales took place in 1988 and to date in 1989; and how many prosecutions have taken place during the same period in respect of illegal discharges.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Ian Grist): The latest published figures, in Welsh Water's report and accounts 1988-89, show that there were 2,185 substantiated river pollution incidents in Welsh Water's area in 1988, 12 per cent. less than in 1987. During 1988, 74 prosecutions were brought by Welsh Water, resulting in 72 convictions. In the period to the end of October 1989 there have been 1,140 substantial incidents and 45 prosecutions have been brought.

Mr. Jones: When the Government are seeking to promote their green image, does the Minister consider it a scandal that the level of trade effluent discharges and untreated sewage into our rivers is increasing substantially? Will he examine the claims of the Farmers Union of Wales that discharges into rivers in my constituency are 200 per cent. greater than they were two years ago? If that is the case and consents have been given, will the Minister assure us that the consents were not given to prevent the National Rivers Authority from undertaking prosecutions in the run-up to water privatisation?

Mr. Grist: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman is talking absolute rubbish—and populist, scaring rubbish at that. Nevertheless, I shall pass his query to the National Rivers Authority, because it has the responsibility.

Mr. John Marshall: I congratulate my hon. Friend on the successful privatisation of Welsh Water today. Does he agree that the privatisation of Welsh Water and the National Rivers Authority is the best guarantee of cleaner rivers in Wales?

Mr. Grist: Absolutely. My hon. Friend is quite right. At last we have separated the gamekeeper from the poacher, and we have a licensing authority that is free of the charge of polluting. I am afraid that the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) does not seem to have understood that point.

Welsh Office (25th Anniversary)

8. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what events were organised by his Department to mark the 25th anniversary of the Welsh Office in November.

Mr. Peter Walker: The 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Welsh Office falls on 1 April 1990. I intend to mark the anniversary in an appropriate manner and will announce my plans early in 1990.

Mr. Wigley: Is the Secretary of State aware that on radio programmes in Wales commemorating the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Secretary of State's office, which was the embryonic Welsh Office, in November 1964, two former senior officials of the Welsh Office, Mr. Richard Hall Williams and Sir Goronwy Daniel said that the major challenge now facing the Welsh Office was to get a degree of democracy into its oversight? Will he confirm that any celebrations next April will bring about that democracy, or will we be lingering behind Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia?

Mr. Walker: I find such admirable institutions as the Welsh Grand Committee, the Welsh Select Committee and the constant activities of lively Welsh Members of Parliament such as the hon. Gentleman marvellous reflections of democracy in Wales that would be envied in Lithuania and elsewhere.

Mr. Denzil Davies: Is the Secretary of State aware that during the past 10 years while his party has been in charge of the Welsh Office, income per head in Wales has fallen faster than in any other area in Britain and is now almost as low as that in Northern Ireland? Is that evidence of an economic miracle or an economic disaster?

Mr. Walker: I repeat that average wages in Wales have massively increased as has the diversity of opportunity in Wales. Wales now has a strong diversified economy which is recognised and rejoiced in by anyone who has any regard for the future of Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the important advantages of a Welsh Office is that Welsh matters are debated here in the United Kingdom Parliament and not in some Mickey Mouse assembly in Cardiff? Does he agree that the hallmarks of a Conservative Welsh Office are prudence and value for money for the taxpayer? Will he ensure that any celebrations bear that in mind?

Mr. Walker: The enormous resources that have been put into regional development in recent years and the fact that domestic ratepayers in Wales will be paying only 15 per cent. of all local government expenditure are reflections of the considerable advantages for Wales of being part of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Geraint Howells: I am sure that the Secretary of State knows that the people of Wales demand their own Parliament within the United Kingdom. On reflection, which position would the Secretary of State like to hold in that Parliament?

Mr. Walker: Ambassador.

Nature Conservancy Council

9. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he next intends to meet the Nature Conservancy Council to discuss nature conservation in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend has no present plans to meet the council.

Mr. Davies: I am surprised at the Minister's answer in view of the current controversy in Wales. Is it not the case that the Nature Conservancy Council in England is being retained to allow the English authorities to resist development pressure and that the effective abolition of the NCC in Wales means that we shall have a lower standard of protection for our national heritage than exists in England? Does the Minister agree that that is why the Council for the Protection of Rural Wales now opposes his plan for the dismemberment of the NCC? Does he acknowledge that that view is shared by every other conservation body in Wales and is endorsed by every serious politician in Wales and all but six of the NCC staff? In view of that, when the Minister gets around to meeting the NCC will he announce that he will reconsider the matter?

Mr. Roberts: The hon. Gentleman has totally misled the House, I am sure not deliberately. I repeat what I said earlier which is that our proposals for Wales have received a wide welcome. I do not agree that the purpose of our new Countryside Council for Wales is to lower standards of protection for the environment. It is nothing of the kind and I can assure the hon. Gentleman that his belief is not shared by any of the people in Wales to whom I spoke, including the Council for the Protection of Rural Wales.

Interest Rates

10. **Mr. Rowlands:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the impact of current interest rates on the development of small businesses in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: The high inflation of previous Governments proved that high inflation is more damaging to small businesses than a period of high interest rates. I hope that the fall in inflation during the coming year will lead to lower interest rates as well as lower inflation.

Mr. Rowlands: The Secretary of State's complacent statement completely underestimates the crippling effects of high interest rates on small businesses and on their cash flows and investment decisions. The right hon. Gentleman is supposed to be a man of independent thinking. What independent thoughts has he about helping small businesses through this period of high interest rates?

Mr. Walker: Much help is being given through various forms of regional aid, such as the Welsh Development Agency and local authorities, to small businesses. I am delighted to say that in 1988 there was a faster rate of increase in the number of production businesses in Wales than in any other region—it was more than double the average for the United Kingdom as a whole. I am glad to say that the latest returns and applications show that that trend is continuing.

Mr. Foot: When does the right hon. Gentleman propose to make his annual speech in which he tells us what he thinks of Government economic policy? This year, will he be making it in the constituency of the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer)?

Mr. Walker: I should prefer to make it in the right hon. Gentleman's constituency so that I could point out all the successes that we have had.

Community Health Councils

11. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met the chairmen of community health councils in Wales; and what topics were discussed.

Mr. Grist: We have received no request from community health council chairmen to meet them, although I would be happy to do so should the need arise.

Mr. Michael: Did the Minister seek a meeting, or was he afraid that they would ask him why he was entering into a period of so-called consultation on his proposal to undermine our system of community health councils in Wales, when that proposal had already been rejected? Surely the Minister must accept that it is manifest nonsense for a council with the word "community" in its name to represent views from areas as widespread as mid-Glamorgan, Dyfed, Powys and even South Glamorgan. Will he allow community health councils to continue to represent the health interests of communities, instead of forcing them to reconcile the needs of different communities, which should be a matter for health authorities and, ultimately, the Minister?

Mr. Grist: The hon. Gentleman has rather missed the point of our proposals, which, as he knows, are out to consultation. The community health councils should be strengthened by the change because they will be able to stand up and shadow their health authorities much more effectively and deploy their assets and finances to much greater effect on behalf of patients.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Is the Minister aware that Ogwr community health council is concerned about the fact that, because of a lack of staff to attend all the intensive care beds in the Princess of Wales hospital, one patient has been sent home three times when expecting an operation for cancer of the oesophagus, and another has been sent home once for the same reason? Will he arrange for extra funding to be made available to ensure that intensive care units throughout mid-Glamorgan are fully staffed?

Mr. Grist: I shall certainly consider the particular instance that the hon. Gentleman mentioned, although I believe that the intensive treatment unit at the Princess of Wales hospital has recently been affected by sickness among its staff.

Railway Electrification

12. **Mr. Coleman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has recently discussed the electrification of main line railway services in south Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Electrification is unlikely to have any significant effect on the quality of services on the south Wales main line. Improved frequency, greater reliability and reduced overcrowding on the high-speed 125 services are the critical factors.

Mr. Coleman: That was an appalling answer from the Minister. What estimate has been made of the cost of electrification of the railway line in south Wales? Is he aware that the cost of electrifying the east coast railway was overestimated? Will not the fact that our railway is not electrified serve Wales badly in 1992?

Mr. Roberts: I can only repeat what the hon. Gentleman already knows—that British Rail has produced a study of the railway network in connection with the Channel tunnel. It considers that the level of demand for through-passenger services for south Wales will be insufficient to justify electrification. As for freight, it makes no difference whether traction is by diesel or electrificity.

Water Sports

13. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what support he is giving to the development of water sports in Wales.

Mr. Grist: Welsh Office financial support for bodies concerned with the development of water sports in Wales is provided through the Sports Council for Wales which grant aids the relevant governing bodies and provides a national watersports centre at Plas Menai.

Mr. Jack: My hon. Friend will be aware of the excellent facilities for the promotion of water sports at the national watersports centre at Plas Menai. May I prevail on him to send a message to those concerned to look again at the financial arrangements for this excellent institution, which is used by many of my constituents and people from the north-west of England, and ensure that they have sufficient funding next year fully to exploit commercially the potential of this institution?

Mr. Grist: The attachment of my hon. Friend and his family to Plas Menai is well known to us. My hon. Friend will appreciate that the Sports Council for Wales received a grant in the current year of some £4,396,000, an increase of 6·1 per cent. over its previous grant. The council has been looking for some time at the financing of the centre at Plas Menai and the efficiency with which it carries out its work. At all times, it is looking for sponsorship and other forms of support for those sports that are not big money raisers.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Redundant Churches

31. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, what is the current policy of the Church Commissioners in respect of redundant churches.

Mr. Michael Alison (Second Church Estates Commissioner, Representing the Church Comissioners): The Commissioners' policy is governed by the Pastoral Measure 1983, which provides for the future of a redundant church to be settled by a suitable alternative use, by preservation by the redundant churches fund, by care and maintenance by the Diocesan Board of Finance or by demolition. The measure lays emphasis on finding a suitable alternative use for the church, if at all possible, and that is what is most commonly achieved.

Mr. Banks: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for that courteous reply. Does he share my concern about the fate of old organs—not, I hasten to add, those attached to old clerics but those fine musical instruments which are in many redundant churches and many churches generally and which do not get adequate protection? Is he aware that such historic organs as we have would be given protected status in most other European countries? Will he ask the Church Commissioners to conduct an inventory of all the organs in their areas of responsibility so that adequate protection can be extended to them?

Mr. Alison: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the interest that he takes in not only redundant churches but the valuable fixtures in them. Under any redundancy scheme, the bishop of a diocese has the decision on the final disposal of valuable fixtures. He is advised by an expert committee with a standard code of practice. Church organs are recognised as valuable. They are nearly always preserved or sold for use in other churches or in other historic buildings.

Publication Programme

32. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, if he will make a statement about the Church Commissioners' publication programme during the current year.

Mr. Alison: The Commissioners have produced a range of publications during 1989 including their report and accounts for 1988, the 17th report of the Central Stipends Authority and a brochure on commended entries for the parsonage design award competition.

Mr. Marshall: Will the Church Commissioners publish a commentary on the recent blatantly partisan declaration on poverty? Does such a commentary commend the massive increase in private giving since 1979, which shows that the parable of the good Samaritan is alive and well in Thatcherite Britain?

Mr. Alison: The declaration by the Church Action on Poverty group is not an official Church of England publication and the Commissioners have no responsibility for it. I agree with my hon. Friend that it is a robustly party political publication whose great weakness is to decry the alleged inadequacy of public expenditure while denouncing the basis of wealth creation in Britain through the social market economy which has to fund that public expenditure. My hon. Friend's point about charitable giving is well taken.

Mr. Sedgemore: Will the Church Commissioners publish a commentary on the report which the Archbishop of Canterbury is suppressing on homosexuality among priests?

Mr. Alison: The hon. Gentleman is referring to a report that is, I understand, under consideration by the Archbishop of Canterbury. It originates from the General Synod of the Church of England and I cannot, having no direct responsibility in that area, tell the hon. Gentleman what its future will be. No doubt the inquiry, which will be registered in the official report, will elicit a response of some sort, which I shall convey to the hon. Gentleman.

Financial Assistance

33. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, what financial assistance the Church Commissioners give to the cost of running *(a)* Lambeth palace and *(b)* the palace of the Bishop of Durham; what financial assistance is given to producing the speeches of prelates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alison: The Church Commissioners are wholly responsible for the housing of all diocesan bishops and for the provision of supporting staff. Lambeth palace and Auckland castle are listed grade 1 buildings. The total running costs of Lambeth palace are currently £1·4 million a year, 60 per cent. of which is office expenses, including the salaries of the 34 members of the Archbishop's headquarters staff. The costs of Auckland castle are £159,000 a year.

Mr. Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend believe that the Church Commissioners and Church members receive value for money from that enormous expenditure? Will he confirm that the Church Commissioners will press the Archbishop to suppress the report on homosexuality if, as is rumoured, it encourages the blessing of unions between gay and lesbian couples in church?

Mr. Alison: I have noted my hon. Friend's inquiry about the costs of running Lambeth palace and Auckland castle, the official residence of the Bishop of Durham. I hope that he will bear in mind that the Church of England bureaucracy is usually a great deal more frugal and financially efficient than the normal Civil Service bureaucracy's administration of public expenditure. On the second part of the question, I can add nothing to the reply that I have already given to a similar question.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Disabled Persons

35. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what percentage of the staff employed by the House on 1 November were then registered as disabled persons.

Mr. A. J. Beith (On behalf of the House of Commons Commission): The percentage of staff of the House registered as disabled at 1 November 1989 was 0·5 per cent. That figure does not include those disabled persons who work in the House, but who are employed by the Property Services Agency.

Mr. Hughes: Does my hon. Friend accept that that is an extremely low figure and that were we not exempt from the rules that apply to employers in general, we should be well below the minimum percentage of 3 per cent., which should be upheld by all employers? Will my hon. Friend tell the House what steps are being taken to increase that number substantially and quickly, not just at junior levels of employment in the House of Commons?

Mr. Beith: The Commission is not satisfied that the percentage is adequate and it is the Commission's policy to consider itself as if bound by the regulations, including the 3 per cent. quota, that apply throughout the general community. The vacancies that come up in the House are notified to local disablement resettlement officers and positive preference among candidates of equal merit is given to registered disabled people. Many advertisements for House of Commons posts make it clear that applications are welcomed from disabled people. Disablement is, of course, no bar to promotion in the House as long as the work of the post can be carried out.

House Sittings

36. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what savings the Commission would make if the House were to adopt hours of work which both started and finished earlier.

Mr. Beith: The total savings possible as a result of the House deciding to arrange its business so that it could start and finish earlier would depend on a number of factors such as the number of staff affected, the predictability of the duration of the sitting and the terms of any renegotiated conditions of service that might be necessary as a consequence. Those factors would be difficult to quantify.

Mr. Allen: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that as well as the House of Commons becoming more efficient if the hours were adjusted, it would be much cheaper to run? At present, we have to keep on the policemen, the door keepers, the catering staff and many others, often not knowing what the overtime bill will be, and all that is done to subsidise those hon. Members who work part time and who wish to keep a day job in the City or in business. Will the hon. Gentleman go back to the House of Commons Commission and find out the extent to which this House is subsidising those hon. Members?

Mr. Beith: There is a difference betwen different hours and shorter hours. If the House were simply to rearrange its hours into an earlier part of the day, there would not necessarily be as great a saving as the hon. Gentleman suggests, as the work that was done formerly in the early part of the day would still have to be carried out.

The hon. Gentleman must recognise that it is the job of the House to decide what hours it will sit and the job of the Commission to ensure that the House is adequately staffed. Some of the work carried out by our staff has to continue even when the House is not sitting, not least that concerned with security.

Mr. Latham: Will the hon. Gentleman disabuse the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) of the idea that the House begins work only at 2.30 pm? There are things called Standing Committees, and some of us have letters to answer. Will he also remind the hon. Gentleman of the evidence against this proposal in the experience of the late Richard Crossman, who started morning sittings which very soon collapsed?

Mr. Beith: The hon. Gentleman makes a fair point about the work that the staff of the House do, particularly during the mornings. The hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) could perhaps usefully bear in mind that the printing day by day on the Order Paper of his motions about the reform of the House—whatever their merits—is likely to be costing the House about £400 a week.

Mr. Allen: Cheap at the price.

Televising of Proceedings

37. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the honourable Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, if he has received any representations from staff involved in televising the House.

Mr. Beith: No representations have been received by the Commission in relation to those staff employed by the House. I understand, however, that representations have been made to the Supervisor of Broadcasting, and they are being dealt with.

Mr. Banks: Is the hon. Gentleman aware of the exceedingly cramped conditions that the staff who provide the excellent televising of the House have to endure? Is he prepared to sit down and discuss with representatives of the staff concerned the possibility of extending their facilities; and will he guarantee that when—I assume that it will be when—we get around to confirming the televising of the House, additional premises and accommodation will be found for them within the Palace of Westminster?

Mr. Beith: Few staff are employed directly by the House in broadcasting, but the staff from the various agencies who work hard to provide the television pictures are indeed accommodation in temporary conditions, and should the House decide to make the experiment permanent it would be a matter for the Services Committee to determine whether any improvements were required.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Procedure Reform

39. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make a statement on his assessment of the case for reform of the procedures of the House.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Sir Geoffrey Howe): Procedures are essentially a matter for the House as a whole. If the procedures appear to be failing in their purpose, we should be ready to consider change. The best forum for the initial consideration of such issues is the Procedure Committee. I, too, am always ready and willing to consider ideas for improvement.

Mr. Hughes: In the light of events in eastern Europe and of the move towards real democracy in which all these countries are setting up multi-party Governments and deciding that they do not want to follow many parts of our system, will the deputy Prime Minister consider that we shall not be a real democracy until we thoroughly reform nearly all the procedures of this House? We must sit at reasonable times and make sure that all parts of the United Kingdom have a proper chance to discuss their business. We must delegate when possible and, above all, all parties, in proportion to their size in the House, must have a proper chance to have their say in all debates and procedures on the Floor of the Chamber. When can we have real democracy in Britain, given that other countries can no longer look to us for an example?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It is not my function to respond to the hon. Gentleman's general political point, but I have visited every one of the countries belonging to the Warsaw pact in recent years and heard their views about our parliamentary system, and they have a much higher degree of admiration for it than does the hon. Gentleman.

Sir Charles Morrison: I am glad that my right hon. and learned Friend agrees that the Procedure Committee is the best forum for assessment of reform, but does he agree also that it comes forward with some excellent recommendations? Unfortunately, most of my right hon. and learned Friend's predecessors have not shown as much desire to accept its excellent recommendations as many hon. Members would have liked. Even more unfortunately, on some occasions some recommendations have not been accepted, not because they are not excellent but because the House is intensely conservative in its attitude to reform.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have described the Procedure Committee in carefully qualified language as the best forum for the initial consideration of such ideas, but I agree that it makes proposals that deserve careful consideration. I am glad that one of the first changes made since I assumed my present responsibility was the Sessional Order which varies the provisions of Standing Order No. 13 and which provides for an additional day for private Members' Bills, in so doing going beyond what the Procedure Committee recommended or expected.

Mr. Spearing: Does the Leader of the House agree that most hon. Members would agree with him that the Procedure Committee is the best forum for evidence and recommendations on those matters? In view of the speed up in institutional developments in the European Economic Community, will he also now consider the recommendations of the Procedure Committee in that respect which are surely now even more relevant than they were when the Committee began its investigation?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I certainly would have expected that question from the hon. Gentleman. The Government have already welcomed the Procedure Committee's report on matters affecting European issues. We recognise the importance of that and I shall be discussing it with my colleagues because the matter touches on many aspects of Government. We hope to respond to the Procedure Committee shortly. I agree with the hon. Gentleman about the importance of the issue that he raised.

Wines

40. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what English and French wines are available in House of Commons refreshment rooms; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Dining Rooms offer at present a range of 68 French and seven English wines. The red and white House wines available in the cafeterias and bars are both French. The full range is shown on the House of Commons wine list.

Mr. Greenway: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm the obvious—that much more French wine than English wine is sold in the House of Commons? Does he agree that that is because real English wines like elderberry, dandelion and parsnip are not available here? Will he take steps to make those English wines available in the House?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend's question comes from a very curious vintage. For every bottle of English wine sold in this place, some 40 bottles of French wine are sold. That is notwithstanding the fact that English wines are given special prominence on the wine list to promote their sale. In those circumstances, I do not think that I can find either the space or anything else to allow the promotion of the more exotic native brews that my hon. Friend recommends.

Procedure Reform

41. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what changes in procedure he is bringing forward in order to make the proceedings of the House more understandable *(a)* to hon. and right hon. Members and *(b)* to the television viewer.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have no plans at present, but I am always ready to consider such changes.

Mr. Allen: Will the Lord President consider improving the level of debates in this House by supporting the extension of a 10-minute limit on speeches and allowing Mr. Speaker to have discretion to operate that limit—excluding Front-Bench spokesmen—whenever he feels that that is appropriate in a debate? Will he also consider, as a way of improving debates, that as well as a 10-minute limit, time should be set aside—perhaps three or five minutes—for interventions when the clock would stop and hon. Members would not lose that time from their 10 minutes? At the moment many hon. Members simply read their speeches into the record. Would not my two proposals improve debates not simply for the television viewer, but for Back Benchers as well? Will the Lord President now add his weight to the proposals?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I can find more sympathy in the House for the relative simplicity of the hon. Gentleman's proposal than for the more complex arrangements that he visualises in his second proposal. It is open to the Procedure Committee to look again at the possibility of extending the scope for the 10-minute limitation. It is essentially a matter on which the views of the House as a whole must be taken into account. However, I can see the case for considering it.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Can the Leader of the House explain to right hon. and hon. Members and to the television viewer why our only opportunity to discuss the EEC budget will be from midnight tonight for about an hour and a half? Does he not believe that with the advance of television, many people will gain the impression that the attention that we give to EEC matters is a bit of a sick joke?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend will know that there is a question about that later on the Order Paper from which it will become clear that during the 1988-89 Session, the total amount of time devoted to European Community matters was some 90 hours. That is a very substantial allocation of time.

Dr. Cunningham: When the Leader of the House is considering ways in which to improve understanding of television broadcasts of our proceedings, will he bear the interests of deaf people very much in mind? I know that he is aware of the considerable pressure exerted not only by deaf people and the organisations that represent them but by Members of Parliament for subtitles to be included to make it easier for the deaf members of our communities to understand—and, we hope, enjoy—those television broadcasts. Will he consider how that might be achieved, and report back to us?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I can certainly give an affirmative answer to that question. The whole House will sympathise with the wishes of deaf people who would like to gain a better appreciation of what takes place here. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the Select Committee on Televising of Proceedings of the House is currently giving the matter active consideration. We are looking at evidence from both sides—that is, from both those who represent the deaf and those who represent the broadcasters—and we are taking the problem very seriously.

Mr. Tebbit: May I ask my right hon. and learned Friend not to underestimate the difficulty of persuading the broadcasting authorities to use subtitling for the deaf in any broadcasts? When I was chairman of the Conservative party and sought to persuade the BBC to allow subtitling for the deaf in party political broadcasts, the BBC opposed my suggestion bitterly, on the ground that the Labour party had made it first.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot undertake to achieve an arbitral conclusion to this important question that is compatible with the legitimate aspirations of my right hon. Friend, but we are discussing it with broadcasting organisations of both kinds. Both are showing an active interest, while at the same time drawing attention to legitimate difficulties.

Facilities (Visitors)

42. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he has any further statement to make with regard to providing improved facilities for visitors to the Houses of Parliament; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Arrangements have now been agreed with the other place to enable visitors to gain access to the line of route by the Sovereign's entrance. The screening facilities in the Norman Porch are to be duplicated to speed up the process. While awaiting admittance, visitors will be allowed to shelter beneath the archway of Victoria Tower. It is hoped that these arrangements will be in operation early next year. Other possible improvements are being considered by the Catering Sub-Committee.

Mr. Skinner: Ought not the Leader of the House and the sub-committee to agree that it would be a good idea to allow the thousands of people who visit the House every day to come into Westminster Hall to get out of the rain and other inclement conditions? They could wait there until called upon to move into the Central Lobby.

Would it not also be a good idea to allow those visitors proper catering facilities, instead of bothering about claret, dandelion and parsnip wines and all the rest? If there are to be 16 or 20 different rooms for Members of Parliament, surely it would not be a bad thing for the visitors who pay our wages to be able to get a cup of tea in this place.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I might have expected the hon. Gentleman, while making a legitimate point about the lack of shelter for visitors, to acknowledge the value of the changes that we have now been able to announce. He knows that many of the existing catering facilities are already under substantial pressure, but he will be glad to learn that the Catering Sub-Committee is considering possible ways of improving the arrangements, particularly when new opportunities may be presented on completion of phase I of the new buildings.

War Widows' Pensions

3.32 pm

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Tom King): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about war widows. The Government recognise the great strength of feeling that has been shown by Members of this House and of another place, and by so many throughout the country, in support of improving the position of the widows of members of the armed forces and others who gave their lives in the service of our country.

Previous Governments have sought to give special recognition to the position of war widows, and this Government in particular have steadily improved the pensions and allowances payable to them. The war widows' pensions, which are paid to all war widows, are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security. Quite apart from the 10 upratings over this period, in 1979 my right hon. Friend the Lord President, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, made the pensions completely tax free. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security has already announced that the amount of those pensions that is not counted in assessing income-related benefits will be further increased.

At the same time, the structure and the value of age allowances have been significantly improved, and my right hon. Friend has already announced a further real improvement, especially for the war widows over 80, to take effect next April. These improvements have helped the vast majority of pre-1973 war widows, who are aged 65 or over. In addition, war widows who have paid national insurance contributions are uniquely entitled to receive a retirement pension, based on those contributions, in addition to their pensions as war widows.

The armed forces pension scheme, which is the responsibility of my Department, and to which significant improvements were made in 1973, provides an occupational pension scheme for service personnel. This scheme also includes a provision for widows. Although the scheme is formally described as non-contributory, it in fact involves an effective contribution from a service man's salary. This is the adjustment made by the Armed Forces Pay Review Body on an annual basis as part of the process of recommending pay levels for service personnel, which is currently equivalent to a deduction in pay of 10 per cent. Occupational pension schemes of different kinds cover a vast number in the public service—including about 2 million pensioners—and it is clearly not possible to apply restrospectively the benefits of improved schemes to those whose husbands were never members of them. There will therefore be no change to the armed forces pension scheme.

The Government have, however, taken full note of those who have argued strongly that much more should be done to improve the income of those earlier war widows who cannot benefit from the later pension schemes, and have been giving urgent attention to how best this could be done. The Government accordingly propose to bring forward arrangements which will be implemented, along with the other improvements to which I have already referred, in April next year, to give the pre-1973 widows a new special payment of £40 a week. This additional payment will be entirely free of tax. Further, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security will be taking steps to ensure that this whole sum is not counted for the purposes of calculating income-related benefits. Both these advantages do not in fact apply to the armed forces pension scheme. The new scheme will cover all those currently eligible to receive benefits under the pre-1973 war pension scheme, and will be administered by the Department of Social Security on behalf of the Ministry of Defence.

The payment proposed will be increased in line with the normal annual uprating. The cost of these proposals is some £110 million in the first year, which will be met from the reserve, within the public expenditure planning totals announced in the Autumn Statement.

The Government recognise the very special place that these widows hold in the affections of this country and the particular debt which we all owe them and the strong feeling of many Members of both Houses and the public throughout the country that they should be treated as a quite exceptional and distinctive case. I believe that the proposals that I have announced today are a proper and fair response to that public interest and concern, and a genuine recognition to those whose husbands gave their lives for our country.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): I am sure that hon. Members of all parties will welcome today's response to the financial problems experienced by war widows.

This is a major, although acceptable, U-turn. Only two weeks ago, on 23 November, in an Adjournment debate called by my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), the Minister of State for the Armed Forces firmly ruled out any concessions on this matter when he stated that it was unlikely that there would be any change in Government policy.

We recognise that pressure from the public, from the many war widows' organisations and from hon. Members of all parties has led the Government to re-examine the case for improving the lot of pre-1973 war widows. The nation owes a special debt to the widows of those men who gave their lives in the service of their country. They brought up families and carried a burden through the hardest years of their life, often alone. They are now in their old age and extreme old age, Christmas is approaching, and it is important that the major problem has at long last been recognised.

Have the Government accepted the principle that an injustice exists by adding an arbitrary block date within the existing rules? Will the Secretary of State confirm that the increase will be a net increase for all elderly war widows, and in his summary will he give a comparison of United Kingdom war widows' pensions with those of war widows in other countries?

Today's statement still leaves many thousands of widows below parity with those widowed after 1973. Will the Secretary of State come to the House with further proposals some time in the near future? That is the least that he can promise to do for those women who have suffered so much over the years, especially as it is so near to Christmas.

Mr. King: I appreciate the general welcome that the hon. Member gave to the statement, and I am conscious of the anxiety of all right hon. and hon. Members about the issue. I do not accept that we have made a U-turn.

[Mr. King]

Throughout their period in office the Government have made steady progress in improving the situation for war widows, and I am proud of what we have done.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the stance of my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces. All right hon. and hon. Members realise the difficulty one faces as a Minister when one is aware that a matter is under consideration, but one has to maintain the line until a statement is made. My hon. Friend has taken a considerable amount of flak during that period, and the House should know the true facts.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned the arbitrary block date. I have heard other phrases, and I have heard that referred to as a technical bureaucratic rule. Everyone in industry or any organisation throughout the country is familiar with the problem that, when a new pension scheme is introduced—we had a similar problem in a company that I was involved in—existing pensioners are not able to enjoy the benefits of the new scheme. One seeks to make available to them, through ex gratia payments, some of the financial advantages that they have lost, and that is what we have sought to do.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Speaking as the chairman of the all-party group for pre-1973 war widows, I thank my right hon. Friend and the Government for their unique gesture. My right hon. Friend has answered every request we made. On behalf of all pre-1973 war widows, I say that the Government's action is greatly appreciated and that we are indebted to the Government.

Mr. King: I am well aware of the close interest and the active part that my hon. Friend has taken in the matter. He wanted a significant and substantial increase in pension provisions, and I hope that he feels that that is what I have announced today. I commend the provisions to the House.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): In welcoming the improvement for elderly war widows, can I ask the Minister about the crucially important change that was made in the 1973 scheme in June 1988? That change made the higher pension paid to post-1973 widows non-contributory in that, even if their husbands opted out of the 1973 scheme, their entitlement to the higher widows' pensions is not affected. Does that not destroy the argument that there has been no change since the 1970s? Is the Secretary of State aware, on present calculations, that 1,200 war widows whose husbands died in the two world wars will die before next April? Can he help them at all?

Mr. King: The first matter that the right hon. Gentleman raised—I have heard him mention it in other quarters and on the radio—is wrong. Deductions are made in the assessment of the rate of pay. That means that even if some men opted out, it was only just that their widows should continue to be included in the scheme because, effectively, they continued to make their contributions. A unique feature of the scheme is that, even if people had opted out, they could not reduce the contribution that they were assessed to make.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security has done something which I think the whole House recognises is hugely important. My right hon. Friend intends to ensure that war widows do not receive with one hand and lose with the other. That is a crucial feature of the arrangement. It will involve a certain amount of work and consultation with local authorities to ensure that, when people declare their income for community charge or housing benefit purposes, they understand that they do not have to declare this additional special payment. While one might have hoped for things to be different, the overall package should commend itself to the House.

Mr. Michael Mates (Hampshire, East): Does my right hon. Friend agree that there will be widespread rejoicing that the Government have acted quickly, fairly and generously, given the justice of the cause which was giving us the problem? Will my right hon. Friend assure those who may still think that the settlement is not what it should be because he has not conceded parity—for technical reasons, which many of us understand? Will he assure us that the scheme with regard to tax and benefit disregards will mean that the most needy pre-1973 war widows will be as well off as, if not better off than, post-1973 widows?

Mr. King: I agree with the latter part of my hon. Friend's question, although it depends on housing costs. The sum will be disregarded from housing benefit, and tax free. A younger war widow of the pre-1973 group is bound under these proposals to get £100 on which she will pay not a single penny of tax. In addition to this £40 disregard, there will be another £10 as a result of changes that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security is making in April. One of the older widows who also receives an old-age pension will get close to £170, on my assessment, which is subject to no tax at all.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): I am sure that the Secretary of State agrees that the group of people whom these proposals are intended to benefit have behaved in an entirely dignified way throughout the campaign which has been waged on their behalf. I have no doubt that they will welcome these proposals, as do I. May we take it that the Secretary of State will ensure that these arrangements will be kept under constant review and that, if it is thought that there is any deterioration for any external reason, the Secretary of State, or his successor, will be willing to consider similar recognition of the special place these ladies have in the affections of the people of the United Kingdom?

Mr. King: I am grateful to the hon. and learned Member. War widows will continue to be entitled to various other benefits in appropriate circumstances. I believe that this announcement makes a significant contribution. This extra special payment will be subject to uprating. I hope that, with increases in age allowance, which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security has already announced, and the disregards that I have announced, these people will be much better placed.

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is a close analogy between pre-1973 war widows and those who were not allowed to contribute to the national insurance scheme when it was introduced because they were too old? As a previous Conservative Government should be proud of having helped non-pensioners in the circumstances I have described, so my right hon. Friend and the Government should be proud of what they have announced today.

Mr. King: I know of my right hon. Friend's interest in this matter and I am grateful for what he said.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): I warmly welcome the statement. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that he has just demolished the case of his predecessor, who argued that ex-service men and women who were disabled due to negligence before 1987 could not be helped because the legislation of that year, which enabled such people to sue for negligence, was not retrospective? The Secretary of State has today accepted the principle of retrospection. As those men and women helped others, will he consider doing what he can to help them and to give them a special payment?

Mr. King: I do not accept what the right hon Gentleman says, I made it clear in my statement that retrospection was not a possibility but that we were anxious to do something to help what the whole House has agreed and so many campaigning on this issue have promoted as a uniquely deserving category. In the presentation of their case the special position of war widows was underlined, and it was on that basis that the Government felt able to act.

Mr. Peter Viggers (Gosport): I thank my right hon. Friend warmly for the statement, which will bring great satisfaction in the country and a greater sense of dignity to the ladies involved. Does he agree that the campaign on their behalf was, rightly, all-party and non-party? Does he further agree that we on the Conservative Benches can take a greater sense of pride that we have found the money to act and show recognition of those who died and their widows?

Mr. King: That is correct. I said in my statement that the campaign and the cause have been supported throughout the House, in another place and throughout the country. It is only because of the strength of the economy and of the Exchequer that we are able to take action. No one in his right mind would dream for a moment that, whatever their good intentions, Opposition Members would ever be in a position to make an equivalent statement.

Mrs. Rosie Barnes (Greenwich): I warmly welcome the Government's change of heart towards pre-1973 war widows. However, several anomalies and disparities still exist between pre-1973 and post-1973 widows. Will the Secretary of State clarify whether the Government are committed in principle and in practice, and by whatever means, to complete equality between the two groups?

Mr. King: I am afraid that the hon. Lady did not understand my statement. If by "equality" she means retrospection of the armed forces pension scheme, I made it clear that that is not possible. However, we have sought to embrace a slightly wider group. My hon. Friends may be interested to know that the special payments will be available to more people than those who technically would have qualified for retrospection of the armed forces pension scheme. The scheme will include the widows of merchant seamen and some in the civil defence who lost their lives in the war. There are differences because the payment will be tax free and will not count against benefits. In view of the impossibility of retrospection, the arrangements are the most viable that could be made.

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): I, too, congratulate my right hon. Friend on his caring and sympathetic attitude on this matter as soon as he became aware of the full facts of the case. Will he confirm that he has made war widows a special case because he was aware that so many men who died did so as volunteers or conscripts and clearly did not have the resources to make provision for their wives and families and that is why we needed to treat war widows as a special case?

Mr. King: I recognise my hon. Friend's active and energetic participation in the campaign. I agree with him, and I said in my statement, that we consider war widows as a special case. To quote the Officers Pension Society,

> "No other group could claim the special nature of the debt of honour."

We believe that that is right, and that is why we have taken action.

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): Now that the Secretary of State and his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security are prepared to make pension adjustments for a wider range of those penalised by war, will he look at those disabled in the second world war? I should perhaps declare an interest, and I hope that the Secretary of State will accept that it is not a special plea. I have had personal acquaintance with and knowledge of many tragic cases of war widows. Will the right hon. Gentleman undertake to consider carefully the wider gap that is opening up between the second world war disability pensioners and those categories that all hon. Members have been so concerned about today?

Mr. King: The difficulty in and obstacle to making any improvement in a scheme or arrangement is often the anxiety about how much more widely the change may spread. That was undoubtedly an obstacle to the improvement in the position of pre-1973 war widows. The right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) said that the top priority of the ex-services' organisations was proper financial provision for elderly war widows. Others also emphasised that. That is the only basis on which I have been able to make this announcement today.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must have regard to the subsequent business before the House. It is an important debate in which many hon. Members wish to speak, so I shall take three further questions from each side. Then, regrettably, we must move on.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): Is my right hon. Friend aware that those of us who take a close and special interest in the conditions of the armed services, especially the widows of those who served in the armed forces, are grateful to him for taking this problem under his wing so soon after assuming the office of Secretary of State for Defence? I am sure that both sides of the House agree that he has gone through a difficult exercise trying to preserve a balance between one group and another and that he has emerged with credit to his office and the Government.

Mr. King: I appreciate my hon. Friend's kind words. I am not sure that I took the matter under my wing so much as had it shoved forcibly there by many right hon. and hon. Members. Those of us who have been working on this in the Department, especially the Ministers of State and

[Mr. King]

Under-Secretaries of State, are aware of the assistance we have received from my hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security and, never to be forgotten, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): I welcome the increase. May I declare an interest? I am a war pensioner, my mother who came into this category and was nearly 90, died recently, and I am an honorary adviser to the British Legion. When I go to ex-service men's conferences, I do not find them to be as partisan or advantage-seeking as many hon. Members whom I have heard today. These are complicated matters.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy) asked about the disabled. Is it not time that we had, as they have in Europe and the United States, a department of ex-service men's affairs, instead of their affairs being split between about 11 Departments? Unless the Prime Minister steps in and knocks everybody's heads together, as in this instance, nothing is done. There is a case for a Department that looks after the interests of ex-service men.

The number of war widows who will be dead before next April is large. That is the nature of life. Could the increase be introduced more quickly? Could the bureaucracy be speeded up, as it has been in the past fortnight, so that war widows would not have to wait until next April?

Mr. King: I note what the right hon. Gentleman says from his personal and, obviously, intimate experience of the problem. I cannot add anything to what I said about the problem of the date. The right hon. Gentleman suggested that heads were clashed together. I think that the Prime Minister would give me authority to say that one or two others were equally anxious about the problem.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): In welcoming my right hon. Friend's extremely positive statement, which does so much to repay the great debt we owe to war widows and their dead husbands, may I suggest that a reason why the Government found it possible to make this unusual and generous offer was precisely because several other groups, including BLESMA, which represents the war disabled, generously and disinterestedly made statements promising that they would not try to climb on the bandwagon if something special was done for the war widows?

Mr. King: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He has made a very important point. Those who promoted the cause of war widows, and many other organisations, made it clear that this was a unique case. It was against that background that it has been possible to make the statement.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): On behalf of the Scottish and Welsh National parties, I thank the Secretary of State for his positive and most welcome statement. I pay tribute to those organisations outwith this place who have consistently and honourably fought in the campaign. Will it be possible for the right hon. Gentleman's Department to publish a table that is similar to the one circulated by his ministerial colleague on 28 November so that hon. Members are able to study closely the significance of disregards and tax allowances? All of us are interested in how close the parity between pre-1973 and post-1973 war widows will be.

Mr. King: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for what she has said. However, it will be difficult to do that; it will depend on individual circumstances: on whether the £40 not being taken into account for housing benefit and community charge will affect their cost of living and what advantage they will gain from the increase. However, I shall consider what the hon. Lady has said and see what we can do to help.

Mr. Churchill (Davyhulme): I warmly congratulate my right hon. Friend and the Government on the statement. Will he accept no carping or criticism from Opposition Members who had an opportunity to acquit this debt to war widows, but did not choose to avail themselves of it? His announcement will go far towards acquitting that debt of honour to those who laid down their lives for our freedom and to their widows who have suffered for a lifetime since then.

Mr. King: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He takes a keen interest in the issue. I hope that it will be seen as a very real response to people who deserve our interest.

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): I thank the Secretary of State for the real progress that he has made in finding a solution to the problem. I ask him not to dismiss the idea that the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) advanced. His package is extremely complex and will depend on individual circumstances. An illustrative table would help us to judge the basis of the award.

The Department's expenditure on war widows fell by £25 million in the last financial year. The number will continue to fall as many of these ladies die. The problem will therefore, unfortunately, eventually solve itself. Will the Secretary of State undertake to re-examine whether, within the expenditure constraints, he could achieve complete parity without breaching pension regulations for the armed forces?

Mr. King: I am aware of the interest that the hon. Gentleman has taken in the matter and the early-day motion in which he is very much involved. He referred to my announcement as a complicated one. It is not complicated at all; it is extremely simple. The complexities arise from the circumstances of the people to whom it applies. We shall certainly do what we can to help; but even if we produced illustrative examples, I think that I am right in saying that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security does not have information on how many would fall into the individual categories. We shall do what we can to help, but that will be one of the problems.

Hong Kong (Chinese People)

4.3 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I beg to ask leave to move the adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

> "The Government's intention to give settlement rights to between 150,000 and 200,000 Hong Kong Chinese as set out in yesterday's *Observer*."

It is a massive number of people, which is sufficient to populate a town the size of Northampton. It is an urgent matter, for in the past whenever Governments have given commitments, Parliament has been unable to uncommit. Therefore, it is vital that the views of our people are clearly made known before any decision is taken, particularly as immigration policy is driven initially by the needs of foreign policy rather than the desires of our citizens. Perhaps it is easier to confront the censored censure of the electorate once every four years than the hypocritical hostility of less-worthy Governments on a daily basis.

We need to debate whether the figure of 200,000 is for primary immigration alone and what are the future rights of unknown quantities of potential dependants. Will individual decisions be based on administrative discretion or will a panoply of rights and appeal procedures be attached? In all these cases the initial figures could be massively exceeded.

Vast areas of our inner cities have already been colonised by alien peoples with little commitment to our country or our way of life. The recent reactions to Salman Rushdie should make that plain even to the Opposition. Should we not urgently debate the extent to which our multicultural experiment has succeeded before deciding whether it is prudent to extend it?

There may be little blood flowing in the Tiber yet, but all the most likely scenarios are filled with great foreboding. Ulster could be but a skirmish compared with the holocaust that could follow. Surely it would be a massive error further to aggravate the delicate balance of our society—*[Interruption.]* Surely that is something which we know our people in their good sense do not want. We must listen to them.—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has as much right as anyone else in the House to make his speech.

Mr. Marlow: It is easy to sign the cheque today, knowing that the bill will become payable much later. It is easy, but it is cowardly and irresponsible. We need an urgent debate.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) seeks leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

> "the Government's intention to give settlement rights to 150,000 to 200,000 Hong Kong Chinese as set out in yesterday's *Observer*."

As the House knows, under Standing Order No. 20 I have to announce my decision without giving my reasons to the House.

I have listened with care to what the hon. Member has said. I have to decide whether his application comes within the Standing Order, and, if so, whether I should give it precedence over the business set down for today or tomorrow. I regret that the matter that he has raised does not meet the requirements of the Standing Order, and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: No. I have a further application under Standing Order No. 20.

Steel Making (Scotland)

4.7 pm

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

> "The future of steel making in Scotland in the light of British Steel's impending decisions on plate mill capacity."

In a letter to a Mr. Lawson, published last Friday, Martin Llowach chief executive of the British Steel Corporation cast doubt on the viability of British Steel's two plate mills at Scunthorpe and at Dalzell in my constituency. He said that the plate business is a vital component of the company's concentration on and success in structural steels. He said that capital costs for entirely new mills are extremely high, and that British Steel had supported the acquisition by Davy McKee of an existing plant from abroad. That plant from Japan is now stored in the Teesside works of British Steel.

When the privatisation of British Steel was announced in the House on 3 December 1987, the then Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster said that the chairman of British Steel had that day made a statement saying that

> "subject to market conditions, there will continue to be a commercial requirement for steel making"—

and continuous casting at the corporation's five major plants—

> "for at least the next seven years. The corporation also expects that, again subject to commercial considerations, there will be a similar requirement for plate rolling at Dalzell."—[*Official Report*, 3 December 1987; Vol. 123, c. 1107.]

That statement has been quoted several times by Ministers as an undertaking—even a solemn undertaking—and it was included in British Steel's privatisation prospectus. It was not a lightly made statement. Those seven years run to 1994. Does the statement still stand?

British Steel has thrown the steel industry in Scotland into great uncertainty. The suggestion of an independent steel industry in Scotland is nonsensical without finishing mills or markets. My steel worker constituents and their families have no wish to be treated as political footballs, but Ministers and British Steel owe the House an explanation of what is going on, and the House should debate the matter urgently before British Steel goes any further.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

> "the future of steel making in Scotland in the light of British Steel's impending decisions on plate mill capacity."

I have listened with care to what the hon. Gentleman has said, but I regret that I must give the same answer as I gave the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow). I regret that his submission does not meet the requirements of the Standing Order. I therefore cannot submit his application to the House.

Points of Order

4.12 pm

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Over the weekend, the total failure of the Prime Minister's policy on Europe became cruelly apparent, and she moved this country to the brink of isolation in Europe. Is it not an abuse of the House, and typical of the contempt in which she holds it, that the Prime Minister is not prepared to address it this afternoon, but will seek to do so tomorrow, after our key European debate this evening? Is it not a matter of the gravest concern that this issue, which is so important to our nation, will not be debated or voted on this week or probably before Christmas because of the conspiracy of agreement between the two Front Benches? As this matter is not amenable to an application under Standing Order No. 20, may I seek your advice, Mr. Speaker, on how it could be debated and voted on before it is too late?

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Gentleman knows that I am not responsible for the timing of statements, but I understand that the Prime Minister is to make a statement on the matter tomorrow. I am sure that what he said about the debate will have been heard by those on the Front Bench, but, again, the arrangement of such a debate is not a matter for me.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Page 129 of "Erskine May" refers to improper but indirect attempts to influence Members. Having considered this, is there not clearly a case of privilege to be answered when an hon. Member feels it necessary to consider resigning and fighting a by-election because of the undue and overmightly influence of the same trade union block vote that sponsors the Leader of the Opposition?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman mentioned the word "privilege." If he alleges that this is indeed a matter of privilege, he must write to me in the usual way and I shall deal with it. I cannot deal with it on the Floor of the House.

Mr. Riddick: I accept that, but, through you, Mr. Speaker, may I offer the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) my support and help in his fight to retain his seat?

Mr. Speaker: I am sure that the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) will be grateful for the hon. Gentleman's support.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Arising out of questions, may I raise a domestic House of Commons matter of some little consequence—the powers, authority and job of the House of Commons Commission? Question No. 47, about which I have been writing to you, Mr. Speaker, the Department of the Environment and others for over two years, on the truly disgraceful state of the Font in Welsh marble and its deteriorating stonework has been accepted by the Table Office. It is embarrassing to take knowledgeable visitors to see the fabric of the House of Commons and to find that the stone is crumbling. I know that there are complications involving the bomb that dropped in the 1940s and the destabilising of the Crypt floor.

Is this not a matter for the House of Commons Commission? The Table Office took the view that it was. I am not quibbling about not being called at Question Time. I am making the point that it is about time the Speaker of the House of Commons put his weight behind doing something about our building.

Mr. Speaker: I do not know whether the hon. Member has received the letter that I wrote to him on 8 December.

Mr. Dalyell *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Speaker: Evidently the hon. Member has not received that letter. When he does so, I think that he will understand why his question was transferred. However, in my letter I said that I shared his concern. I have a family christening in the Crypt Chapel next week and, bearing in mind what the hon. Member has said, I shall look carefully at the Font.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will know that from time to time the Opposition complain about Ministers making statements outside the House rather than to the House. I understand that a statement was to be made at 4 o'clock by the Leader of the Opposition on the matter which was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick), referring to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field). This is a matter of keen constitutional importance to all Members. I wonder whether some way can be found to change the procedures of the House so that the Leader of the Opposition can make a statement to the House and we can question him about it.

Mr. Speaker: That is as may be, but it is not a matter of order in the House.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that we have a very busy day ahead of us.

Mr. Skinner: I thought that I saw you wince when the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) submitted his Standing Order No. 20 application and spoke about the incitement of racial hatred. When Conservative Members want to stir up racial hatred, I wonder whether you could provide these members of the goose-stepping tendency with a pair of jackboots. They could be kept with the opera hat which is with the Serjeant at Arms. In that way, hon. Members could dress properly for the occasion and the viewers would know what they were up to.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I shall take the point of order because the hon. Member was mentioned.

Mr. Marlow: I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) feels that it is wrong for a Member to put forward the views that he knows are held by the majority of his constituents. If that is his position, let the hon. Gentleman tell his constituency about it, because my constituents would rather have my views.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps I can clear up the matter. Every Member has a right to make his speech in his own way. We often have to listen to speeches with which we may not wholly agree. The hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) has a right to make his submission, and he has done so.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I will put together the two motions relating to the statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft Driving Licences (Community Driving Licence) Regulations 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft European Communities (Definition of Treaties) (European School) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

Orders of the Day

National Health Service and Community Care Bill

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [7 December], That the Bill be now read a Second Time.

Question again proposed.

[Relevant documents: Eighth Report from the Social Services Committee, Session, 1988-89, Resourcing the National Health Service: the Government's plans for the future of the National Health Service, (House of Commons Paper No. 214-III, 1988-89), the Government's reply to that Report (Cm. 851), the Second Report from the Social Services Committee, Session 1984-85, Community Care with special reference to adult mentally ill and mentally handicapped people (House of Commons Paper No. 13-I 1984-85), the Government's reply to that Report (Cmnd. 9674), Community Care: Agenda for Action (1988 HMSO), and the White Paper Caring for People: Community Care in the next decade and beyong (Cm. 849).]

Mr. Speaker: I must announce to the House that I have not selected the amendment in the name of the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), but the arguments that are advanced in that amendment can, of course, be made in the debate.

I must repeat what I have said: a large number of hon. Members wish to participate. I therefore propose to put a limit of 10 minutes on speeches between 6 and 8 o'clock. The hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) raised a point about the time limit on speeches, but I have no authority to limit speeches to 10 minutes before 8 o'clock. Nevertheless, I hope that hon. Members who are called before and after that time will bear that limit in mind so that more hon. Members may be called to put their points of view.

4.18 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): Today is the second day of debate on the Bill. Before I address myself to the major issues that are covered by the legislation, I want to report to the House a welcome development on the position of doctors in the rural and more sparsely populated parts of Scotland of which, I believe, the House will approve. In the White Paper "Working for Patients", the Government gave a guarantee that they would seek to protect the position of such doctors, and that has been a priority for us.

The new general practitioner contract already includes a transitional payments scheme which will help small practices to adjust to their new circumstances. However, the evidence that the Department of Health submitted to the doctors' and dentists' review body last week also stated that I intended to fulfil the undertaking given in chapter 10 of the White Paper by funding from Scottish block resources a scheme analogous to the transitional payments scheme, but on a long-term basis. Scottish doctors who are normally eligible for rural practice payments and who fulfil the obligations of the contract will have their level of income protected under the new contract. As a matter of practical convenience, the fund will be administered by the Scottish rural practices fund committee as the body best placed to ensure that the payments are targeted to doctors who are entitled to receive them. I understand that the proposal has been welcomed by the British Medical Association and I am sure that it will be welcomed by the House as a whole.

I want to begin by giving what I hope will be seen as friendly advice to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), who will speak on behalf of the Opposition. On a previous occasion, he expressed some criticism of the fact that the Government's Scottish proposals are incorporated in a Great Britain Bill. I advise him, in the friendliest way, not to pursue that line of reasoning. If he does, he should bear in mind that in the 40 years since the National Health Service was founded, no fewer than 13 Bills affecting it have applied throughout Great Britain as a whole and only three, including a consolidation measure, have dealt with specific aspects in Scotland. As the Government's proposals apply throughout Great Britain, this is the proper approach to take.

Two debates are taking place in the House and in the country on the Government's National Health Service proposals. There is a bogus debate and a real debate. It is appropriate to address myself to both issues and I shall start with the bogus debate because I know that Opposition Members will be more interested in it as it dominates their thinking on the matter.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Rifkind: I hope that the hon. Lady will allow me to continue for a moment.

The bogus debate has taken three forms. It was begun by an assertion that the Government were seeking to destroy the NHS. It was then claimed that the Government's proposals were intended to lead to a reduction in NHS funding and, finally, it was suggested that the Government were putting profit before people and were seeking to commercialise the NHS. Let us address the evidence and see what justification those arguments have.

In its submission to the Government, the BMA states categorically that, in its view, the Government's proposals will

> "destroy the comprehensive nature of the existing service."

The Labour party, in a document produced by the hon. Members for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) and for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith), stated that the Government's proposals represent "opting out" of the NHS. The National and Local Government Officers Association, in its—as usual—constructive contribution to the NHS debate, suggested that the Government are proposing the "break-up" of the NHS. It is a compliment to the Government in a sense that, as the critics are unable to direct their attention and concern to the contents of the White Paper and of the Bill, they seek to divert attention from those matters by referring to matters that have never been the Government's intention.

One simply needs to quote from the White Paper, which says categorically and unequivocally:

> "The NHS is, and will continue to be, open to all, regardless of income, and financed mainly out of general taxation."

Those are the principles on which the NHS is based and on which it will continue to be based. The first assertion—that we intend to destroy the NHS—is of such manifest absurdity as not to justify further attention by the House.

No less a body than the BMA then suggested that the Government sought to reduce the funding of the NHS. In paragraph 2.4 of its submission, the BMA said:

> "The Government's main proposals would appear to be to contain and reduce the level of public expenditure devoted to health care."

That is a serious allegation from the BMA. I say to the BMA and to those who think similarly that when one puts forward such a proposition, it is proper to judge matters not by what people say, but by what they do. The achievements of the Government over the past decade make the falsity of that accusation undeniable.

Over the past 10 years no fewer than 67,000 more nurses have been working in the NHS; no fewer than 14,000 more doctors have been working in it; and expenditure on the Health Service has risen from £8 billion in 1979 to about £26 billion. Before I give way to the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing), I want to give her a Scottish aspect to this discussion. In 1979 expenditure on the NHS for every man, woman and child in Scotland was about £385 which, in today's prices on a common price basis, has risen to £509. I hope that when I give way to her she will concede that that represents a fundamental and real increase in the resources available to the NHS. I hope that if she is as fair about that as she would wish to be seen to be, she will happily acknowledge the point.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: The Secretary of State has raised so many points that it is difficult to include them all in a short intervention.

There is a difference between funding and meeting the task that lies ahead. The requirements in Scotland are so extensive that we shall need to examine the NHS budget carefully. I welcome what the right hon. and learned Gentleman said about rural practices, but what provision has been made for part-time women doctors in practices? What provision is being made for state-enrolled nurses who want to take bridging courses to meet the requirements of Project 2000? If these nurses do not want to take bridging courses, what provision will be made to safeguard their contracts?

Mr. Rifkind: I thank the hon. Lady for her welcome for my earlier remarks. We recognise the importance of those who want to work part time in the NHS—particularly female doctors and other female members of staff. For the first time a part-time contract is now available to them, and I am sure that the hon. Lady will welcome that.

The third assertion to which I referred some moments ago was the claim that the Government somehow want to put profit before people or, in the quaint phrase used by the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) on Thursday, that we are seeking to commercialise the NHS. I presume that he was not suggesting that we are seeking to obtain value for money—no: the implication of his remarks was that the Government see the NHS as a profit-making body, or believe that it should become one, working in a commercial way without giving priority to the needs of patients.

I hope that the hon. Member for Garscadden will not associate himself with such a foolish argument. If the Government wanted to put profit before people they would hardly have brought forward these proposals, fundamental to which is the idea that any resources saved by a general practice budget will remain with the general practice to improve the quality of its service, and that any savings obtained by an NHS hospital trust will be reinvested in that hospital for the benefit of its patients. In no circumstances can the Treasury or any doctor obtain financial benefit as a consequence of these changes. That adequately meets the point about the Government's priorities.

The bogus debate should not detain the House for more than a few moments, so I turn to the real issue that should attract the attention of the House and the country. The real issue in the NHS debate of the past few months is simple and straightforward. It is how, in a modern society, we should administer the vast resources—the £26 billion or £27 billion—that are required to run the NHS. Can we continue to administer it in a centralised bureaucratic way, or can we, through the benefits of modern information technology, adopt a decentralised method of administration for the benefit of the patients whom the NHS exists to serve?

In addition, we must examine the origins of the NHS and how it was administered when it was first set up. At the time of its inception some 40 years ago there was a basic belief, no doubt sincerely held, in the virtues of central planning and of a benign bureaucracy. There was undoubtedly a widespread belief, perhaps extending beyond the Labour party at the time, that the best way to administer resources of that scale was through a form of rigid, centralised planning which would then feed its way through the system to the benefit of the public as a whole. We did not see that approach only in the NHS; it was evident in various other sectors of the economy and our society. It was reflected in the great nationalised industry legislation of the Attlee Government. The assumption was that there should be nationalisation and many small concerns should be brought together into massive conglomerations and that would achieve the best use of resources. That view was shared in western and eastern Europe as well.

The hon. Member for Garscadden and his colleagues should appreciate that a structure established 40 years ago does not necessarily make sense in the dramatically changed circumstances in the 1980s and 1990s.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Does the Secretary of State accept that his Government have reorganised the NHS twice since then?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Lady is quite correct. Of course there have been changes. However, even today we still have an essentially centralised system administering vast resources. The Government have realised that we must change constantly as circumstances change and it is unfortunate that the Labour party appears to be caught in a timewarp and is attached to a system of administration of the resources which might have been relevant 40 years ago, but is certainly not relevant to the vast sums of money and the vastly changing circumstances at the moment.

It is also sad that the BMA, with its particular involvement in the NHS, should remain so resistant to change. It is resistant not because it is caught in a timewarp, but because it has a fundamental antipathy to change. The BMA opposed the NHS 40 years ago because setting up the NHS represented change. It opposes the Government's proposals today because they also represent change and that is something it cannot come to terms with.

If we consider the way in which circumstances have changed over the past 40 years, I do not believe that Labour Members can seriously suggest that we should not

[Mr. Rifkind]

take cognisance of those changes. We have seen a vast increase in resources dating back 40 years. When the NHS was first formed, the expenditure in 1948 was £270 million for the whole of the NHS. Today it is £26 billion. Even taking account of inflation over the past 40 years we have seen an increase in real terms under both Conservative and Labour Governments of 610 per cent. It beggars imagination to suggest that the system of administration of such vast resources can remain untouched by those changes.

It is not simply the scale of resources that has changed. In this country and elsewhere we have also seen a growing disillusionment with central planning and central control as a means of administering resources and getting the best benefit from the way in which we run the NHS. New information technology also offers an exciting opportunity. If we had wanted to decentralise control and the administration of NHS resources in the past, there would have been grave practical limitations on our ability to do that. Hospitals and health authorities did not have the information and could not have been expected to obtain information essential to making rational decisions between different priorities for resources.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): If it was so evident to everyone that changes had to be made along the lines that the Government are now proposing, why did the Government make no mention of the proposition in their election promises to the country?

Mr. Rifkind: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, the scale of the resources has increased as the years have passed. If he wants to accuse us of being a little tardy in approaching the need for reform, perhaps we will plead guilty to that. However, the right hon. Gentleman should at least appreciate that the Government are serious in their attempt to ensure that resources are used for the maximum benefit of patients.

Perhaps the greatest single change since the inception of the NHS has been the extent to which both sides of the House now emphasise the virtue and importance of choice for patients as a crucial requirement for the way in which the system should be administered.

Dr. Lewis Moonie (Kirkcaldy): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Rifkind: I will develop this point and then I will happily give way to the hon. Gentleman.

I am glad that the hon. Member for Garscadden agrees with me that the desire for choice has now been represented as common to the views of both sides of the House. In its document "Patients First", a discussion document on the NHS in Scotland, the Labour party actually goes so far as to say, in the most eloquent terms:

> "The National Health Service should provide patients with treatment when they want it, where they want it, by whom they want it, and in suitable surroundings. In other words, choice. This choice must be available to all, and free at the time of need."

The document goes on to refer to

> "Choice in primary care . . . Choice in the hospital service . . . Choice of day and time of hospital appointments . . . Choice of consultant . . . Choice within hospitals and health boards and between health boards . . . Choice of date for in-patient treatment . . . Choice of in-patient accommodation."

Those are fine words and fine sentiments, but the question to which the Opposition have so far failed to address themselves is how such fine aspirations can be translated into reality. We are dealing with a society of no fewer than 55 million men, women and children. How can individual men, women and children be provided with effective, meaningful choice without a dramatic decentralisation of the administration of our vast resources?

Not only will we require such a massive decentralisation, but, if individual citizens are to be given effective choice, we must ask ourselves where they will exercise that choice. Such people do not enter the Department of Health or the Scottish Home and Health Department; they do not enter the regional or the district health authorities. The point of contact with the NHS for the vast majority of ordinary citizens is a visit to either their GP or their local hospital. Only if we can give GPs and local hospitals more freedom in how they use the resources provided for them will it be possible for them to respond to the individual wishes of individual members of the public.

That is the crucial and fundamental point to which the Opposition have not yet addressed themselves. Fine words about choice, and marvellous sentiments about individual members of the public being able to determine which doctor or hospital they visit on which day, can have no hope of translation into reality unless those who provide the services—GPs and local hospitals—have sufficient autonomy in their use of their resources to be sensitive to individual wishes in any meaningful way.

Dr. Moonie: Will the Secretary of State tell us how it will improve choice for patients to implement a directive such as that sent out by the Scottish Home and Health Department last week to all health boards, instructing them that once the Food Safety Bill becomes law all chicken served in hospitals will have to be irradiated?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that the Government made some announcements about irradiation recently, and we shall no doubt have an opportunity to discuss that subject at an appropriate time.

If the hon. Gentleman, who has a medical background, does not believe in the need for proper standards of public health, he is a very surprising example of his profession. We are talking about a view that is common to both sides of the House, and one that was expressed in the hon. Gentleman's own document—for it was his document to which I referred. When I gave way to him, I hoped that the hon. Gentleman would put forward real, serious propositions on how sentiment could be translated into reality, other than through the granting of far more autonomy to individual general practices and hospitals.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Has the Secretary of State seen the article in today's *Glasgow Herald* about the service offered by Yorkhill children's hospital? Serious allegations have been made there about delays in carrying out operations on young children. Will the Secretary of State give me an assurance that he will initiate an investigation into those allegations?

Mr. Rifkind: I, too, was concerned when I read the press reports this morning. I have already made inquiries, and I understand that there has been a recent increase in demand for intensive care beds in a number of specialties, leading to the unfortunate postponement of a number of planned operations. The board has already funded an increase of two beds in the intensive care unit and I understand from the board that there is no question of money being transferred away from paediatric-cardiac surgery. The recent unfortunate cancellation is now the subject of a full investigation by the board. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising that matter.

I referred to the general agreement existing between hon. Members of all parties about the need for increased, meaningful choice for individual patients. However, the practical debate—the real debate—is about how one translates that sentiment into new administrative procedures that give the opportunity for effective choice rather than simply for splendid political rhetoric. Therefore, I turn now to the specific practical criticisms that the Opposition have sought to make about the Government's proposals. Essentially, when one removes the rhetoric and the emotional dimension to the Opposition's position, one comes down to allegations about two basic alleged failures in our proposals. First, the Opposition suggest that our proposals represent what they call a "fragmentation" of the National Health Service. Secondly, they seek to suggest that the effect of our proposals will be to reduce choice, rather than to increase it. Those are serious matters which represent the core of the serious part of this argument, rather than the wild political posturing on which I commented earlier.

With regard to the first accusation—that our proposals represent a "fragmentation" of the National Health Service—clearly the word "fragmentation" has not been chosen unconsciously. It is an emotional word which seeks to suggest something improper or undesirable——

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): It is a descriptive term.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Member for Garscadden says that it is a descriptive term, but if we are talking about fragments, that term is appropriate only if we refer to the size of the fragments with which we will end up. The hon. Gentleman should look at, for example, the proposals for National Health Service trusts, which are proposed—at least in the first instance—to apply to the large and acute hospitals. If the hon. Gentleman examines the budgets for such hospitals, he will find that they range between £10 million and £50 million per hospital. If that is fragmentation, it is a pretty substantial fragment, as I am sure the hon. Gentleman will agree.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): My point has nothing to do with Scottish hospitals. On my right hon. and learned Friend's point about fragmentation, I must advise him that I have received one or two letters from constituents who are diabetics, and who are worried that treatment may become more fragmented, as between care in the hospital and care in the community. Will my right hon. and learned Friend or his hon. Friend the Minister of State deal with that point at some stage?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is perfectly right to raise that matter. Clearly, it will be important for the health authority to continue to use its strategic role for ensuring provision of the services required by the public, including diabetic patients, in its locality. That is important when determining what contractual relations the health authorities should enter into with individual hospitals and others providing medical services. It is important that the needs of the community should continue to be identified by the health authorities which will not, of course, provide resources unless they are satisfied that the services that are required will be met.

I should have more time for the Opposition's accusation about fragmentation if their own position and the proposals in their documents did not point in the same direction, at least in theory. I read with considerable interest the document entitled, "Working with Patients —A Critique", of which the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy was co-author. There is a section on the White Paper, entitled, "What's Good in the White Paper". Indeed, it may delight the House to know that the hon. Gentleman has found a number of things that are good in the White Paper and presumably, therefore, in the Bill. He stated that the quality of care proposals in the White Paper are good. Indeed, they must be good in his view because he claims that they were taken from the Labour party's White Paper and it is always a good sign if the Opposition have to fall back on that claim. The hon. Gentleman welcomed efficiency in the delivery of care and more information being made available to consultants and general practitioners. He also welcomed a flexible accounting system to reflect clinical-led doctor-patient choice.

However, most important of all, which is why I am drawing attention to this point, is the hon. Gentleman's particular welcome to what he describes as

> "further devolution of management to hospital and unit level".

Indeed, the hon. Gentleman comes close to the Government's thinking in a way that must alarm some of his hon. Friends on the Opposition Front Bench. He stated, "This should be done", and claimed that it is done already under the current structure.

The hon. Member for Kirkcaldy then went on to say what a Labour Government would do. This should be of particular interest to the House, because he said that a future Labour Government

> "would issue hospitals with their own budgets."

—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] We have suddenly discovered that, far from being antipathetic to hospitals having their own budgets, the Labour party, which spends half its time accusing the Government of creating an administrative shambles through such a scheme, is putting forward such a proposal itself. However, there is a qualification. Indeed, there is always a qualification and it is right that I should repeat it. The document states:

> "We would issue hospitals with their own budgets, but only WITHIN health boards. Savings should go back to the health board for use in priority areas."

We know what that means. It means that hospitals will be given their own budgets, encouraged and no doubt praised for making savings, but they will not be allowed to keep the savings. Savings will have to be returned to the health board. We know of the prospects of hospitals striving as hard as possible to make savings if they themselves are not going to have any benefit as a result of their success in so doing.

Dr. Moonie: I thank the Secretary of State for giving way again. Most of the debate seems to be about papers that were published last year. However, I should like to put two points to him. First, general management has been in place for only four years and the right hon. and learned Gentleman has not yet conducted an adequate evaluation of the success of that general management, which was established within an integrated community-based set-up, by which I mean involving both hospitals and the

[Dr. Moonie]

community side. Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman recognise that it might have been better to evaluate the existing change in management before trying to bring in a separate structure?

Secondly, the right hon. and learned Gentleman rightly referred to hospital budgets and savings therefrom. Does he not agree that, when we are dealing with finite resources, savings should be allocated to the most appropriate area of need in a community?

Mr. Rifkind: On the hon. Gentleman's first point, his criticism would be valid if we were proposing that as from the enactment of the Bill every single hospital in Great Britain should be required to set up an NHS trust. However, we are not doing so. Not only is the proposal entirely optional, but inevitably there will be only a relatively modest number of participants to begin with and, depending on how matters then develop, that number will increase if the system is seen to be successful by those who have not so far volunteered. What better way could there be of moving towards a more decentralised system, which the hon. Gentleman claims in his document to support?

On the hon. Gentleman's second point, he must appreciate that what he says may sound fine in theory, but will not be realised in practice—*[Interruption.]* No, because the hon. Gentleman knows as well as I do the practical consequences of telling individual hospitals that they will have a budget and that if they do not use the whole of that budget, any excess will be taken away immediately. The only practical way in which one can achieve the benefits of which the hon. Gentleman claims to be a supporter is by giving hospitals generous budgets and if, by careful use of those resources, the hospitals find that not all their resources are required for the purpose for which they were given, telling them that they may use those extra resources to improve the quality of the provision in the individual hospitals to make them even more attractive to the general public.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): Does my right hon. and learned Friend know whether the budgets suggested by the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) will be cash-limited and, should a hospital overstretch its cash limit, what penalties will be exacted by the hospital board? That is an interesting line of thought because it accords with some of our thoughts on this matter.

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend has asked a fair question, but I must advise him that we have not been blessed with such information. As is so often the case with Opposition proposals, generalised statements are made, but there is an unwillingness—or perhaps an inability—to expand on exactly what is meant. Perhaps the hon. Member for Garscadden, who is hoping to speak immediately after me, will be able to explain exactly the kind of budgets that the Labour party proposes to give to hospitals and will answer the relevant points raised by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Before we leave the subject of new information, the Secretary of State for Health, who is sitting beside the right hon. and learned Gentleman, has rightly in my view, for what it is worth, said that he would be casting his vote in favour of research on embryos. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman be in the same Lobby?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman had better await that debate and then his curiosity will be satisfied.

I shall turn to the other allegation that the Opposition made against the Government's proposal—that its practical consequence will be to reduce choice, rather than to increase it. The hon. Member for Livingston has said:

"Patients will lose the right to go to the hospital of their choice—*[Official Report, 27 November 1989; Vol. 162, c. 446.]*

I am not familiar with the existence of any such right at the moment. The hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) should appreciate that. A member of the public may express a preference, but the idea that a patient has a meaningful, enforceable right at the present time is not in accordance with the way that the National Health Service has operated at any time since its inception. The real question is whether individual GPs will be more able or less able to respond to the declared preferences of their patients in the future.

The Bill provides for a system in which there will be an incentive for GPs with practice budgets to respond to the wishes of their patients, because that will materially influence the way in which the practice is financed. The consequence of that will be entirely to the patients' benefit.

I hope that the hon Member for Garscadden will address himself to the objectives that he says his party is committed to—the practical consequence of the measures. The hon. Gentleman should appreciate that we are seeking, through group practice budgets and NHS hospitals, to provide a decentralised system of administration that will enable the individual GP and the individual hospital to be more sensitive to the wishes of the general public.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Rifkind: Many hon. Members wish to take part in the debate and I shall not give way.

Opposition Members are perfectly entitled to express their views on the administrative consequences of the proposals in the Bill, and to give their own view of the Government's achievements. What they may not do is express a view that is based on the belief that the last Labour Government made a splendid contribution to the well-being of the NHS. During the period that they were in office, the proportion of resources devoted to the NHS fell, nurses' pay fell by no less than one fifth and waiting lists increased by a quarter of a million.

In 1978 the then chairman of the British Medical Association said of the Labour Government's record on waiting lists:

"The sum of human misery represented by those record figures is a scandal without parallel in any technically developed country".

That was the last Labour Administration's achievement. When they comment on the Government's proposals, I hope that they will do so with the appropriate humility.

4.53 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I come to the Dispatch Box confident in the knowledge that I will be the first person in the debate today who has spoken about the Bill.

The Minister gave us a suitably elegant lecture. He has obviously been working hard on the plane from Edinburgh this morning. He started with a stylish anti-climax that I found amusing. We were told, or there was an implication, that there would be an announcement about the rural practice fund, and that he was glad to have the opportunity to make that announcement. However, what we wanted to know about the rural practice fund was to what extent it has been increased, and that was the one fact that the Minister failed to give us.

We know that rural GPs will suffer particularly badly from the shift in the GP's contract towards an emphasis on capitation fees. If those GPs are to be fully compensated, the rural practice fund will have to be increased significantly above the cost of living figure. We will have to wait for an answer to that as well as to many other questions.

I shall make on diversion, and I make no apology to the House for that. I came down to London on the overnight sleeper from Glasgow, and found myself in conversation with two members of the ambulance service from the west of Scotland. *[Interruption.]* During the conversation they told me of their determination to achieve what they and the majority of the public see as a just settlement.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: What about the Bill?

Mr. Dewar: I said that it was a short diversion.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): The hon. Gentleman quite rightly criticised my right hon. and learned Friend for not talking about the Bill, but the ambulance dispute has nothing to do with it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) must relate what he said to the Bill.

Mr. Dewar: I have been on my feet for one minute, and the most notable fact has been that my mention of the ambulance dispute was greeted by gales of laughter from Conservative Members and by a frivolous intervention. I think that the ambulance drivers will be interested to read of that reaction in *Hansard.*

I shall not speak at great length about the ambulance dispute, but I want to point out that the situation is deteriorating in Scotland. This week, staff in the west of Scotland have found themselves on and then off full pay three times. Many of them are getting as little as 25 per cent. of full pay, although they believe that they are honouring the agreed guidelines. The Government's insensitive approach, their machismo and the search for victory are doing an enormous amount of damage to morale and to the fabric of the service.

I repeat my view that if the Government's case is so strong, then there seems to me to be no reason why they should not submit the dispute to the independent judgment of an arbitrator. I hope that Ministers will understand in time that it is in their interests to do so, as well as in the interests of the service.

The Bill implements a White Paper which has been heavily and properly criticised. It is seen by many people as another campaign in the war of attrition that has been fought by the Government against the Health Service in recent years. We have had the regrading dispute, and competitive tendering, which makes workers struggle to save their own jobs at considerable cost to their terms and conditions. The threat of competitive tendering is getting nearer to the core of the Health Service.

Radiographers from Scotland are coming to London tomorrow to meet Opposition Members to put their case, and to express their fears and anxieties. Ministers have a duty to consider the effect on morale and to measure the difficulties against the proposals in the Bill.

One minor point that I shall mention in passing is the meaning of paragraph 3 in schedule 5 of the Bill, which has had a number of public outings and has been a cause for concern. The Minister may remember that that paragraph refers to the transfer of officers and servants to other health boards in Scotland, and to the common services agency. I am not clear about the definition of a servant in that context, but I suspect that it means all employees, and I do not know the circumstances in which it is envisaged that the transfers will take place. Perhaps the Minister could give me that information by letter, if that is the most convenient, as I have received a number of representations about the matter, and I want to give accurate information in my replies.

The White Paper and the Bill have hardly a friend in Scotland. I do not wish to overstate my case, but the Bill is almost as unpopular as the Minister responsible for health in Scotland, and that is saying something. Perhaps that is not surprising as the Bill is seen as being built in his image.

There have been individual protests in plenty. One that I have mentioned before but that is worth recording again is the view of the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor). That gentleman has a special responsibility for the Conservative party's campaign tactics in Scotland. On 18 October he told *The Guardian* that the White Paper

> "has caused so much unnecessary harm. Unless we are prepared to concede a lot, I think we should scrap it."

That is not a bad summing-up of what many people in Scotland feel.

In July this year, at a conference in Inverness, a lady who is well known to many of us in Scotland, Mrs. Winnie Donaldson, a leading Conservative councillor in Edinburgh for many years, chairman of the social work committee of both the old Edinburgh corporation and the Lothian region and a former member of the Lothian health board, said:

> "The White Paper absolutely appals me . . . It seems to be like something out of another country . . . when out of the blue comes this document, which seems to be something from another world. How do we get sense into people?"

That may not be the most technically complex of arguments, but it is a cry from the heart of somebody who, from a Conservative point of view, has given a great deal of service to the Health Service in Scotland.

I and my colleagues are often attacked. The hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) is never tired of telling us that we represent nothing more than a narrow vested interest, that we reflect unworthy and prejudiced views. If the House looks a little more closely, it will find that we are being accused of speaking for doctors, nurses, auxiliaries and ambulance drivers. I make no apology for expressing some of their anxieties, but the proposals affect thousands of people in Scotland.

This morning, I received a letter from the hon. Member for Stirling in his capacity as Minister with responsibility for health at the Scottish Office. He wrote:

> "You recently delivered a number of postcards to St. Andrew's house".

Close to 50,000 postcards to be precise, each one completed and signed by a member of the public who had taken the trouble and was worried enough by what the

[Mr. Dewar]

Government are proposing to fill it in. I gather—I welcome it—that each of those 50,000 is to receive a postcard from the Scottish health Minister. That is good news for the Post Office, although it might not have wished for it in view of the impending Christmas rush, but it will be a shock to many good, honest Scottish citizens who expect no such honour. Last year, by way of Christmas cheer, they got advertisements in almost every Scottish newspaper telling them of the joys of the poll tax. This year they will get a personalised postcard from the hon. Member for Stirling extolling the virtues of a business-oriented approach to the Health Service. It will be well calculated to take the bang out of anyone's cracker.

In any event, we can take one thing from the Minister's responses—we have drawn blood. He is obviously conscious of his weakness with public opinion and realises that he cannot just shrug off this substantial evidence of disquiet. He was kind enough to send me a copy of his pamphlet, complete with a second-class postage stamp carefully drawn in. I appreciate the artwork. It is clear that someone in a high grade in St. Andrew's house has a second talent. The Minister's little pamphlet illustrates the peculiarity of the debate.

That brings me to what the Secretary of State said. Many of the arguments are indeed common to both sides of the House. We both pay lip service to the concept, history and traditions of the Health Service. The question is not who uses that kind of rhetoric; the question people have to make their minds up about is what is the reality of what is happening and who is committed to preserving the Health Service. The Minister's letter says:

> "We support and will not change the principles that have guided it over the last 40 years . . . The Labour Party campaign has therefore been built on a misapprehension. I intend to ensure that this is removed."

He sounds as though he is talking about an offensive gall stone. I do not think that he is likely to remove deeply-held convictions, based on the private experience of thousands of citizens, that the Government have got it wrong in terms of their fundamental theoretical approach to the Health Service. That is at the heart of the debate.

Of course there is a problem with how efficiently to deliver services and the commitment to escalating costs that new technology brings to health care, but my suspicion is that the Secretary of State, if I interpret his speech aright, is saying, "Look at all the money we have poured in and all the troubles we still have. We have to find another way. That other way will be followed because it is financially prudent. We shall push to one side the genuine byproducts and difficulties which will flow from that."

Much of what the Minister says in his little pamphlet cannot be sustained.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): The hon. Gentleman speaks of the rhetoric that both sides of the House use in regard to the NHS and says that hon. Members and Governments will be judged by what they do. Will he cast his mind back to 1977-78, when Labour was in power and there was a 3 per cent. cut in real terms in the NHS? Surely that is the type of judgment that the public are entitled to make.

Mr. Dewar: I recognise that every memory works in its own way, but most of my constituents remember the past five years more clearly than the events that the hon. Gentleman has trawled up.

We are told in the pamphlet that the Government's proposals

> "do not involve patients having to pay for services currently provided free at the point of delivery."

I accept that. There is nothing in the Bill that say that they will have to pay, but I am entitled to observe that the claim sounds a little hollow bearing in mind what has happened to prescription, dental and eye test charges. There is overwhelming evidence, which my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) has given, to show that people are doing without. The pamphlet continues —this is an important claim—

> "The proposals do not involve any hospitals opting out of the NHS".

I understand the linguistic nicety on which that statement is based. They are not opting out of the Health Service. I am tempted to agree that that is a fair statement because, in Scotland, there is so little support for this crazy notion that I suspect that no hospital will opt out for that very reason. Nevertheless, we are entitled to some explanation. The Secretary of State said almost nothing about a timetable and what he expects. We know that the Minister with responsibility for health is anxious to be a front-runner—to blaze a trail with opting out and to maintain his claim. Perhaps it is all to maintain his place in "her" heart, which has led to his becoming the leader of the Scottish Tory party. In any event, we know from *The Scotsman* that among the Minister's claims is the

> "creation of 'shadow' trusts. They would be ready to assume self-governing status and take over the running of hospitals immediately the necessary laws were approved . . . He is known to be anxious that Scotland should lead the way on implementation of the reforms"—

then comes the sad anti-climax—

> "which have, however, met general resistance from the medical profession."

I suppose that not everything can be perfect in this world. I listened in vain to the Secretary of State to learn what the plans are. There are few signs of genuine interest. We know that the target will be the 320 acute hospitals in the United Kingdom with 250 beds or more. The hospitals in Scotland that have been mentioned are peculiarly inappropriate. We are told that the Royal Scottish National hospital at Larbert is interested. It has 800 beds for mentally handicapped patients. Its aim under the new approach to care in the community is to work itself out of existence, not to become a brave new cutting edge for the peddling of services to other NHS agencies. We also have a group of three cottage hospitals in Forfar which I am told can muster 115 beds between them. I hope that I am not being unworthy when I say that they are interested because they fear for their survival in the brave new commercial world of the White Paper. That is not a good basis on which to become the favoured guinea pig in the opting out experiment.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): That is a frivolous comment. Forfar is the largest town in my constituency and it is the county town of Angus. The people of Forfar will find it offensive that the hon. Gentleman is so dismissive of it. Its hospitals are important to the people of Forfar. The hospitals are considering self-governing status because local general practitioners and others want it.

Mr. Dewar: The hon. Gentleman clearly wants to defend what is happening. As the constituency Member, he is entitled to do that, but on self-governing hospitals Scottish working paper No. 3 speaks of the target being

"major acute hospitals providing a reasonably comprehensive service."

Three cottage hospitals in the Forfar area do not spring immediately to mind as the most obvious example of that.

A more dangerous and more plausible example involves Stracathro and Forresterhill. If, for example, Forresterhill were to opt out, the Grampian health board would be left without its main provider of acute services, to use an up-to-date parliamentary expression. Forresterhill is a major complex with which I am familiar from my days as the Member for Aberdeen. If that hospital opted out, it would not create the market and competition which I understand is at the heart of the Government's arguments. If not the monopoly provider, the complex is the main provider of acute services to the Grampian health board. To introduce competition, it would be necessary to look to Dundee and Glasgow. That would not be meaningful competition.

Perhaps the Minister will tell me if I am wrong, but I believe that Mr. Kyle, the chairman of the Grampian health board, is a great enthusiast of opting out for Forresterhill. Scottish Office selection procedures are admirable because in almost every health board area one can count on at least one enthusiast for opting out—the chair of the health board. When we spoke to the consultants in Forresterhill, over 80 per cent. wanted nothing to do with opting out. Perhaps the Minister will tell us what he thinks about Scottish working paper No. 3, issued by his Department not long ago, paragraph 55 of which says that the health boards

"will seek the views of those with an interest, particularly other health boards likely to be concerned, staff affected, general practitioners, local health councils and the local community."

We know that the staff at Forresterhill are not interested and I defy the Minister to produce evidence that the local community will be interested in opting out. I do not believe that GPs or anyone else will support opting out. What are we to understand by paragraph 55? Was it just a deceitful aside to pad out the paragraph or will the health board have to consult before opting out? What form will consultation take and what will happen in cases such as that of Forresterhill where the overwhelming evidence is that there is no interest?

The reasons why people discuss the crazy scheme for opting out are simple. One is bureaucratic. That may seem an odd argument from the Labour party but we are not interested in bureaucracy if it is expensive and fulfils no useful social or administrative purpose. Separate hospitals will be separately managed and will have separate legal, personnel and purchasing departments.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Forsyth): And separate budgets.

Mr. Dewar: And possibly separate budgets. It is dishonest of the Secretary of State or at least highly misleading to suggest that a reference to budgets in the useful paper prepared by two of my colleagues can be equated with a trust which will own assets, hire and fire staff, borrow on the markets and buy and sell its services to the highest bidder at the most advantageous price in the market place. That is a completely different concept, and the Secretary of State knows it. It is a mark of the weakness of his argument that he is reduced to drawing such false comparisons.

Mr. Rifkind: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will do the House a service by explaining what the Labour party means when it says that it would issue hospitals with their own budgets? What kind of budgets would be provided? To what extent would the hospitals be committed to keep expenditure within the budget? What would be the effect if they exceed the level set down? Would budgets be a meaningful change or just a form of rhetoric?

Mr. Dewar: No doubt the Secretary of State will have time to discuss that on other occasions. We are discussing the Bill. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question."] The Secretary of State may be interested to consider the possibility of a clinical budget for a ward and an extension of the principle of auditing. We are implacably opposed to the provisions for hospitals trusts outlined in the White Paper. They are divisive and will mean a loss of choice for patients and doctors. If, after discussion with a patient, a doctor decides that he wishes to send a patient not to the Western infirmary but to the Victoria infirmary or Southern General hospital, I am confident that he will be able to do so. However, if the patient needs a form of treatment for which the health board has drawn up a contract with a specific hospital, under the new market arrangements, clearly the patient will have to go to that hospital whether it is Ross Hall—*[Interruption.]* I have taken the trouble to talk to the people involved and they believe that that will be the case. If the Secretary of State is saying that we have misunderstood, that is an appalling comment on the quality of explanation that has been offered. *[Laughter.]* The Secretary of State had better clear the matter up. If the famous hip operations to which the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State always refers are contracted out to a certain hospital by the health board, and that is the only outlet for that treatment, where will be the choice? Can the patient refuse to go there and ask to go somewhere else?

Mr. Rifkind: Yes. The patient will be no more obliged to go to the hospital of the doctor's choice than he is now. Presumably a doctor will not enter into a contract with a hospital unless he believes that it gives a high quality of service. He may wish to recommend it to the patient, but it will be for the patient to decide whether he wishes to accept that advice. [HON. MEMBERS: "Rubbish."]

Mr. Dewar: On occasions I think that debates in the House are useful. The Secretary of State has made an interesting statement which we shall look at carefully. If it is true, it is another example of a feature of the Government's conduct of this case. Every time that we approach the logic of what they say, whether in White Paper or Bill, they hasten to deny the obvious consequences.

The Bill will move the Health Service towards a two-tier service over a period of time.

Mr. Rifkind: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dewar: No, I am up against a time problem.

It may not be the principle or immediate aim of the Government to create a two-tier service but it will be an acceptable by-product to the Government. The tax concessions announced in the Budget for those of

[Mr. Dewar]

pensionable age who opt for private health care underlines that point. We shall see the private sector build wings on opted-out hospitals so that they can share facilities. We shall arrive at a point where a better service is available for those whose credit rating or employment conditions allow them to use private medicine than for those who are not in that position.

I now come to my final point because I do not wish to delay the House for too long. Opting out will disrupt and undermine the planning function of the health boards in Scotland. Perhaps the Secretary of State will tell me if I have misunderstood but I assure him that that misunderstanding is widely shared, particularly by members of the Greater Glasgow health board who have examined the matter carefully. The board is considering its acute services and producing an overall planning framework based on six centres for the whole area. I have had my disputes with the health board about cross-boundary flow, demographic factors and reductions in the number of acute beds and the social assumptions that they have made, but I do not dispute the need for an overall framework. I recognise that many difficult decisions have been taken. A row is already raging about the placement of obstetric units in the health board area. Whether it has got it right or wrong, it is entitled to make such decisions and to have an overall view of how it organises its resources.

What will happen to the overall strategy if a centre of acute care opts out and becomes a free-standing hospital? What will happen to the concept of overall planning and to the health board's role if a trust turns round and says, "The health board may think that the reorganisation is in the interests of patients and the community as a whole, but it is not in the interests of our hospital because we shall have to close wards and stop operations which are particularly profitable and bring us business. We shall not do it."? The Under-Secretary shakes his head fiercely, but many people in the Health Service at health board level see these problems as a negation of good management forced on the Health Service in the false name of efficiency. There will be casualties.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Is my hon. Friend aware that a new unit for psycho-geriatrics has been built in Grampian region and that the health board is actively pursuing the possibility of contracting every aspect of care, not just cleaning and catering, but medical care, to a private medical company? During discussions with the board, it could not say what the medical plans were because it had to discuss costs with the private company. Does my hon. Friend agree that that is a complete negation of planning and, indeed, of the ethos of the Health Service?

Mr. Dewar: I agree. These discrepancies and distortions will creep in increasingly. One of the tragedies is that there will be many casualties. I draw the attention of Tory Members to the view that:

> "Medical education, currently regarded as a proud obligation, will become merely tolerated under a market-led system."

The principal of Glasgow university also said that medical education was being seen as an

> "add-on, a non-optional extra that NHS managers would have to put up with."

It would be sad if that were to emerge as the view on medical education. I would not think that Sir William Fraser, a former permanent secretary at the Scottish Office, was a tyro at looking behind the Scottish Office press releases to the reality of what is happening. Yet that is his considered view of the likely impact of the Government's plans on medical education in his university and in the west of Scotland.

I have dealt with the opting-out issue at some length, partly because of interruptions. General practitioner practice budgets are unlikely to be a major feature in Scotland as only 5 per cent. of Scottish practices reach the 11,000 mark. Where they are introduced, administration will be a major problem. It takes time and effort to negotiate a contract and to shop around as envisaged, and that time will be taken from patients. I plead guilty to finding the practical arrangements obscure. If a GP sends his patient for a barium meal and the patient requires further investigation and ultimately major abdominal surgery, that will come out of the practice budget. Presumably, there will be standard charges to even out costs, but at the end of the day there is little evidence that the service will be improved for patients. I genuinely do not believe that there is much point in the exercise or that anyone will benefit from it. It is like the switch to capitation fees. Ministers spend their time explaining that what everyone thinks will happen will not happen and that everything will go on as before. That is a futile argument.

I accept that, despite the indicative drugs budget, GPs will always be able to prescribe. I shall not go in for scare stories. I am prepared to accept that assurance. Perhaps the Under-Secretary of State will listen to my next point. If we move away from local general practice committees monitoring drugs budgets, we are in danger of putting a cash test in the place of medical criteria. If a doctor pumps out valium and is irresponsible at that end of the trade, he may not reach his indicative budget, but he may prescribe in a way which is clinically damaging and, because of the switch in the criteria, that may not be picked up. I cannot welcome that proposal.

Some provisions in the Bill are good. Health councils survive, although in a different form. There is a medical audit. More important, the Bill provides for Griffiths's key recommendation: that local authorities retain the key role in community care. That decision must have stuck in the Under-Secretary's craw. The key is resources. We can have jointly planned projects, but they must be jointly funded. We can have protections and plans that will be as naught if patients leaving hospital and being maintained in the community do not have the support and services that they require. Perhaps the Minister, again in a letter, can tell me a little about the status of grants to the mentally ill under clause 52. Is it new money or top sliced from existing resources? What arrangements will be made for the co-ordination of community care planning, given the provisions for separate submissions of plans by health boards and local authorities? Will the Minister sit down with the voluntary sector and local government and consider the matter?

I shall ignore the Government health warning that was given at the beginning of the debate. Whatever the precedents, I genuinely regret that there is no separate Scottish legislation. It would have made for better scrutiny and a more easily conducted debate. It is sad that good government has been subordinated to expediency.

Mr. Rifkind *rose*——

Mr. Dewar: No, I will not give way.

Mr. Rifkind *rose*——

Hon. Members: Sit down.

Mr. Dewar: I apologise to the Secretary of State, but I have spoken for too long already. He knows that I normally give way to him, but he made his points about the statistics and precedents earlier.

Whatever the precedents, it would have been better to have a separate Scottish Bill, particularly as we do not have a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs which could have provided useful back-up scrutiny.

I regret even more the Bill's contents. Ministers will continue to claim that the best is being preserved and nothing is being lost. I can only say to the Secretary of State that if he thinks that, he does not understand the implications of his legislation. We in the Labour party are strongly opposed to the measure which in the long term threatens the basic principle of a comprehensive Health Service fully available at the time of need. It is on that that we cannot compromise.

5.26 pm

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): Notwithstanding the stories that we hear from time to time from the Opposition, we have a good Health Service. Parts are very good and of a high standard. That was demonstrated last week at the Hospital of the Year awards which were sponsored by the *Sunday Times*. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health attended the award ceremony. Throughout the proceedings emphasis was rightly placed on the quality of care.

I enjoyed the high standards myself in a local National Health Service hospital during the summer when I underwent skilful surgery and received the most competent, sensitive nursing care. However, nobody would claim that all is as well as it could possibly be in the NHS. Each year more doctors and nurses are employed, more patients are treated and more money is spent. Yet each year we hear of longer waiting lists and more closed wards. That must show that more resources alone are simply not the answer. It points to the need to examine the structure of the Health Service, its administration and the way in which resources are distributed and used. It was just such an examination which the Government undertook two years ago.

The key to success in the NHS must be the staff, from the bottom to the top and particularly the professionals. I understand why the Government in undertaking their review confined the involvement of those who work in the service to submitting papers. They were not involved in discussions. It was unfortunate that the Government then chose to publish the outcome of the review in a White Paper rather than a Green Paper and that in speaking to the White Paper Ministers used language that suggested to those in the service that the Government were presenting them with a fait accompli. It was a pity that the White Paper was not accompanied by a response to the Griffiths report. The review covers hospitals and general practice, but, as it does not refer to community care, it is rather like a three-legged stool with two legs. That omission has been remedied, but rather late in the day.

One result of the way in which the matter was handled was a somewhat hostile response to the review—much of it negative and some of it unpleasantly personal. The British Medical Association drew no credit to itself for the way in which it conducted its campaign.

If we examine the reactions of some of the professional bodies, we find that they support many of the proposals and that their concern about some of the others relates to what could happen and what might be the result of implementing the proposals. Some of the comments and some of the literature were misleading; some were downright wrong. They caused unnecessary distress to patients, in particular to the most vulnerable patients. Some of the concerns, however, were perfectly genuine. They sprang from uncertainty and from lack of detail. I hope that the professional bodies—the colleges and in particular the BMA—will accept that the Government are committed in principle to their proposals and that they will take part in a constructive dialogue about the details.

The differences are not all that great. For example, the BMA says that there should be pilot schemes for self-governing hospitals and practice budgets. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has accepted that both will be introduced gradually, that each scheme will be a trial and that we shall learn as we go along. The difference between the two approaches does not seem to me to be very great. I am sure, therefore, that if both sides adopt a constructive approach, progress can be made.

I know that my right hon. and learned Friend is fully committed to the National Health Service, but some of the things that he has said and the way that he has said them —in the press, on television and at meetings—have given the impression to the doctors and consultants to whom I have spoken that he is not concerned about their views. I am sure that that is not the case and that he will wish to correct that inaccurate image.

I welcome the principle that underlies the Bill: to ensure that increased resources are devoted to providing the highest possible standards of service and care in the most efficient manner—for example, by giving district health authorities and doctors the freedom to purchase operations and treatment, with the money following the patients. In a debate on the Queen's Speech the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) referred to Queen Mary's hospital in the Bexley health authority area and said that it had had to close wards. However, he did not go into the details. One of the reasons for the closures is cross-border patients, some of whom come from my own constituency, but who are a charge on Bexley health authority. That will be put right.

It surely makes sense to bring responsibility down to local level, to let doctors have their own budgets, if they so wish, and to let hospitals be self governing. I am glad that Bromley district health authority's application has been approved. The corollary is local involvement in the service —especially for the local authority to be responsible for community care.

I hope that we shall examine again the proposed composition of health authorities and self-governing trusts. I note that Members of Parliament are to be specifically excluded. Many of us remember our erstwhile colleague, David Crouch, was a member of a health authority and a particularly valuable Member of this

[Mr. Roger Sims]

House for that reason. My hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) served for a time on a health authority.

There are many examples of successful co-operation between the National Health Service and the private sector. It must be right to try to develop that co-operation. The private health sector is well established in community care. There is certainly scope for greater co-operation between local authorities and the private sector, as proposed in the Bill. However, standards must be set and maintained in all sectors—local, national, independent and voluntary.

It is equally important that community care should be adequately funded. It is admirable that local authorities should be made responsible for this service, but they must be provided with adequate resources. They will be seeking assurances that sufficient cash will be made available to enable them to handle all the cases that come their way. I am sure that the Secretary of State does not underrate the strength of the ring fencing argument; the money at present being paid for social security purposes must be made available in full specifically for community care.

I am particularly concerned about those who are living in residential homes and nursing homes. I am sure that all hon. Members could give examples of constituents whose social security benefit is insufficient to meet the cost of living in such homes. I am referring not to expensive private homes, but to places such as the Cheshire home in my constituency where the minimum cost for each resident is above the maximum social security benefit that some of the residents are able to obtain. I have been in correspondence with the Secretary of State for a long time about the problem. I was assured that it would be addressed in the Government's response to the Griffiths report. I was disappointed to find that it does not seem to have been adequately addressed in the report. I am particularly worried about those residents who, alas, may not be with us by 1991. The Government should take urgent steps to improve their position.

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): I support my hon. Friend's point as a result of my own experience of a Cheshire home in my constituency. Exactly the same problem has arisen and I, too, will be seeking reassurances from Ministers.

Mr. Sims: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I suspect that all hon. Members could tell similar stories. I hope that Ministers will take the point on board.

Many hon. Members would like to know more about a number of details. For example, what are to be the criteria for the approval of self-governing hospitals? I dissented from my Select Committee colleagues who advocated that there should be a local ballot. I do not think that that would be practicable. However, we should be given more details about the criteria that the Secretary of State will set. How will those who are parties to a contract be held to it if it does not have legal validity? What definitions will govern a core service? Many other details need to be clarified. It could rightly be argued that these are Committee points, but they are very important to those who are working in the National Health Service. They will have to implement the Bill when it becomes an Act of Parliament. They are also very important to those who are involved with community care.

As these issues are so important, I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will look sympathetically at the motion that I and other Select Committee members have signed. We urge that the Bill should be considered by a Special Standing Committee. I have some experience of this relatively little-used procedure and I commend it to my right hon. and learned Friend. It provides an opportunity for those who work in the National Health Service to put their point of view on how the Bill could best be implemented and the kind of problems that they envisage. The Secretary of State would then be able to consider those matters. The only alternative is that outside bodies have to find a friendly Back Bencher to present the case on their behalf. Even at this late stage, I hope that Ministers will be prepared to adopt that procedure. I do not believe that it would cause the proceedings to be unnecessarily delayed. In the long run, it may save time.

We all want to make this good Bill better. Politicians, professionals and patients are united, and, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State said when he moved Second Reading on Thursday, we all want to make a good National Health Service even better.

5.39 pm

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): I oppose the Bill because I believe that it will be tremendously damaging to the Health Service in Britain. We all have to recognise the way in which the Government work. They often have to go part of the way in the direction they seek and then take it further in subsequent legislation. On Thursday, my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) set out the reasons why the Government, who do not like the Health Service and do not want it to work, dare not go any further than the proposals in the Bill. They recognise that the Health Service has massive public support, and, therefore, they have to tread more cautiously.

The Opposition believe that the two main priorities are that people are entitled to educational opportunities and to health care based on need and regardless of ability to pay. That is why we must not allow the Bill to make progress. It does not tackle the problems facing the Health Service which are based on resources and finances.

I have copies of letters from a general practitioner to the hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), now Minister of State, Home Department, and to the Under-Secretary of State for Health. After the correspondence had continued for some time the doctor's final letter concluded:

> "Alternatively, of course, you could propose to your Government colleagues that all pretence at improving the NHS should be dropped, and it should instead be admitted to the voting public that the only way to assure ourselves of high quality treatment and freedom of choice under the proposed new arrangements will be to obtain private medical insurance."

The Bill underlines the fear that we are moving towards a two-tier Health Service; a Health Service providing for basic needs, but a better level of service for those who have the ability to pay. That would be regrettable.

We have discussed the practice budgets and the indicative drug budgets. Whatever the Minister says about those figures, we all know that, although budgets might not be rigidly cash limited, they influence decisions. I have no doubt at all that when doctors are prescribing drugs, although they accept that they may be permitted to prescribe a more costly drug, they will be influenced by that budget limit. The Minister should recognise that the Opposition know that to be true. We have only to look at what is happening in the Department of Social Security to community care grants. My local office recently wrote to me saying that it could no longer make certain community care grants for the remainder of the year because it had to retain enough of the budget to meet demands for the remainder of the year.

Although Ministers say that doctors will be able to prescribe, general practitioners, the public and Opposition Members fear that the new system will affect their decisions. When I met local GPs and the BMA in my constituency they made two points about budgets.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Presumably in 1985 the hon. Gentleman opposed the limited list on drug prescribing about which the BMA also protested. Does he now accept that that was right and that £75 million has now been allocated to pay for other things in the Health Service?

Mr. Pike: I do not want to be sidetracked by the hon. Gentleman. In any event, many additions have been made to the original limited list which is constantly under review. I shall not be sidetracked on that point as it was not a finite decision at the time.

The general practitioners made two points about the provision of services to their patients. They do not believe that the decisions that they take concerning the medical treatment of their patients should be influenced by politicians, in the House or anywhere else, or by accountants. They fear that their judgment will be affected if the Bill is enacted in its present form.

The Under-Secretary of State wrote to me on 24 July stating:

> "It is not our intention that budget pressure would ever affect a clinical decision.".

In a subsequent letter he wrote:

> "If a doctor spends significantly over his budget, he will be subject to peer review from another doctor who will consider whether there are sound clinical reasons for the level of spending. A doctor will only be subject to a financial penalty if he cannot give a clinical explanation for expensive prescribing practices."

The Minister failed to recognise my point that in any event GPs' prescriptions will be influenced by the indicative drugs budget.

Mr. Hayes: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Pike: No.

In his opening speech on Thursday, the Secretary of State referred to a practice with a list of 7,000 patients which was spending £800,000 a year on drugs. He said that was 185 per cent. above the average for its family practitioner committee area. He said that that practice dealt with the average number of elderly people, but he did not take into account other factors that may have affected that expenditure. Housing and working conditions also affect people's health and the problems for which they have to visit the GP and could therefore affect the prescriptions. We have to be careful how we judge these matters as we could reach hasty and wrong decisions when determining whether a doctor is overprescribing and that could be extremely dangerous.

I am particularly worried by the Government practice that they always anticipate that their legislation will be enacted. Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale health authority meets this Wednesday. This year it has an additional allocation from the North-West regional health authority of £149,500 to spend on preparation for the implementation of the Bill—before it has received parliamentary approval. The health authority received that extra money when it had to close a maternity ward—it has the highest perinatal death figures—and another hospital was closed in October to save money. Yet suddenly extra money is made available to health authorities. Lancashire has operated a quota system for ambulances since 1986 and we need money to deal with those problems.

The Government do not like to talk in terms of hospitals opting out, but we know that if hospitals move in that direction the Health Service will be absolute nonsense. We should aim for a system in which hospitals provide the maximum possible services locally, although we will always have regional centres of excellence for certain specialised services and needs.

Other hon. Members wish to speak, so I shall conclude by saying a few words about community care, which was hardly mentioned in the Minister's speech. I welcome the Government's decision to make county councils responsible for assessing and supervising the provision of community care, but I should have been much happier if they had made local authorities the major providers of services. Care for our elderly, mentally handicapped and sick people should be provided publicly. The massive growth in private homes and in the profit being made from old people is obscene—*[Interruption.]* Conservative Members obviously agree with that, but I believe that the care of our elderly, mentally handicapped and disabled people is a public responsibility. In my area, the Government are trying rapidly to run down and close Brockhall and Calderstones.

The Government say that they accept that community care, which we all support and believe to be right, is not a cheap option, but however many times they say that, they still hope that it will be a cheap option. Community care will work only if we ensure that sufficient cash resources are made available and that there are sufficient adequately trained staff to provide services for our elderly, mentally handicapped and sick people.

The Bill fails to tackle the problems facing community care and the Health Service. I hope that it is defeated and that the Government will tackle the problem by providing sufficient resources to deal with both issues.

5.51 pm

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): I shall not follow the terms of the speech of the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) because I do not agree with what he said.

I apologise to the House for not being present to hear the speech of the Minister, but I was at the Public Accounts Committee. I am grateful to hon. Members in that regard.

The Bill and the proposals in it were not in our manifesto, so when they were first produced I thought it necessary to think carefully about them. Having done so and, as other hon. Members have done in their constituencies, having listened to GPs in my constituency, it is right to give my hon. Friends on the Front Bench and the Secretary of State the benefit of the doubt; I shall support the Bill tonight.

[Mr. Michael Latham]

However, there is still some doubt, and I hope that in discussions inside and outside the House, and while the Bill is passing through the House, Ministers will listen to members of the profession and continue to discuss it with them. In answer to the hon. Member for Burnley, my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) mentioned the limited list, which was an example of how Ministers acted properly. They discussed the proposal with the profession and allowed changes to the limited list, which was much more acceptable and is the way to proceed. I hope that the pilot schemes and the proposals for introducing hospital trusts carefully and deliberately will be followed by the Government.

I should like briefly to mention rural services, which are particularly important to me, as my hon. Friends on the Front Bench will know. Tomorrow, Leicestershire district health authority will visit the House to meet Leicestershire Members of Parliament. I have been dissatisfied with its policy of closing rural maternity units, which I regard as unacceptable, particularly as its chairman gave assurances that closures would not be allowed. He said that the Oakham maternity unit in my constituency would not be closed, but it closed last September. That was extremely regrettable because it deprived my constituents of a service that they regarded as extremely important.

The hon. Member for Burnley referred to the interaction of community care and the Bill. I take it as axiomatic—I assume that Ministers will confirm this—that there will be no question of closing down old geriatric hospitals until community care supportive welfare is in place. We simply cannot allow that to happen—*[Interruption.]* Hon. Members shout, but in the paper that we shall be discussing tomorrow, regarding the Catmose Vale hospital in my constituency, Leicestershire health authority says that

"Closure . . . will follow the opening of the new buildings"

of the Rutland Memorial hospital in 1990-91. I believe that that is the proper way to proceed. New buildings should be provided at one hospital, and then the buildings at the old one can be closed. I expect community support to be in place before decisions are taken, which is essential for elderly people.

I hope that Ministers have not closed their minds—originally it seemed that their minds were closed—to smaller hospitals being hospital trusts. The original intention undoubtedly was that district general hospitals should opt for the status of hospital trusts within the Health Service. I am concerned that smaller hospitals, particularly cottage hospitals in rural areas, may feel so threatened and isolated that they will want to set up their own trusts. I am sure that they would receive much local support for so doing, and I hope that that will not be ruled out by Ministers.

I should like some assurances about the rights of GPs under the new arrangements to be able to send their patients where they want. I was a little concerned by some replies that my hon. Friend the Minister for Health gave. I asked:

"to what extent . . . general practitioners who are not budget holders will be permitted to choose the hospital to which they send their patients for (a) non-emergency treatment on an in-patient basis and (b) maternity care, including the delivery of the baby".

My hon. Friend replied:

"For all services, including non-emergency and maternity services, GPs should usually be able to choose the hospital that they consider most appropriate, taking account of their patients' needs and wishes. GPs who are not fund-holders will normally refer patients to hospitals with which the district health authority has placed contracts. In placing those contracts, the DHA will be expected to secure the referral patterns which local GPs wish to see put in place, unless there are compelling reasons for not doing so."—*[Official Report, 28 November 1989; Vol. 162, c. 222.]*

I hope that that will be the proposal, because many excellent GP practices in my constituency will not be large enough to be budget holders. I should like them to have the right to send patients to local hospitals in Melton Mowbray and Oakham or across the border. I welcome this aspect of the Bill—to hospitals in Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, the constituency of the Under-Secretary of State for Health, my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman), or to Nottinghamshire if they believe that that is suitable for their patients. I hope that they will not be prevented from doing so but will be encouraged to do so because they are not large enough to be budget holders.

With those reservations—I shall watch carefully how the Bill proceeds in that regard—I wish my hon. Friends well and will support the Bill tonight.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I remind the House that earlier Mr. Speaker announced that he will impose the 10-minute limit on speeches between 6 o'clock and 8 o'clock.

5.57 pm

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): I had hoped to address my remarks to Ministers at the Scottish Office, but none is present; indeed, I am the only Scottish Member present in the Chamber. Although they are not present, I hope that they will read *Hansard* tomorrow, because the Bill illustrates how inadequate the House is to deal with Scottish legislation. These are devolved matters that are very important to Scotland, yet the House is not capable of dealing with them properly. Fundamental changes affecting major Scottish institutions are being tagged on as afterthoughts to legislation for England and Wales. If ever there were perfect subjects for scrutiny by the Select Committee on Scotland, these are they. The House is in breach of its Standing Orders by not having a Scottish Select Committee.

As with Scottish education, the Bill, affecting the National Health Service in Scotland and our community care system, is being pushed through with minimum Scottish input and little or no time properly to debate its Scottish aspects. I should like to place on record my disgust and protest at this cavalier treatment of Scotland. No Scottish Government would ever allow it, and it is to the shame of this place that such circumstances should occur.

The Government are out of step with the majority of people in their treatment of the National Health Service. There is massive mistrust of the motives for the end product of the Govermnnent's changes, and I certainly share those feelings. The National Health Service is not safe with the Government, and I fear that the concept of community care will suffer at their hands. Basically, we are being offered a managerial, cost accountancy solution which is inadequate to meet the health problems of the decade that will take us into the 21st century. How do we cope with our increasingly aging population, which is estimated to be 1·1 million by the year 2001? How do we continue to shift resources towards health promotion and the prevention of illness? How do we ensure the supply of professional trained staff, both ancillary staff and those directly connected to health care?

I look for answers but the Bill does not supply them. Nowhere in the proposal do I see consideration of quality of care in medicine and health provision. There is plenty of emphasis on finance and some on technology, but where are the quality assurances? There are dangers of fragmentation of national health services and the creation of a divided, warring, competitive system driven by the profit motive and cost-cutting, rather than a national, comprehensive health care system that is available when and as needed by each individual. That is what we all have a right to expect and what we should be working towards. I do not want a system that pits doctors against patient or hospital against hospital.

The Government heard the united opposition of health care professionals and the general public, yet they have responded only reluctantly and in small measure to the range of thoughtful and considered responses to their NHS proposals. I am worried about the quality of care in the National Health Service and the community care system. The Scottish section of the White Paper dealing with community care is devoid of targets to be pursued. There are 10 references to discussion papers and guidance papers yet to be published, as well as matters which "require further consultation". This leaves a vagueness and tenuousness which all but obviates discussion on the Scottish aspects of the Bill. How can there be meaningful discussion or analysis when many fundamental matters are to be left to the diktat of the Minister?

This Scottish vagueness is in direct contrast to the Welsh section of the White Paper which details the existing situation and sets out targets and objectives for community care in Wales. Why are we not given similar provision by the Scottish Office? Will such information be produced and, if so, when? Scottish legislation is in enough of a shambles without adding these extra handicaps.

Despite the generally accepted underdevelopment, which even the Government have acknowledged, of community care in Scotland, the White Paper on which the Bill is based is weak and lacks a positive sense of direction. Since much is left to further consultation and guidance, how can there be effective debate on these issues without some flesh being placed on these bones? What is the Government's timetable for the 10 matters that require consultation in Scotland? Given their placing in the Bill, how can a full debate in Standing Committee be assured to deal with the Scottish clauses, some of which are very different from those applying to England and Wales? Given all that, are Scottish Office Ministers prepared to have joint meetings with repesentatives of the professional and voluntary organisations to discuss the details in the White Paper and the Bill, in view of the limited parliamentary time available for discussion? I should like them to take that on board. It is a matter of urgency for Scotland.

More generally, what will be the relationship between local authorities, the Government and private provision as part of an overall strategy for community care? In contrast to the Welsh and English position, there appears to have been little positive thought about an overall co-ordinated approach or even specific goals or targets on housing. Scottish Homes does not even rate a mention in the White Paper—perhaps that is a statement of the Government's opinion of its usefulness regarding the provision of housing in Scotland. Why is there no reference to homelessness or to people with mental illness? The approach of the Scottish Office seems to be less adequate than the English one. I should like assurances that something will be done during the Bill's passage to remedy these defects.

In particular, why will not the Government provide proper income to carers? The bulk of caring in the community is met by informal carers, saving the Exchequer billions of pounds because of their work. The Government have failed to recognise that caring for a sick and sometimes terminally ill relative is a full-time job that puts tremendous strain on the carers. When carers cease their caring activities, they are not eligible for benefits in their own right. They have difficulty re-entering the labour market. The proposed review of disability benefits offers the Government the opportunity to provide support through the benefit system, for example, by providing training schemes for young carers. Those people should also be eligible for unemployment benefit.

Changes in the pattern of community care are likely to affect women disproportionately. There is a danger that many women will be trapped into providing care for relatives and become a support safety net. That problem must be urgently addressed. What action will the Government take to protect carers in the front line?

From statements made by Ministers earlier in the debate it could be thought that the NHS has few or no problems and that the Bill provides complete security for the NHS, its patients and work force. Like the majority of people, I have no confidence in the Government or in their approach to the NHS. The Bill is a trojan horse placed before the NHS. It is inadequate to meet the needs of proper health care. I hope that it will be strongly and unitedly opposed.

6.5 pm

Mr. Michael Morris (Northampton, South): Once again, it gives me no pleasure to voice deep concerns about proposed changes to the National Health Service. Once again, I declare a series of interests in that two of my immediate family are doctors and another is a physiotherapist. For all my working life before becoming a Member, I was associated with the pharmaceutical industry, and I advise two companies—Upjohn, and Reckitt and Colman. As my hon. Friend the Minister knows, I have served on the Public Accounts Committee for some 10 years and have asked a fair number of questions on the NHS.

I am the first to admit that changes in the NHS are necessary. A number of items in the Bill are right and should be supported, but—it is a big but—we all need to recognise that this is probably the most dramatic change that the NHS has faced since Aneurin Bevan set it up, based primarily on work done by a Conservative Member, Mr. Brown. Both sides can therefore take pride in the creation of the NHS.

The big difference between then and now is that the NHS had a long period of gestation. There was time to reflect and a groundswell of opinion in favour of the changes. If I felt that the preparation for the Bill had been

[Mr. Michael Morris]

as thorough as the preparation for the NHS, I could readily support it. I am afraid that I do not. I have studied the Bill in considerable depth and, unfortunately, I feel that there is a degree of shallowness and unreality and a feeling of policy being made on the hoof. It is not good enough that the White Paper referred to GP budgets of £700,000, when it transpired following academic work that the figure was nearer £1·4 million. Now in column 513 of *Hansard* for Thursday last week we are told that the matter is to be negotiated. This is far too reminiscent of what happened over the limited list, where we started with 31 products on the list, but then the number increased to 156, and it started with a claimed saving of £125 million, but ended with a claimed saving of £75 million, as yet unsubstantiated.

The last thing that any Member should do is undertake ill-thought-out change. One need only look across the Atlantic to see what happens when one pushes through a Bill that is ill thought out in terms of health care. Two weeks ago in the United States, what was called the Catastrophic Health Act had to be repealed. It had been introduced to help the elderly, at their request, but it was found to have unrealistic time dimensions and budgets.

There are some real problems, which we must face. We cannot get away from the fact that the first problem is money. We need to recognise that we spend about 6·5 per cent. of gross national product on health, that the United States spends about 12 per cent. and that the rest of Europe spends about 8·5 per cent. Those figures are indicative of the problem. Those of us from the Oxford region who attended a presentation the week before last had it made clear to us that if in the past five years—and Oxford is allegedly the most efficient region in the country—we had had increases to meet the cost of inflation, we should have had an extra £35·3 million, which would have gone a long way in helping us to deal with problems such as the closure of wards.

If one plans to change the service radically, one must work with the people and with the grain. It is sad that last Thursday, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State said that waiting lists were a "badge of status" for consultants. They are not in Northampton or elsewhere.

One also has to think clearly about what overseas experience teaches us. Recently, I had the opportunity to go to the United States and to try to relate the proposals for hospital trusts with what has been done there. The American experience suggests that in a market-based system, hospitals and other providers react quickly to changed financial incentives and that contract specification is crucial. The Bill does not seem to anticipate that problem. The American evidence also suggests that providers will change methods of service delivery to maximise income and will engage in favourable selection of patients if there is freedom to do so. What are the safeguards to prevent that?

Quality of care in the United States is, to a great extent, dependent on elaborate arrangements for the external monitoring of quality. The Americans have peer review organisations and I do not know what we have to equal that. From the United States, one learns quickly that administrative costs spiral and we learn from previous announcements that administration costs may spiral here. In the past 10 years, one of the areas that the Public Accounts Committee has challenged has been trying to bring down administrative costs.

The medical audit raises another problem. We all accept that it is a vital area, but I find that the Government have set aside only £1·25 million in the coming financial year, which is less than £100,000 a region. Every experience, not only in the United States, but on the continent, tells us that it is an expensive area. Yet we have not provided major financial resources. A paper by the Medical Audit Advisory Group suggests that teams of general practitioners will go round GP practices. Where are all the GPs who can be spared for the medical audit?

The hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) referred to the major problem of drug budgets. This is a real fudge issue. We already have the pharmaceutical pricing regulation scheme, prescribing analyses and costs—PACT—formularies, over-the-counter medicines, generic products and the limited list, yet on top of all that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State wants indicative drug budgets. Only 25 per cent. of GP practices are computerised, so the proposal will not work in the time scale that has been set.

It is also incumbent on the House to understand that, although drugs represent 10 per cent. of NHS cost and are highly visible, many modern medicines are preventive medicines and will stop people having to go to hospital. We also need to understand that the number of elderly people will increase. One can work out that there will be an extra 4 million scripts for people who are 60 to 65 now and another 4 million for those over 75. On top of that, there will be screening and public health programmes, so the number of scripts is bound to increase and the drugs bill will also increase. We need urgently clarification of one central point. How is it that there is a Treasury fixed budget in overall terms for drugs, yet there is to be no restriction on GPs through indicative budgets?

The pharmaceutical industry is important to this country. Such a strong, research-based industry, which makes an £850 million surplus for this country, should not be ignored or forgotten and we must recognise the importance of the new medicines that it has introduced.

I believe in the ethos of the NHS, in good management and in strategic objectives to meet proven needs, but we should cost what has been achieved, experiment, test the market and assess the results before making decisions. We should involve the whole team and work with them. We should look at the implications of the decisions on others who are friendly to the industry. We should learn from the experience of others and we should set realistic time dimensions and realistic targets. Sadly, the Bill tries to do too much in wholly unproven areas, with too few resources. Sadly, I shall not support it.

6.15 pm

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): I shall confine my remarks to local issues, because of the 10-minute rule, and I hope that the House will bear with me. Bassetlaw health authority is one of the three smallest in the country. After great pressure from myself and others under the Labour Government, it was agreed to establish Bassetlaw health authority, although the population is just over 100,000 and the population in the average health authority is about 370,000.

When the Bill was announced, there were immediate cheers from my local Tory-controlled health authority, which offered to opt out not just the local hospital, but the entire authority. That decision was greeted with acclaim by the Minister and the Social Democrats. The health authority sent out a letter asking staff to give it full support and stating:

> "The public opposition to our expression of interest has come so far, to the best of my knowledge, solely, from Minister Joe Ashton MP"—

I assume that that meant Mr. Joe Ashton—

> "who represents part of our Health District . . . and a relatively small number of Labour Party activists; and this opposition has been couched in party-political, ideological terms."

The authority gave press releases and said that it hoped that most staff would strongly support the scheme from its introduction.

The authority spent a lot of money putting out the *Update* newspaper using money that should have been spent on health. The authority has been £1 million short of its budget for the past 12 months. The authority said that it would engage Price Waterhouse to investigate the method of setting up a trust and that staff at all levels should be prepared to support it. The authority aroused a great hoo-ha. It placed advertisements in local newspapers and spent a great deal of cash pushing the political idea of the whole health authority opting out.

The authority also said, which I welcomed, that there would be a public referendum after consulation next year. When that was announced, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health began to have second thoughts. He visited the area, as did the Secretary of State. The one thing they did not want at any price was any form of public referendum. Public consultation was entirely against their policies.

While congratulations were levelled at the health authority, it suddenly had cold feet about the referendum. In June, the trumpets and fanfares were sounded. What happened last Friday? The local newspaper announced:

> "NHS trust abandoned. Bassetlaw Health Authority has abandoned its plan to set up an NHS trust. The opt-out plan, which met with strong opposition in the area, is, announced the Authority yesterday, no longer an option being pursued".

When these opt-outs are analysed and costed they may not turn out to be such a good thing after all.

The health authority maintains that it is going ahead with opting-out the hospital, but again with no mention of a referendum. The whole area has campaigned for many years, as have I, for a brand-new hospital. This is a mining area and we finally got the hospital, which the Government delayed for many years despite six visits by Ministers to the area, because, by an act of God, a miner was carried in on a stretcher, having broken his leg. Stinking, black and bleeding he was brought in from one of the many accidents in the pit and he had to be treated in a corridor in a collection of tin huts—that was what finally convinced Ministers that the need for our hospital should go to the top of the list, and we managed to get one built.

Now we discover that all our pressure does not matter. The people at the top will decide whether the hospital will opt out, not the people who use it, who campaigned for it and who paid their stamps every week for it. The people who will decide are those at the top who wanted to keep their good administrative jobs by opting out the small health authority.

The staff have been consulted, meaning that they were told of this at a mass meeting and asked whether they had any questions. Naturally, they did not want to jeopardise their jobs or to be awkward and shout their disagreement like Oliver Twist. They all want promotion, so they say nothing, enabling the people who held the meeting to claim that the staff agreed without complaint.

If there were a secret ballot it would be different. If a trade union wants a political fund it must hold a secret ballot of its members. If a council estate is to be sold off to, and run by, a private landlord the Government insist on a ballot, but hospital patients and visitors and people living in the area are not balloted on whether their hospital should opt out. The Secretary of State will not entertain that at any price.

Last week the National Union of Public Employees conducted an opinion poll in the east midlands in which 400 people canvassed 7,000 respondents. In that reliable survey 94 per cent. of those questioned said that there should be a ballot. They did not say that the hospital should not opt out, but they were in favour of a ballot. Many were Conservatives who had voted Conservative all their lives and who might even support much of this Bill, but they want a referendum before the hospital decides to opt out.

There has been much propaganda about how self-sufficient hospitals will be, but that will depend where they are. If a hospital is new and owns a lot of land, having bought an extra couple of fields paid for by the NHS, it will be able to survive the first few years by selling off surplus land, holding extra flag days and selling off ancillary services. Undertakers will set up in the foyer, flowers and food will be sold under franchise and people will be turned away and told that they should have gone private. Insurance may even be sold under franchise, and in that way the hospital will make a profit.

The Minister has assured staff that they have nothing to fear. They have everything to fear. They are assured that they will be guaranteed Whitley council wages and the same sort of pensions and holidays as they receive now, but that is nonsense. Once hospitals no longer have to pay regular wages they can pay the market rate. There is still 9 per cent. male unemployment in my area, despite all the part-time jobs in supermarkets that have been created. Hospitals will pay a damn sight less than they have to pay under the NHS.

I cite Mr. James Butler who held a top-level job as a commissioning officer in Bassetlaw hospital. He was made redundant in March last year and Bassetlaw health authority refused to give him an early pension even though it was guaranteed by the Whitley council and the Minister had said that he was entitled to it. God help him if he had not been in the union, which took the health authority to court. The authority took legal advice and then backed down because it realised that Mr. Butler, NUPE and the Minister were right—after having spent several thousand pounds on legal advice.

This shows that once a hospital has opted out under these provisions it will pay any wages and pensions that it likes, it will privatise what it likes, it will adjust holidays and it will destroy the long tradition of fair conditions. And staff will have no comeback. Hospitals that have opted out will be run as they used to be—on flag days. If they are hospitals in Bournemouth, where there is plenty of local cash and millionaire do-gooders abound, they will make money as they did in the 1930s. If they are in places

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such as Barnsley and Bassetlaw, people will put 20p in the box—the hospitals will not be left big legacies in wills—and the hospitals will have to scratch around, send people where it is cheaper and turn them away, sometimes advising them to go private.

All these matters must be explained at length and in a democratic way to the people of the country, who must be given the chance to vote in a full referendum after extensive local discussions. I hope that the Minister will insert in the Bill a clause providing for referendums.

6.26 pm

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): I listened carefully to what the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) had to say. I suspect that hon. Members on both sides were none the wiser having heard his speech because if the hon. Gentleman puts his hand on his heart he must admit that he has not read the White Paper or the working documents or the Bill; if he had, he would not have said what he did.

We are not talking about hospitals opting out of the Health Service; we are talking about self-governing National Health hospitals—*[Interruption.]* That is in the Bill. Why has the hon. Gentleman not read it?

Thank heavens, the electorate are rather forgiving.They can forgive us for messing around with their jobs and taxes and perhaps even for messing around with their rates, but they will not forgive us if we misinform them about their health and about what will happen to the health of their loved ones, the frail and the vulnerable. The BMA and the Opposition have done for the truth of the White Paper and the Bill what King Herod did for babysitting.

On 7 December the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), the shadow Secretary of State for Health, made a speech which I should like to go through, analysing precisely what he said. I asked him whether he was going to commit his party to voting against medical audit, against money travelling with the patient and against resource management. All those points were medically led —they did not drip out of a back room of 10 Downing street or Richmond house. They were advanced by the medical profession and supported by it.

The hon. Member for Livingston replied:

> "I am sorry to disappoint the hon. Gentleman. There is nothing in the Bill about a medical audit. If the hon. Gentleman is thinking of voting for the Bill because he supports the idea of a medical audit, I would . . . welcome his joining me in the Division Lobby".

Of course the Bill does not mention medical audit; it does not mention resource management either—but these things are all in the White Paper. They are all in the working documents. So much has been written about it that I suspect that whole Amazonian rain forests have been destroyed.

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): How irresponsible.

Mr. Hayes: I expect nothing less from the hon. Gentleman.

The shadow health spokesman then referred to money travelling with patients. He said:

> "Of course we do not oppose the idea of money following the patient. The question is whether the Bill does anything to provide for money following the patient."

In other words, this is all about resources. If it was all about resources, the Government would have fudged it long ago because we are spending 45 per cent. more now than in 1979. The difficulty is that we have a ridiculous state of affairs where there is no financial incentive for health authorities to reduce their waiting lists. In fact they are penalised. There is also no financial incentive for hospitals to treat more patients. At this time of the year, money runs out and beds and wards are closed.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): That is scandalous.

Mr. Hayes: It is absolutely scandalous. Opposition Members do not accept that that scandal is finally being laid to rest. Money is travelling with the patient and there will be a financial incentive to reduce waiting lists and to keep beds open.

The Opposition claim that the amount of money involved is not mentioned in the Bill or in the White Paper. Of course, that is not mentioned there. It is a matter for the Autumn Statement. However, I can give the Opposition a clue. Believe it or not, a lot of people distrust politicians. They put us on the same level as journalists, estate agents and burglars. I want to remind the House of what Mr. John James, a senior civil servant, said to the National Association of Health Authorities. He made it clear that because of the system of money travelling with the patient, more money would have to flow into the Health Service. If hospitals and health authorities know precisely what their unit costs are and how much operations and treatment cost—which they do not know at the moment —they will be able to put in bids to the Treasury which would lead to more money coming into the Health Service.

The Bill is all about resources and the patient.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): What about the 12 per cent?

Mr. Hayes: I want to draw the attention of the House to other points made by the shadow health spokesman on 7 December. He said:

> "The Bill does not extend choice to patients."

He was making the same point as the hon. Member for Bassetlaw about self-governing trust hospitals. He wanted to know why we do not have a ballot and ask the patients, doctors, nurses and cleaners. How can we do that? We do not even do that under the present system when there is a proposal to close a hospital. In those circumstances, we consult the people in a proper and statutory fashion through the community health council involved. I believe that a ballot would divide communities and divert valuable resources and attention from patient care. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) will say that I am shooting myself in the foot. How ridiculous. If we do not have a ballot or a referendum when a hospital closes, why should we not use the existing procedure which has worked perfectly for many years to express people's views?

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hayes: No, I want to make progress. The hon. Gentleman will have plenty of opportunities to hold himself spellbound in a few moments.

The shadow health spokesman also said:

> "Under this Bill, the GP will not have the opportunity to send his patients to hospitals at which the district health authority does not have a contract."—[*Official Report*, 7 December 1989; Vol. 163, c. 518-20.]

That is nonsense. It has been made absolutely clear that a special fund will be available for those referrals. Has the shadow health spokesman not read the Bill or the White Paper? Has he not seen the guidance from the Department of Health stating that referrals will be much the same as they are now? Of course he has not. Regrettably that is the mass deception by the Opposition, the BMA and others.

At last the BMA, the presidents of the royal colleges and the other caring professions accept 80 per cent. of the Government's proposals. Some Opposition Members say that the Health Service is just a wonderful quaint museum piece. They believe that we just have to pat it on the shoulder, patronise it and throw it a few more pounds and everything will be all right. Several thousand of my constituents have been waiting 24 months for elective surgery and they waited 12 months before that to see a consultant.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): And the Government are responsible for that.

Mr. Hayes: The hon. Gentleman rather foolishly says that the Government and I are responsible. He knows nothing. The ludicrous and antiquated system of finance which the Bill will change is responsible. That is why I support the Bill.

6.36 pm

Mrs. Rosie Barnes (Greenwich): The Bill has much to commend it, but much more to condemn and criticise. I want to discuss the provision for hospital services in some detail and, if time permits, I will refer briefly to general practitioners and community care.

The Secretary of State for Health must be congratulated on promoting a number of important initiatives within the hospital services—for example, the introduction of capital charging, the development of the resource management initiative and the empowering of the Audit Commission to scrutinise the NHS.

Those three moves should together encourage better financial management of the Health Service. Other welcome aspects include the differentiation between purchasers and providers of service which should clarify the responsibilities in planning and operations, the introduction of clinical audit which will form a better framework from which to assess the effectiveness of the service, the streamlining of district and regional health authorities and the full participation of executive directors which will enhance proper decision-making.

Why, if I find so much in the proposals to applaud, am I so adamantly opposed to them? First, the effectiveness of district health authorities will be seriously eroded by the operation of fund-holding general practitioner practices. It is ironic that after the Government have put so much effort into the development of the public health function within district health authorities over the past two years, they are about to undermine some of those achievements.

The public health departments have been developing two vital functions—they have become increasingly powerful in promoting good clinical practice and they have been acquiring the necessary expertise to anticipate and thus facilitate the timely provision of the services that people need.

I challenge the appropriateness of general practitioners making the market in hospital care. If it is to be made, let the patient do it and let the DHAs play a more pivotal role. The error will be compounded by the limited authority that a DHA will be able to exercise over a National Health Service trust hospital.

A trust hospital may become a model of good practice. If it does, will the local DHA be able to afford comprehensive access to its services? Conversely, a trust might become a bastion of backward-looking practice. Would a DHA then want access to its services?

It is far more likely that NHS trust hospitals will become more interested in the wider market at the expense of the local population. It is vital that a comprehensive definition of care services is incorporated in the Bill to safeguard the interests of local residents.

My third and very important point is that the Minister has failed satisfactorily to integrate the primary service provided by general practitioners and hospitals at local level. I urge him to consider that fundamental problem. District health trusts, as a sensible, comprehensive alternative to self-governing hospitals, would enable district health authorities to ensure that proper services were provided within their areas, and to plan strategically for all the local population. They would also facilitate smoother transition from one part of the service to another, and thus deal with a considerable flaw in the current proposals.

Fourthly, and critically, the Minister has failed to demonstrate any grasp of the dynamic relationship between quality, cost and timeliness. He talks glibly of raising the standards of all to the standard of the best, but fails to acknowledge that authorities have already been deciding on differing priorities for the best local use of scarce resources. We must ask the Minister to include absolute commitment to quality in the Bill, as well as clinical audit. Quality figures large in the White Paper but appears to be absent from the Bill, which is an unsatisfactory state of affairs. "Quality" must include adequate provision, accessibility and reasonable waiting times. While I am on the subject of quality, let me also ask the Government to make an unequivocal commitment to the work on "total quality" being carried out by the Kings Fund in its hospital accreditation programme.

The Minister is to be congratulated in part on the proposals for GPs, who will certainly be more accountable for the services that they provide. I doubt, however, whether the new contract arrangements imposed on them will resource them adequately for their new responsibilities. I have already spoken at length in the House on my misgivings about fund-holding GPs' practices in conjunction with NHS trust hospitals, and the unwelcome complication that financial considerations will introduce to the relationship between GPs and their patients.

Let me devote the remainder of my speech to the community care aspect of the Bill, which I think is long overdue and has tended to be ignored. Again, I must give credit where it is due: the Government must be congratulated on facilitating better differentiation between residential care, community or social care and the medical components of the service, while balancing that with a commitment to the joint working of all three. What is entirely unsatisfactory, however, is the lack of definition in the allocation of responsibilities.

We have two key anxieties. First, we fear that the Government will progressively make more demands on local authorities to fund local services directly—and, as we all know, the areas in greatest need are often those least able to afford such services. Secondly, the Government are

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demonstrating an unnecessary bias against the direct provision of residential accommodation by local authorities. We support a mixed market; if the Government truly supported that, they would have the courage of their convictions and allow local authority provision to flourish where it is working.

Finally, let me make some general points covering all aspects of the Bill. First, I am concerned about the speed of change. The problems involved in this development are highly complex, not least in the way in which they are interrelated, but the targets are over-ambitious in their timing and owe more to party-polital considerations than to professionalism and concern for patients' well-being.

Secondly, I am worried about the lack of genuine choice. There has been some slight modification to the way in which patients may choose their GPs, but the rest follows automatically and they will have very little say. As the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) said earlier in the debate, the patient follows the money rather the money following the patient; the patient travels with the money but the money does not travel with the patient, as Conservative Members claimed earlier this evening.

I am also very concerned about the lack of patients' rights. There are no tangible commitments or improvements, particularly as regards waiting time. I refer hon. Members to the amendment that I tabled, along with others, to the Health and Medicines Bill, proposing that statutory times should be laid down for treatment to be delivered, and for patients to exercise their right to go elsewhere if their own health authority could not deliver that treatment. If that provision were in the Bill the money would truly follow the patients, and they would have more control over their share of the Health Service's money.

Resourcing is a major problem. The Government's achievements in that respect—as we hear week after week from the Dispatch Box—cannot be ignored or denied, but in return they must acknowledge that genuine need continues to outstrip their commitment to provide, especially in view of the aging population and the increasingly technological service that is now available across the board. In particular, the Minister must acknowledge that the great majority of the development moneys that he gave the NHS recently will be absorbed by inflation and the financing of existing workloads.

I agree that the NHS requires organisational development to promote changes in its management and clinical practices, but I am concerned that the Government have responded by foisting on the service their uniform precription for the public sector: it is inadequate, it is dangerous and, in its present form, it must be rejected.

6.46 pm

Mr. Michael Irvine (Ispwich): Scaremongering and distortion have been the characteristics of the campaign against the Government's plans for reforming the National Health Service. I am afraid that both have been very much in evidence in many Labour speeches in this debate.

Another feature of the opposition to the proposals for reform, and to the Bill, has been the almost unremittingly negative character of the criticisms that have been made. It seems that the only answer to the problems of the National Health Service from Labour Members and others who campaign against the Government's proposals is a call for more resources. They are on dangerous ground there, because the record shows that, far from being a poor provider of resources, the Government have been a very good provider. My hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) produced the acid figure: a real-terms spending increase of 45 per cent. since the Government came to power in 1979. Such a figure really stands up to examination; it shows the merit of the Government's health policy, and their ability to provide the necessary resources.

It is not just a matter of resources, however. The key question is how we apply those resources. The great weakness in the present structure of the NHS is that it simply does not give sufficient account to cost. It does not reward efficiency; all too often indeed it stifles and suffocates good management. Several Conservative Members have given examples of how, time and again—especially at this time of year—hospital beds are left empty and operating facilities left unused.

Why does that happen? Sometimes, but not always, it is due to bad management. Sometimes, however, it is the hospitals that have been particularly efficient, have maintained a good patient throughput and carried out more than their fair share of operations that run short of resources. The proposals for self-governing hospitals are directed towards remedying that fundamental flaw in the system. The managers of self-governing hospitals will be free to manage. They will be free to attract to the National Health Service those staff for whom there is a particular need. They will be free to provide incentives to overcome shortages. They will be able to make their hospitals more efficient, to make the administration more flexible and to make their hospitals more responsive to patients' wishes and better able to provide a better quality of patient care.

That new freedom for management will have an additional effect. It will make it more likely that higher-calibre managers will be attracted into the National Health Service——

Mr. McCartney: Will the hon. Gentleman explain the new freedom for managers? I refer to the Atherleigh hospital near my constituency, which cares for the elderly confused and those with senile dementia. Because of the shortfall in his budget, the district general manager gave 24 hours' notice to the community health council that he was closing the hospital and moving out as many patients as possible to the private sector. That was done without consultation with patients' representatives, their families or the community health council. Is that the type of management decision that will be taken because of unit costs and the need for local decision-making at Health Service district management level?

Mr Irvine: I shall not follow the hon. Gentleman down that rather dangerous road into a precise problem affecting his constituency. However, perhaps the problem that he has identified shows that at the moment the National Health Service is not working as effectively as it should.

There is one element of the criticisms that have been made about self-governing hospitals of which the Government should take careful note. An effective point was put to me by hospital doctors and consultants in my constituency when I met them. It is that there is some risk that self-governing hospitals may be tempted to skimp on medical training and education. I have in mind the education and training not only of doctors and consultants, but of radiographers, technicians, nurses and others. There is also a risk that self-governing hospitals might be tempted to skimp on research and development. There is just an element of risk that some self-governing hospitals might not provide the resources that they should in those directions. We need to guard against that risk. Therefore, I was glad to hear my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health say on Thursday that he will indeed be on guard against that risk, that there are powers in the Bill to enable him to intervene if he feels that that is the case in any particular self-governing hospital and that he will stand ready to use those powers.

Basically, I have no doubt that self-governing hospitals are an excellent idea. We should remember that they are optional. No hospital will be forced to become self governing against its will. Why then is there such hostility to the idea? I suspect that much of the opposition to self-governing hospitals is based on the fear that they will be successful and show up those hospitals that are badly administered and not up to standard. Self-governing hospitals will set a standard by which others are judged. That point is at the heart of much of the fear about self-governing hospitals and of the hysterical campaign that has been mounted against them.

If there has been scaremongering and distortion about self-governing hospitals, there has also been quite a bit of the same about indicative drug budgets. For the vast majority of responsible and able doctors who prescribe sensibly and effectively and who have a proper regard for costs, indicative drug budgets hold no fears. The budgets are directed against the minority of doctors who prescribe wastefully. They are directed against those who prescribe Valium as if it were bubble gum and who do not have a proper regard for costs. If good doctors who prescribe carefully overrun their budgets, they will be able to justify that overrun by referring to special aspects of their practice affecting their need to prescribe. It will be the small minority of wasteful doctors who have no regard for costs who will be caught out.

I am glad that the principle of the proper allocation of resources will characterise the new framework for community care. The great dangers to effective community care services are duplication, lack of co-ordination, overlap and fragmentation. By providing clear lines of accountability and care packages for individual patients, the Griffiths proposals will do a lot to overcome that risk. They will help to reduce waste and will save resources. Those resources will be needed because there is no doubt that community care will be expensive in the coming years, partly because of demography and the increase in the age of the population but also because the increased efficiency of the National Health Service, which I believe will result from these proposals, will place greater demands on community care. More operations will be carried out and people will be discharged from hospital at an earlier stage of their treatment. That in turn will place greater burdens on community care services.

In my constituency of Ipswich much strain has been placed on the home help service, not because of any reduction in the amount of money being devoted to the home help service, but because people are being discharged from hospital at an earlier stage of their treatment. This means that personal care from the home help service is becoming increasingly in demand. As a result, strains are building up on the home help service. However, by providing a more efficient framework——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but he has overrun his time. I call Mr. Bradley.

6.57 pm

Mr. Keith Bradley (Manchester, Withington): I thank you for calling me to speak in the debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because this issue is of immense importance to my constituents. Indeed, no more important area of concern has been expressed in correspondence from consultants, doctors, and the general public than the reform of the National Health Service.

We cannot discuss the Bill without considering resource allocations—on which the Bill is silent. Whether we are talking about hospital services, community services or general practitioner services, the Government's proposals are silent on the need for extra resources. Ministers trot out figures time and again about the extra money that is spent on the Health Service, but they never put that in the context of the extra demands for health care, the growing numbers of elderly people who need health care and the new technologies that increase the cost of health care.

We should consider the Bill in the light of what is found in individual health authorities, such as my own in south Manchester. It has been suffering from a financial crisis for many years and, despite all the cost improvement programmes that it has implemented, it is now £1·5 million short in its budget for this financial year. The health authority has therefore had to freeze vacancies, and 120 posts in the provision of health care have been lost this year.

Despite repeated representations to the Secretary of State for Health for more resources for south Manchester, he has refused to entertain our request. The latest letter that we have received from him shows his thinking on how that financial crisis has arisen. He says:

> "I do not know whether the clinical regrading costs arise from previous errors in the original gradings or over-generous findings on appeal."

The Secretary of State says that one reason for the problem is that south Manchester health authority, when it was assessing the grade of staff in the nursing service, was overgenerous, and gave them more money than it should have. That is the sort of Secretary of State we have; that is how he considers the needs of our staff.

What is the health authority now doing to save money because of the financial crisis? It has published a consultation document on rationalisation of the service. That means further cuts in service. The document does not identify how much money it intends to save or give the figures. We can be sure that two things will be lost in south Manchester: the accident and emergency department at Wythenshawe hospital will be closed for major accidents and transferred to Withington—Wythenshawe is next to Manchester airport, but it will not have a major accident service—and Withington hospital maternity unit will be closed, with all mothers transferred to Wythenshawe. What patient choice does that mean?

Let us consider the Second Reading debate to date. When asked about obstetric services, the Secretary of State said:

> "The other day, it was hinted that expectant mothers may lose local obstetric services because of our proposals. That is

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nonsense. No right hon. or hon. Member would suggest any of that rubbish."—[*Official Report*, 7 November 1989; Vol. 163, c. 503.]

South Manchester is having to close maternity services to save money. Can we believe the Secretary of State's statements about the Bill?

I have the unhappy task of trying to defend one of the hospitals that is on the Government's long shortlist for opting out—Christie hospital in south Manchester.

The Secretary of State justified opting out, saying that it will free nurses and doctors who have been frustrated by the constraints of bureaucracy for years, and will allow them to use their abilities and to work as they wish. When I asked doctors, consultants and nurses why they had expressed an interest in opting out, they identified one reason—lack of cash. They are heartily sick of a Health Service in which they cannot provide care to the number of patients they want because they are short of resources. That is the only reason why they have expressed an interest in opting out. They do not want to go down that road, but they want to get more money out of the Government. They are appalled that the regional health authority is bringing in extra staff to develop plans for opting out when there is a freeze on nurses' jobs in the hospital. There is a freeze on nursing staff, but more accountants can come into the Health Service. That shows the strength of the Government's commitment.

A meeting of 185 local doctors in Manchester and of the local medical committee passed a resolution that was in absolute opposition to the Government's plans for GP services. GPs are fearful, regardless of the assurances given by the Secretary of State, about what cash-limited budgets will mean for the service delivered. As my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) said, what is happening to the social fund is a good example.

Last weekend a constituent came to me because she had been refused a community care grant. She was told that there was no money left in the budget. After further investigation, I found out that the Department of Social Security is having to reassess priorities within the budget, because the cash is running out rapidly. If my constituent had gone to the DSS earlier in the year, she would have got a grant, but at this stage, because of the change in priorities, she will not. GPs fear that the same thing will happen with their practice budgets. They may be able to prescribe a particular treatment for one patient at the beginning of the year, but when money is getting short they may have to prescribe another treatment for a similar patient later in the year.

General practitioners are worried that they will not have the capital that they need to develop their clinics and practices to meet the demands of the extra treatment that they will have to undertake.

In my area of Chorlton, the local health centre is already bursting at the seams. There is no room for a typewriter let alone a computer to undertake the administration that will be imposed by the Bill.

General practitioners are anxious because they already face restrictions on where they can send patients. Last week they received a letter from the regional health authority which said that, because of financial and manpower resources constraints, neurosurgery would be limited to which hospital a particular doctor in a particular area could send his patients. We already have restrictions on patient choice, and the Bill will make that worse.

Finally, GPs are concerned that waiting lists will be transferred from the hospital to the GP's practice. GPs will have to determine where to send patients, but the amount allowed for under the contract with a particular hospital for a range of services may have run out. The waiting list will be at the GP's door, not at the hospital's door.

Our opposition to the Bill is summed up best by a letter that I received from a constituent. He clearly reflects the Labour party's view when he says:

"I am an ordinary citizen, with a wife, three young children, and elderly parents. We all have cause to be thankful that our GPs have given us the best treatment they could provide to meet our needs, rather than the best treatment they could offer within the limits of their local budgets. And they have referred us to hospitals near our homes which provided services the population needed, rather than those which managers decided they could market efficiently. I would like it to stay that way, and if that means I must pay more in tax, I will pay more in tax. I have never before written to make my feelings known to a Member of Parliament. That I do so now is a measure of my profound opposition to the Government's proposals."

That letter is one of thousands that I have received. The people of Manchester and the other people of Britain will totally oppose the Bill.

7.7 pm

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in this debate because I am grateful for the Bill. It will herald a new era for the National Health Service and will turn it into the thriving, expanding concern that is should be.

My constituents will benefit substantially from the proposals for self-governing hospitals. They will also benefit substantially from the greater flexibility in referral patterns, and the greater knowledge that will be available to doctors about where waiting lists are shortest.

It is a matter of considerable regret to me that my constituents, in particular the elderly, the sick and the vulnerable, should have been frightened and misled by the utterly irresponsible campaign waged by the British Medical Association.

An example of the way that my constituents have been frightened is that sick and elderly people have been literally shaking with fear when they come to my surgery. They told me that they would not be able to get medicine because their doctors would no longer be allowed to prescribe it when it became too expensive.

The Secretary of State said, from the outset, that indicative budgets would not be cash limited. On the basis of those assurances, which he gave time and time again, I was able to circulate a leaflet to all my constituents, telling them that there was no truth in the BMA's claims.

Several months later, when the BMA realised that it could not sustain its lies any longer, it said that the Secretary of State had done a U-turn, and had now said that indicative budgets would not be cash limited. That leaves us with three possible options. First, that the BMA simply did not understand what the Secretary of State was saying right at the beginning, and genuinely did not realise that drug budgets would not be cash limited. If that is the case, it is too stupid to represent a highly-educated profession. Secondly, it is possible that the BMA understood perfectly but chose to ignore it, and pushed it to one side. In that case, it is too irresponsible to represent a highly-respected profession. The third option is that the

BMA understood, did not ignore it, but thought that it would be effective if it could frighten people, so deliberately deceived the elderly, sick and vulnerable into believing that drug budgets would be cash limited. If it did that, it is too thoroughly dishonest to represent any profession which acted more like trade union bully boys than a group of respectable professionals.

I am not surprised that two of the most respected local consultants in my constituency have resigned from the BMA and I am not surprised when local doctors tell me that they believe the BMA's campaign has been wholly unjustified. I think that, as the public realise that the BMA has misled them about indicative drug budgets, about the effects of opting out and about the effects of independent budget holding, the professional relationship between doctor and patient will be damaged far more than by anything that the Government are proposing.

If the BMA wants to hold the confidence of the public, it should start to tell the truth pretty soon. I am delighted to have the Opposition Front Bench's confirmation that drug budgets will not be cash limited.

Meanwhile, my constituents can be assured that they will benefit from the fact that, if Maidstone hospital chooses to become self-governing—I do not know whether it will—it will be able to fix pay and conditions there. One of the biggest problems that we have in the south-east is recruitment. Flexibility on pay and conditions will make it much simpler to cope with that problem.

If there is one thing that I regret about the White Paper it is that it did not seize the opportunity to hold all consultant contracts at district rather than regional health authority level. It does not allow even self-governing hospitals to take on existing contracts rather than just new ones. For a self-governing hospital to be truly effective, it must have complete flexibility over who it employs, and consultants are obviously a key to the services that a hospital provides.

We in Maidstone are efficient. Every year we have an enormously ambitious budget, and every year we comfortably exceed our activity levels. In future, with money following the patient, that will not lead to our being confronted with budget problems at the end of the year. We shall no longer be penalised for being efficient. I believe that the people of Maidstone will benefit greatly from the Bill.

When I first came to the House, many constituents came to me complaining that they had been on waiting lists for too long and asking me whether they could go anywhere else to get operations done more quickly. Although I willingly took it on, it did not seem my role as a Member of Parliament to shop around the country on behalf of my constituents, so it is much to be welcomed that the technology which is to be made available will enable doctors to get speedy and efficient information on where there are shorter waiting lists. They will be able to give their patients a better service, and patients will not have to ask their Member of Parliament to do the shopping around for them. That will be an enormous plus.

For all those reasons, I believe that the Bill is one of the best things that has happened for Britain, especially for my constituents. What I regret most is the party politicisation of a major asset such as the NHS. Opposition Members should join us to make these proposals work so that we can guarantee the future of the service.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): It is party political when the district health authority confronts massive cuts every year. This year, my local authority faces yet another £500,000 cut. How can the hon. Lady think that that is not a political issue? People on waiting lists in my constituency think that it is political, and blame the hon. Lady's party.

Miss Widdecombe: The hon. Lady should be honest enough to tell her constituents that my party is not to blame, and that the problem is a thoroughly overburdened system that will be much relieved by these reforms. Precisely because we have such problems, we should pull together to make the reforms work. Subject to refinements of detail, which I think necessary, particularly in regard to referral patterns, these reforms provide a basis for the future. They should not have become the object of party politics. They should be the object of a good, thorough, thriving, expanding, researching, developing and serving British health service for a century to come.

7.14 pm

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): The National Health Service is not above criticism. It is not an untouchable monument. Indeed, it is no more unassailable than the former Chancellor of the Exchequer was.

The NHS has been scarred by many shortcomings in many of its facets, whether lengthy waiting lists, miserable waiting rooms or a minority of consultants and registrars who seem to belong to a James Robertson Justice impersonators' club treating patients with all the sensitivity and delicacy of a vet treating sheep for wind.

Likewise, the managers of the NHS, like any management of a large high-spending organisation, need constant monitoring. I do not argue with any of that. Whatever its faults, however, the NHS was recognised as being infinitely preferable to the private service and panel systems which it replaced in the late 1940s. Indeed, it became during subsequent decades the most public image of governments and societies which viewed the health of the nation as a matter not to be determined by the vagaries of personal wealth or the market.

During the past 40 years, the British people have come to regard the NHS almost as a birthright—the right of access to the best health care that can be provided, regardless of personal or corporate wealth. Most of us have moaned and groaned about the Health Service, but most of us are also inordinately proud and fond of it.

That is why, it seems to me, the British people have reacted with such vehemence and distaste to key aspects of the Government's proposals. They regard the Health Service—general practitioners, practices, local hospitals and the long-term care facilities for the chronically sick and infirm—as a keystone in the structure of their communities. They do not want that keystone to be loosened. They do not want their elderly and very young to be hawked around in search of health care as their young are now being made to hawk themselves around in search of jobs in a metropolis such as this. They do not believe that health is a marketable product, but the Government do.

The proof is in the Bill, or rather it is evident in what is not in the Bill. It is evident in the lack of explanation of what is to happen to those vital elements of NHS provision which relate to care of the chronically ill, the elderly and the mentally ill and to those areas of the NHS which cannot be milked for a fast buck.

[Dr. Kim Howells]

The Bill smells of the same oily rag which the Government have used to clear the decks for the privatisation of other public services. The people know that smell, and it angers them. They want to know why the Bill does not concern itself with resolving the many problems that beset the NHS. The Bill will solve none of those problems. It has been drafted by a Government who are deaf to the huge sigh of protest and concern that has greeted it. The Bill is an abrogation of responsibility. It is drafted by a Government who are drunk on bootleg privatisation. I rejoice in the knowledge that that deafness and this ideological drunkenness will drag the Government to a well-deserved resting place at some miserable footnote on a page of history that most of us would have much preferred never to have read.

7.18 pm

Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes (Wimbledon): I have hitherto been reluctant to speak on the Government's proposals for the reform of the National Health Service. There are times when one is almost too close to an issue, caught between one's profession and one's political colleagues. Since becoming a medical student some 25 years ago, I have had more than a passing experience of the great matters involved, and I am grateful for the opportunity to comment on some of them today.

St. Bartholomew's, where I trained, is arguably the oldest London teaching hospital as it was founded in 1123. St. Bartholomew's hospital has continuously adapted and developed for the past 866 years. It strikes me as peculiar in the extreme to assume that, after a mere 41 years, the National Health Service is incapable of modification and improvement. Indeed, any suggestion of change is interpreted in some quarters as an attack on the whole concept of the NHS.

It was with distinct unease that I watched the posturing and skirmishes of the past few months. I imply a degree of blame on the Government, the Opposition and the British Medical Association respectively. I am utterly convinced that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State was right to extend to the NHS the challenge presented to so many of the institutions and vested interests in our society. We have tackled the City, trade unions, the teaching profession and the legal system. We have made them justify their practices or abandon them —all this in the interests of the consumer. Why should the medical profession be immune?

As a practising physician and a non-practising barrister I suppose that I have cause to feel singled out for persecution. I make no complaint about that, but it was as a member of a trade union—the BMA—that I felt most uncomfortable. It was with astonishment and sadness that I saw the discredited techniques of old-style trade unionism adopted by a professional body. I cannot believe that ultimately it was in the interest of anyone to frighten vulnerable people in surgeries across the country with alarmist and mischievous literature. From sheer misinformation to merely putting the worst possible construction on virtually all the proposals in "Working for Patients", the BMA let itself down. However, I have had a series of civilised and constructive meetings with the chairman of the BMA council and his senior colleagues. We all agreed that it was time that peace broke out.

In extensive consultations with general practitioners and hospital doctors in my constituency anxieties have been aired and misunderstandings ironed out. I welcome the Government's flexible reaction to various practical objections which proved valid. Nothing is more unsettling than uncertainty. The sooner that we move on the better.

The latest BMA literature uses the recurring theme of "risk of failure", a phrase which is hardly indicative of enlightened and optimistic thinking for the future. If the Government had baulked at the formidable range of problems presented to them during the past decade because of the risk of failure, their achievements would have been minimal.

I have worked as a hospital doctor in various parts of the country. Despite believing that NHS treatment is the best in the world from a professional point of view, I recoil with horror at memories of queues of out-patients where tens of people were given identical appointment times. They waited phlegmatically and passively in outdated and uncomfortable hospital buildings that were either too hot or too cold. I recall the impersonal, condescending and sometimes almost patronising attitude of administrators, doctors, clerks and technicians. I remember the wastage of materials and time. I remember the blunderbuss ordering of expensive, poorly directed investigations into problems and the haphazard methods by which patients were called forward for admission. In out-patient departments people traipsed from the examination cubicle to further waits outside the X-ray department or blood laboratory and so on. It would be a rash person who, including travel by public transport, assumed that the whole process would take less than half a day. What happened next? They were told to come back in a week's time. They were extremely lucky to see the same doctor. Results were often delayed or mislaid or fell foul of technical problems and tests would have to be repeated.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: No, I shall not give way because of the time limit.

I make no apology for putting over that litany. I do not say that that position was universal, but in every constituency one could still walk into an out-patient department and see a picture similar to the one that I have painted. The medical treatment may have been excellent, but did the patient come away feeling that he had been served by the National Health Service?

In the first day of this debate, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State said:

> "Patients also tolerate variations in the times for which they must wait for treatment, and . . . facilities".—*[Official Report*, 7 December 1989; Vol. 163, c. 500.]

He will agree with me that in the 1990s the time for tolerating inadequate services is over. His enlightened proposals should increase the pace of change for the better. Administrators and doctors should no longer communicate badly with each other, and with nurses, physiotherapists and technicians and all the people who make the management of a hospital possible. Good management and good morale follow each other inseparably.

So much for personal accountability. What about financial accountability? A whole generation of doctors, patients and politicians have grown up knowing nothing other than the welfare state and the NHS. It may be free at the point of delivery and financed mainly out of general taxation, but who knows the cost of anything? Only relatively recently have the best GPs become conscious of the cost of drugs, dressings and so on. How many know the cost of operations in the local hospital? More importantly perhaps, do the hospitals themselves know the cost of the operations carried out in them? Do they ever question the bed-stay times in different hospitals for identical operations, or, indeed, the waiting lists in different hospitals where the same surgeon operates? It is hardly surprisng that doctors have been labelled bad managers when they lack the data on which to make decisions and thus the opportunity to debunk that fallacy.

We know the argument that medicine cannot be equated with a production line. However, the NHS cannot be regarded as immune from normal financial pressures. There is nothing paradoxical about a service run on prudent and businesslike lines. For far too long, this Government as well as their predecessors have chucked money at problems instead of solving them—a palliative if ever there was one. If each family had been asked to write a cheque for £35 each week of the year, specifically for the NHS, I suspect that minds would have been concentrated earlier.

I commend wholeheartedly the combination of GP practice budgets, now called practice funds, and self-governing hospitals, now called NHS hospital trusts. I believe that each will play a part in increasing choice, efficiency and accountability linked to a developing internal market. I also hope that the new term "self-governing hospitals" will lay to rest the label "opting out" which is used with great effect but a lack of honesty by the Opposition. The Opposition's representation of self-governing hospitals has resulted in many people needing to be convinced that, far from opting out, NHS hospitals will opt in to a new standard of excellence in a service held in such great affection by the British people.

I entirely endorse my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's statement that the NHS should be so good that no one will want to go to the private sector. I say that as a practising physician in the private sector—*[Interruption.]*—no member of whose family has ever been treated other than in the NHS. My wife, my two sons and I have all been in-patients in the NHS during the past 10 years and have much admired the treatment that we were given.

I welcome the biggest ever increase in the health budget announced in the Autumn Statement. Extra resources will go towards provision of new consultant posts, proper audits for managers, improved information technology and medical audits. Now at last Britain's biggest enterprise will have the opportunity to move away from charity, paternalism and rationing as we prepare for the next century in a time of great demographic and technological change.

The ultimate test for the efficacy of the Government's proposals will be whether the changes are perceived to be for the better by the only person who matters—the patient. I am confident that owing to my right hon. and learned Friend's persistence—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but he has overrun his time.

7.29 pm

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): I do not wish to follow the arguments of the hon. Member for Wimbledon (Dr. Goodson-Wickes) or those deployed by the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes), whose contribution was a sharp reminder to us all that the pantomime season is upon us.

My hon. Friends and I could talk at great length about the deep resentment of our constituents—doctors, nurses, ancillary workers, patients and would-be patients—about the monstrous proposals in the Bill, but, because of the restriction on time, I shall confine my remarks to part III which relates to community care.

Many hon. Members said that the Secretary of State for Scotland did not mention the Bill when he introduced the debate. If hon. Members look at *Hansard* tomorrow, they will see that the words "community care" did not pass his lips. At least I can agree on one aspect of the Government's approach. Despite the shilly-shallying following the Griffiths report, they took notice of the advice of those consulted and agreed to let local authorities take charge of community care. That is where my appreciation ends. It is unfortunate and arouses much suspicion that the Government do not seem prepared to give the community care part of the Bill much debating time. That has been amply demonstrated.

Since the Bill was produced only five working days after the White Paper was published, there has been no time for consultation. If hon. Gentlemen wish confirmation of that, they should look at their postbags today. They will find that many organisations have submitted views on the White Paper and the Bill, but they are too late for inclusion in this debate.

Community care is of particular concern. As the House is aware, there are already some 6 million disabled people with about the same number of unpaid carers. By the year 2001, the number of people aged 65 and over will have reached 9 million, 1·15 million of whom will be over 85. The Bill in no way addresses itself to the magnitude of that problem.

The Government may well have appointed local authorities to play a leading role in community care, but as usual they are unwilling to provide the resources that are essential for the system to function properly. The Bill is insubstantial. It needs to spell out clearly what is expected of local authorities which are undergoing ever-increasing demand on their ever-decreasing resources. The rhetoric of the White Paper has not been translated by the Bill into definitive proposals for action.

To arrange, organise and devise the necessary services is a mammoth task which has huge resource implications. Again, the legislation lacks detail. How much cash will be available is open to speculation, as we know from arguments already made. By channelling money through the revenue support grant, there is every likelihood that some of it will be diverted into other urgent projects, and we cannot blame local authorities for doing so.

In order to force local authorities to put their elderly people's homes up for sale, or, as the Government put it, to give them

"every incentive to make use of the independent sector",

the funding policy of the legislation deliberately discriminates in favour of private residential care at the expense of public provision. Clearly, that enables the Government to deny that they are introducing compulsory

[Mr. Tom Pendry]

privatisation of care, while effectively doing so for all but the severest of cases. As the House knows, the tendering is to be policed by the Secretary of State for Health who will "issue direction" and "give guidance", whatever that means, to authorities that do not seem to be doing their utmost to stimulate privatisation.

Will the Minister for Health spell out what powers she intends to take to ensure that local authorities comply with community care plans? How is it possible for local authorities to balance this form of compulsory tendering to the private sector with the requirement to retain facilities where needed? Obviously, the Government have in mind commercially unattractive areas of the market with what they term "challenging patterns of behaviour", which the private sector will not touch with a barge pole.

Private sector homes will probably concentrate their efforts on the 40 per cent. of the elderly who do not need financial assistance from the state. Others will be cared for in the community—or so the Government envisage. The White Paper called on local authorities to support unpaid carers, yet the Bill does not provide the means for them to do so. By encouraging private sector service provision, the Government believe that that vulnerable sector of society will benefit from the increase in choice, but, as with so many of the Government's ideas, that so-called choice exists only for those who can afford it.

How can the provision of home helps be both good business for the private sector and yet affordable to the average pensioner, without there being a lowering of carers' working conditions and wages? Why should the elderly and disabled be subjected to the risk of corner cutting and slipshod standards, which will almost certainly arise from accepting the lowest bids for private sector services?

he legislation seeks to encourage the voluntary sector to play an even greater role in care provision, while failing yet again to provide the resources needed to fund such a change. I have discussed the Bill's proposals with many national and voluntary organisations, of which Crossroads is the largest. It provides direct services to the disabled and to informal carers and families in their homes.

Crossroads can give voluntary help to 12,000 families, but it already has 7,000 on its waiting list. It has told me that it fears that funding will be insufficient to fulfil all the unmet needs that already exist in our constituencies and that voluntary funding is not a realistic option. It raises as many funds as possible, but it cannot possibly be expected to meet all the cost by voluntary donation. Many depend on joint finance and are worried that local authorities will not pick up the bill, should joint finance come to an end, as the legislation implies.

Crossroads has monitored a marked tendency among local authorities to focus dwindling resources on the highly dependent. If the legislation is implemented, even greater numbers of such people will be dependent on community care and local authorities will be forced to prioritise even further. Naturally, they will focus on the most dependent. That will leave carers, already a low priority group, even further out on a limb, increasingly burdened and possibly receiving poor standards of help.

My local borough of Tameside has informed me that it may well prove difficult to develop the voluntary sector as the Government want. Despite good contacts with Age Concern and other organisations, a common voice is lacking and there is little tradition of these groups working together.

The Bill is a direct attack on the quality of life of many women in society, as women make up the vast majority of paid and unpaid carers. The provision on contracting out community care poses a threat to many jobs, especially among members of my sponsoring union NUPE. Those who manage to keep their jobs are likely to see pay and conditions deteriorate under the private sector. The legislation will lead to yet more women taking on the role of unpaid carer while receiving no extra financial help, at a time when the poll tax will add yet another heavy burden to their daily lives.

This commercialisation of community care has been described as a "charter for despair". How true that description is. It is hardly surprising, knowing the Government's record, that the old, the disabled and the mentally handicapped now have cause to feel as though they have a shelf life rather than that they deserve a life which can be both longer and of greater quality.

7.38 pm

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): As my right hon. Friends have recognised, the National Health Service is not a sacred cow that is incapable of reform. The 1987 Conservative manifesto suggested reforms. Now we face the reality of the considerations to change and improve it. The emphasis is on patient care. The Bill is about improving the standards of care for patients. If we look at the Bill from that point of view, we are looking at the driving force behind it.

The new system is patient-led. It is based on demand and the needs of the patient. The money will follow the patient. We have tackled the problems connected with waiting lists and the closure of wards. Nobody has considered in the past where the demand really lies. With money following the patient, it will be made available where that demand exists. The demand is for hip replacements and cataract operations. They are among many of the items towards which Ministers have directed their waiting list initiative.

There was a real need to tackle the problems in the National Health Service. Two years ago there were articles in the press and letters from our constituents suggesting that the NHS needed to be reformed. We have now devised a solution. It may not be acceptable to the Opposition, for the simple reason that we have not followed the old formula of throwing money at the problem and hoping that money will solve it. Money has to be adequately and efficiently spent if we are to provide maximum care for the patient.

The Opposition can tell us nothing about care. In the 1970s when the Labour Government were in office there was a cut of one third in the hospital capital building programme. That is why so many people have had to wait for a very long time for new hospitals. Waiting lists increased by 250,000 and nurses' pay decreased by a fifth. There was a 3 per cent. cut in real terms in the National Health Service budget for 1977-78. The Opposition cannot, I repeat, tell us anything and they have offered no solutions in the debate. The public will judge them on their record. When the Bill is considered in Committee, the

Opposition will have to table amendments, which presumably will be based on the Opposition's ideas. We shall then be able to judge them.

Various criticisms have been levelled at the Bill, including GP budgets. They do not exist; there is simply a guide for GPs as to the money available to them. Information about the treatments that a general practitioner has prescribed over the past three years can be fed into a computer. That will include the background and the age profile of the GP's panel. It can be allied to the panel's prescription patterns. It enables one to find out what the general practitioner is likely to spend on his patients in the forthcoming year. That is a sensible approach. We need to know what will be spent on patient care. The system is based on technology.

If my constituents believe that the Government are imposing a cash limit on the budget for GP treatment, or the drugs that are prescribed, ignoring the fact that a doctor may have heart bypass patients, or AIDS patients, or people suffering from influenza, they must think that we are well and truly off our trolleys. The system has been devised to give guidance on how much money is spent, and that is all.

The funding of the National Health Service has not changed. It is paid for by taxation and it is free at the point of delivery. All that has changed is the organisation of the funding, and the public should have no fears.

On drugs and practice budgets, who will decide whether prescribing practice is adequate for modern treatments? That will not be decided by officials or Members of Parliament. Doctors will examine the practice of their fellow doctors. They will decide whether, in certain circumstances, it is reasonable to prescribe a certain drug, or whether there is an adequate generic substitute. Judgments will be made by one doctor about other doctors. Clinical decisions will not be made by those who are not qualified to make them. Doctors will make them.

It has been suggested that because the money will follow the patient, he will be sent to the hospital that can provide the cheapest treatment and that he may have to travel a very long way for it. Today, 80 per cent. of patients are treated in their local hospitals. That pattern will, I am sure, continue. The hospital in my area is small and relies for certain essential services on hospitals in Liverpool, Manchester and Wigan. It will continue to rely on them for those services. If, however, there is a waiting list in a certain area, the patient will be able to say to his GP, "I need care urgently: can you look, using the new technology, for a bed somewhere else so that I can get help quickly?" No patient will be obliged to go to the hospital with which the GP has an arrangement. He will be able to choose his GP, the hospital and the consultant. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland said that there will be a fund for those cases.

The role of the district health authority will be crucial. People have asked how the provision of health care for particular groups will be protected under the new system. It will be protected because of the obligation on the district health authority to provide a full range of health care for the people in its area. In the vast majority of cases, people will follow the pattern of the past and go to their local hospital. For my constituents, for example, I expect some treatments to be available in Wigan, Manchester and Liverpool, but it will be for the DHA to ensure proper provision for their health care is made.

Hospitals, it is claimed, will be able to opt out. That is nonsense. They will be NHS hospitals, controlled by the NHS and funded by central Government. The Government have provided a 45 per cent. increase in real terms in health care. It has tripled since 1979——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Mr. Doug Hoyle.

7.48 pm

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): As the joint president of the Manufacturing, Science and Finance Union I do not intend to refer to matters that have already been discussed. I intend to refer to the forgotten people, the 40,000 members, apart from junior hospital doctors, whom MSF represents. Most of them are speech therapists, clinical psychologists, medical laboratory scientific officers and hospital pharmacists.

I know that the House has a great deal of goodwill towards speech therapists. An early-day motion signed by 96 hon. Members recognises that speech therapists in the Health Service are being treated most unfairly. Despite being highly skilled professionals, they are badly paid because it is almost entirely a female profession. Speech therapists are badly paid compared with other professions in the Health Service. We in MSF consider that they should be comparable with other professions such as clinical psychologists and hospital pharmacists. We are waiting for a review tribunal to look into the matter. Meanwhile, speech therapists have been offered an increase of only 6·5 per cent. and that is causing a great deal of concern. I received a letter from a speech therapist who has been qualified for 33 years, yet her salary is only £10,947. Will the Minister who replies to the debate say what the Bill offers speech therapists as a profession?

Clinical psychologists are also highly qualified but they are leaving the Health Service in droves because the pay in the Health Service does not compare with that in the private sector. In the private sector they are used in top management and would not receive below £30,000 but at the top grade in the Health Service they receive just over £28,000. The Department of Health commissioned management consultants MAS for advice on clinical psychologists. There are rumours that the advice was that the conditions and salaries of clinical psychologists should be compared with those of consultants. Can the Minister confirm whether that is true?

Hospital pharmacists are also on the front line. The Bill is the thin end of the wedge for privatisation. It has started in Greater Glasgow health board which is the largest regional health service in Britain. It was caught out because it placed a notice in the official journal of the European Community asking for private companies to tender for pharmacy and laboratory work. Studies are still being undertaken but there is no doubt whatsoever about its intentions.

There are two major objections to the privatisation of hospital pharmacies. First, a private company would be looking to maximise profit. Hospital pharmacies will simply offer drugs over the counter, but at present they do far more than that. They give clinical advice to doctors and nurses about the correct drugs to use and that service will be lost. Secondly, an even more serious consequence is that many companies that retail drugs also manufacture them. There is a danger of double standards as those companies which obtain tenders will be pushing their own drugs in the

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hospital pharmacy and there could be a conflict of interests. Far from reducing costs, that tendency might increase costs.

Medical laboratory scientific officers are also in the forefront of privatisation because in certain areas laboratories will be privatised. Before we privatise the laboratory service we should consider what happens in north America where the service is privatised. In north America the staff are poorly trained and the laboratory equipment is old because of the need to maximise profits. Some doctors look at the samples themselves and the errors in diagnosis are as high as 27 per cent.

Inaccurate tests have led to fatal consequences and many women have died of cervical cancer because they received a negative smear test and the error was discovered far too late. Financial compensation is not much good when lives are lost. The reverse also occurs when people receive a positive result instead of a negative one and again lives are lost. The staff maximise the number of tests. They even take work home. Because they are poorly paid they work long hours for overtime and they are not properly qualified. Laboratory staff are spending seconds on difficult tests which should take quite some time. That is because poorly qualified laboratory staff are working with outdated equipment and private laboratories are reluctant to install new equipment. That is what could result from the privatisation of the National Health Service. Instead of being a professional service, it will be concerned more about profit than about patients' needs. We should be very wary of the lessons to be drawn from north America.

The Secretary of State will become the Arthur Daley of the Health Service and we all know who "'er indoors " is. The Government would flog off anything and this is only the beginning. The public should be warned because, although there will be a little privatisation before the general election, if the Government are returned to office, there will be wholesale privatisation of the National Health Service. I conclude by applying the words of Lady Macbeth to the Secretary of State:

> "Stand not upon the order of your going
> But go at once."—

and take the Prime Minister with you.

7.57 pm

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): The speech by the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) bore very little relation to the National Health Service and Community Care Bill. He sounded like a trade union spokesman making a bid for the next wage round. There is nothing in the Bill about privatisation and his speech was yet another example of the scare tactics that the Opposition have used in the past year. It is despicable that they should do that; they have managed to scare many ordinary people into believing that the Government would produce a totally different Bill.

I support the Bill because it is important to examine what should be improved in the National Health Service after 41 years of existence and praise its qualities. I and my family have always used the National Health Service and I believe that it is the best health service in the world. But that does not mean that I do not recognise that it has many grave faults which could be corrected. I believe that the Bill will do that.

It is interesting that after two days of debate the Opposition have not yet addressed themselves to the many problems that have come to light. General practitioners' referral rates differ greatly. Some GPs refer 25 times as many patients to hospitals as do others and some GPs prescribe twice as many drugs as do others. Operating costs can vary by 100 per cent. between different hospitals in the same district for the same operation. Operations per session can vary greatly between different hospitals, and accident and emergency departments continually complain that most of the vast numbers of people they see are there for entirely the wrong reasons. They clog up casualty departments. Statistics show the difference in the use of the National Health Service from district to district and hospital to hospital. We are entitled to ask why there are such marked divergences in spending and use.

We must ensure that the expenditure on our Health Service—£28 billion at the last count—is spent properly. That is what I wish to discuss. It is not new for the Health Service to have problems with its budgets and spending. I recently read John Campbell's biography of Aneurin Bevan. On page 177, he says that in 1949

> "there was inadequate financial discipline"

of the National Health Service. A year after the National Health Service came into operation, Aneurin Bevan, speaking at a meeting in London on 15 November 1949, warned:

> "Now that we have got the National Health Service based on free prescriptions. . .I shudder to think of the cascade of medicine that is pouring down British throats at the present time. I wish that I could believe that sufficiency was equal to the credulity with which it is being swallowed."

These problems with Health Service spending and ensuring that resources are properly used have not disappeared.

It is interesting to read the works of academics who support the National Health Service and want it to be improved. Alan Maynard, writing in the *Health Service Journal* on 10 September 1987, said:

> "At present the majority of healthcare treatments cannot be demonstrated to be good value for money because their costs are uncertain and their outcomes largely unmeasured. Unless GPs and consultants can demonstrate the superiority of the costs and benefits of their activities, the economic case for financing these activities is absent.
>
> Consequently the argument that the NHS is underfinanced is seriously flawed. It may be—and only an evaluation of practices will demonstrate it—that the NHS is overfinanced and the existing improvements in health status, or benefits, could be achieved by a budget less than that currently available to the NHS."

He further said that it is important, if we are to spend more on the Health Service, to ensure that resources are spent properly, that we know the outcomes of operations and that we know that resources have been targeted on the right sectors and operations.

It was interesting to read shortly after that an article in the *British Medical Journal* entitled "Mr Q the surgeon", "Conversations with Consultants" by Tony Smith. The consultant said that his hospital formed an economy committee to consider the use of intravenous needles and other disposable materials by the National Health Service. It discovered that it could save £80,000 or £90,000 a year by changing the brand of needles, catheters, bags and other disposable items. Suddenly, there was a National Union of Public Employees strike, and overnight the hospital lost over £250,000 because it was not allowed to use its pay beds. He asked what was the purpose of saving that money if the union can lose £250,000 in the next week simply by strike action? He says:

> "If you asked me what can we do about"

resources in the National Health Service,

> "I would answer that we must stop the terrific wastage in the NHS. The reason for the wastage is that there is virtually no incentive to save in an enormous organisation like this. In your home you are paying the electricity bill and you turn off the lights as you walk out of the room, but in a hospital you don't. Even though many of us may turn out the lights as we walk out of the department in the evening when we come back in the morning every single light is back on. The cleaners have been in in the night and left them all on."

The consultant argued that the National Health Service would happily save money if it was told that for every pound that it saved by being careful with disposables, being more efficient, watching electricity, turning the lights off in the evening and the other things that people in the Health Service could do, it could be given back the 10p or 15p in the pound that it saved towards its research funds.

What surprises me about Labour Members is that whenever we talk about budgets or finance, they say, "We do not want to hear about that; we do not want to hear about accountancy." But we all know that they are very careful with their own money. They somehow assume that there is an unending supply of public money that does not need to be monitored. I only wish that, like the rest of us, Labour Members would treat public money in the same way as they treat their private resources.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Is the hon. Member aware that we have one of the most cost-effective health services in the world? It is four times more cost-effective than that in the United States, and we spend less per head on the Health Service than any other industrialised nation. Will the hon. Gentleman withdraw the slur that the National Health Service wastes money?

Mr. Bennett: The hon. Lady's assertion is incorrect. Italy spends less than us. She should consider the figures for the amount of gross domestic product spent on health services in different countries. It is interesting that although Britain spends less of its GDP on health than other countries in Europe, it is largely because many of those countries have a far larger private sector. Much depends on the size of a country's GDP, and Britain has seen the largest increase in GDP over the past two years of any country in the European Community. We should bear in mind the fact that health spending has increased under this Government because we have had the resources to make increases and because we have increased prosperity so much since 1979.

It is interesting to note the Labour party's policies, or the lack of them. I have read the debate of the first day, and I was present for the speech of the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) and on the Welsh Grand Committee when the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) led for the Labour party in a debate on the National Health Service. What are its policies? We have not heard how it would improve the National Health Service.

Mr. Hoyle: You are the Government.

Mr. Bennett: The hon. Member for Warrington, North says, "You are the Government." We are, but the Labour party tries to claim that it is the Government-in-waiting. If so, it has a duty to tell the public how it would spend the Health Service budget of £28 billion and ensure that the service was improved.

Mr. Hoyle: The hon. Gentleman is intent on saying that, but why did not the Conservative party tell the electorate of its policies on the Health Service and seek a mandate for them?

Mr. Bennett: The hon. Gentleman knows that every Queen's Speech says "Other measures will be laid before you", of which this is one.

The Labour party believes that we should do nothing to the Health Service and leave it as it is. Let us consider its policies. When the Labour Government were in power between 1974 and 1979, they did not increase spending on the Health Service, as this Government have done, but cut it by 3 per cent. in real terms in 1977-78. They cut the hospital building programme by 30 per cent. in 1976, and hospital closures were 50 per cent. higher under the Labour Government than under this Government. Nurses' pay went down in real terms by 21 per cent. and GP's pay was cut by 16 per cent. The trouble is that the Labour party's policy is predicated not on what the people want but on what NUPE and the Confederation of Health Service Employees want. They want a Health Service run by NUPE and COHSE for the benefit of NUPE and COHSE, not for the benefit of the people of this country.

I shall conclude by asking three questions, to which I hope my hon. Friend the Minister will reply. The first concerns the definition of "resident" in the Bill. I represent a health authority that, in the summer, covers three times as many people as it does in the winter because of holidaymakers visiting our beautiful county. Can we be assured that we shall be given the resources to deal with those holidaymakers and that they will be defined as being "resident" during that time?

Secondly, what will happen when someone has been referred to another health district for an operation but it is not done properly and remedial work becomes necessary? Can we be assured that the health district which did the operation will pay for the remedial work and not the health district that sent the patient to the operating district? That is important because it would be unfortunate if the health district that sent the patient had to pick up the bill for unsuccessful operations.

Thirdly, the family practitioner service authorities should have GP representatives who are elected locally by GPs in their areas. I hope that the Government will consider that carefully when we debate the clauses dealing with FPSAs, because it is an important worry of some GPs and it is worth considering further.

I draw attention to my health authority, because it is important to talk from the experience of what happens in our districts. I have been immensely impressed by the fact that since Pembrokeshire health authority came into operation in 1982 it has managed to spend resources properly and carefully. It has managed to increase outpatient attendances by 34 per cent., radiology attendances by 24 per cent., occupational therapy attendances by 90 per cent. and operations by 153 per cent. It has managed to save £340,000 by tendering out some services within the hospital, and that money has been reallocated to other services carried out by the health

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authority. The authority has been able to employ 80 more staff this year and the unit of work costs in the DHA are the lowest for all the Welsh authorities.

It is therefore no surprise to me or my constituents that this year Withybush hospital in the Pembrokeshire health authority region has won an award from *The Sunday Times* for being the best district hospital in the United Kingdom. That is what can be done if resources are spent properly. The Bill is about making sure that that happens, and I commend it to the House.

8.10 pm

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): As a member of the Select Committee on Social Services, which for 12 months has been carrying out a review of the Government's proposals and the deliberate underfunding of the Health Service, it was my original intention to discuss the amendments which have been tabled in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field). If my hon. Friend is not in his place, I intend to move those amendments formally at 10 o'clock.

I should like to discuss the implications of the review for my constituency. Because of the proposals and the Government's preparation for the reorganisation of the Health Service, my constituents in the Wigan metropolitan borough find themselves in an incredible position. The health authority has proposed the closure of five hospitals which cover not only my constituency but those of my hon. Friends the Members for Wigan (Mr. Scott) and for Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe) and the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind). This summer, I wrote to the Under-Secretary of State about the way in which the matter was approached by senior officers and the chair of the health authority and in general about the cavalier attitude towards the proposals, in that no proper consultation was taking place with the community health council, Members of Parliament or the local authority.

At a meeting held in private, on the ground that it was not an issue that involved the public interest, the Wigan health authority decided to employ Amec consultants, an American company which owns Fairclough Construction and Fairclough Homes. The company was offered the use of public money to come forward with proposals to reorganise the health service in Wigan, in view of the Government's proposals in the White Paper and the need for the local authority to take account of the market-based economy which would thereafter operate both within the health authority and in terms of its relationship with other health authorities in the north-west.

The contract was awarded without public scrutiny. People were not able to make submissions and there was no proper check on funding for the contract. Amec proposed that the health authority close all five hospitals —Billinge, a maternity and general hospital in my constituency, which has a large section for the mentally ill, Atherleigh, a hospital for the frail elderly and those with senile dementia, the Wigan Royal Albert Edward infirmary, an accident and emergency unit and general hospital, Leigh hospital, an accident and emergency unit and a general hospital with a new section for the mentally ill, and Astley general hospital.

The proposal was to close the hospitals and to sell the land, without tender, to Fairclough Homes and Fairclough Construction. Subsequently, the health authority decided to close all five hospitals and to approach the regional health authority to fund a new single-site hospital, which was to be built by Fairclough Construction without going to public tender. I wrote to the Minister asking him to intervene, taking account not only of any public impropriety but of the view of my constituents, the local authority and the community health council, which opposed the way in which the matter had been handled. The Minister not only rejected my appeal but wrote a letter supporting the idea.

Four weeks ago, the situation changed for the worse. The health authority—because of Amec's recommendations—withdrew a request for funding for the reorganisation of Leigh hospital and its redevelopment phase. Two weeks ago, the North Western regional health authority advised the Wigan health authority that the Government had not made available a single penny of capital resources for construction of a new hospital. My health authority is going ahead with the programme of closure of five hospitals, with no plan for alternatives. That is happening because of the Minister's encouragement.

This action is unhealthy and is a gross dereliction of duty by the health authority and the Under-Secretary of State, who could have intervened this summer but refused to do so because of his ideology on the review of the NHS. The hon. Member for Lancashire, West, who has left the Chamber, shares a constituency boundary with me. He should tell his constituents—in Up Holland—what will happen to the maternity unit at Billinge hospital, which covers the south-east of his constituency. He should tell them what is happening in terms of patients following money at the Wigan Royal Albert Edward infirmary. There will be no hospital to follow. What will prevent the health authority from implementing hospital closures? The Secretary of State has refused to provide the regional health authority with funding for construction of a single unit to replace the five hospitals.

The Minister refused to intervene this summer when I wrote to him about Atherleigh hospital. With 24 hours' notice, the health authority was decanting patients into the private sector without consultation with the community health council, the social services department, patients their relatives, or their representatives—a huge proportion of the residents of Atherleigh—on the ground that the authority's financial position was so serious. A confidential report, which was leaked to the four Members of Parliament affected, showed that provision has already been made for the hospital to close and for the private sector to receive from Wigan health authority over 124 additional places for the frail elderly.

A private sector nursing home in my constituency recently submitted a planning application to extend its premises, on the ground that the local health authority would provide additional patients because of the closure programme. To do that, the nursing home sought an amendment to a previous planning application to get rid of the physiotherapy unit, recreation area and the hydro-pool facility. Those facilities are important to the environment of people living in public or private sector homes and needing long-term care. Because of my health authority's decision, the home was prepared to get rid of those facilities to provide additional beds, at a cost to the taxpayer.

The Minister owes us not just a scanty explanation. He failed to answer my points on the three occasions that I raised them. He cannot do that now. He will have to sit down with the four Members of Parliament concerned and tell us and our constituents what we are to do about the crisis.

The health authority is embarking on a programme of closure of our facilities, but with no alternative facilities with which to replace them. The Minister cannot simply hide behind the claim that it is a matter for the district general manager and the health authority. He positively encouraged the authority to go down that road. Nor can he hide behind the fact that the health authority needs to take account of changing circumstances.

What would his position be if he were Under-Secretary of State for the Environment and a Labour or Conservative local authority sold off, without tender, large-scale public assets or became involved with a private sector developer in the wholesale disposal of public assets at a knock-down price? He would be the first person to bring in the district auditor to examine the way in which that local authority was operating, yet he, as a result of his inability or unwillingness to act in the matter over the summer months, has been a party to the asset stripping of resources in my constituency.

He owes it to me and to my constituents to meet us at the earliest opportunity to resolve the issue.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Roger Freeman): Before the hon. Gentleman sits down, I must point out that, as he probably knows, I shall not be replying to the debate. My hon. Friend the Minister for Health will be replying. However, I and my officials will read the record of what he has said because he has made a number of allegations about me personally. As I shall not have the opportunity to reply in this debate, I shall write to him and send copies to the hon. Members who are affected.

Mr. McCartney: I thank the Under-Secretary for those comments. Perhaps he will also agree to meet us to discuss the activities of my health authority.

Again as a result of the cut in resources, nurses leaving the training school in the hospital in my constituency this month have been informed that there is no placement for them in the health authority. That has happened at a time when the Government are, supposedly, spending £4 million on advertisements to encourage people to join the nursing service. At the end of this month, my local trainee nurses will be receiving in one hand a certificate saying that they are trained nurses and in the other hand a redundancy notice.

What will the Secretary of State do about that? Is he prepared for public money to be wasted in that way? Is he prepared to see nurses going through a full training scheme and at the end of it being told that neither the health authority in Wigan nor nearby health authorities are able to give them a position as a result of cuts in their budget for this and next financial year? Those trained nurses will have to sign on the dole in January 1990. The reality of the Government's policy of public expenditure cuts is reductions in services, a reduction in the overall money spent on nurse training and the asset stripping of the resources of local district health authorities.

Mrs. Mahon: Will my hon. Friend take on board what is happening to enrolled nurses? A scandal is being allowed to happen. The 150,000 enrolled nurses are the backbone of our nursing profession. Fifty thousand of them have applied for conversion courses, but there are only 1,000 places. It will be well into the next century before even one quarter of those nurses are retrained under the Government's own training programme.

Mr. McCartney: My hon. Friend is right. The Select Committee on Social Services, in an earlier report this year, pointed out to the Government their failure in trying to provide resources for training in other aspects of the Health Service. The Government are already damaging the Health Service at local level. The Bill will do nothing other than further damage it and that is the all-party view of the Select Committee, which has examined the matter in great detail not over just a few months, but over a lengthy period. The Committee's report on the way in which the Government have handled the issue has the support of both Conservative and Labour Members.

8.23 pm

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): I welcome the clear confirmation that was given, once again, by the Secretary of State in the debate last Thursday that the fundamental principle on which the Health Service reforms are based is that free medical treatment should be provided regardless of means and financed largely by general taxation. I also welcome the undoubted fact that the resources that are being made available to the Health Service by this Government have been increased steadily and that the past two public spending rounds have themselves raised the available cash by more than 20 per cent. I am also aware of the essential need to make the best use of every penny of those resources. That requires a public Health Service that is efficient and where waste is minimised. Many of those who now work in the Service, dedicated and effective as they are, are not at all satisfied that the National Health Service today uses its resources as carefully or effectively as it should. They too want reform and they too look for improvement, even though they may disagree with some —or in some cases all—of the proposals.

It is of key importance that the decision-making process in the Health Service and the objectives of each unit and department in it be clarified and improved, and that the opportunity for local leadership and more localised decision-making be increased. The Bill aims to do this and addresses the issues that can enable that to happen.

During my 10 years as a Member of Parliament, my experience is that complaints against the quality of care that is given by the Health Service are very few and that, in the main, they refer to the length of the waiting list for consultation and for treatment in specific areas of difficulty. These are the orthopaedic and ear, nose and throat specialisations. There is also a continuing problem of providing adequate care for the elderly and infirm, and for those most vulnerable groups in our society—the mentally ill and handicapped. I accept that the provisions are designed to deal with those issues, but however good the intentions, they will not be realised unless the available resources are increased continually, as well as the organisation being improved to deliver the service as efficiently as possible.

I am concerned, as other colleagues have already said that they are, about resources. The overall funding of the Health Service makes no provision for pay alone. A centrally-assessed allowance is included which is meant to cover pay and general price increases, and it is left to individual authorities to use that sum to suit best their own

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circumstances. The point at issue is the overall adequacy of that allowance. For some years now, the level of inflation that has been experienced by the health authorities outside their control has exceeded the national provision. I know that extra resources have been given, especially for pay review body awards, but they have not covered the true additional costs.

We are all aware that the Health Service is highly labour intensive and that any underfunding on pay is critical. It is a fact that there is a considerable difference between the index increases that the central allowance takes into account and the actual inflation in wage costs that the health authorities have had to pay. The result is that despite the necessary additional finance, which is welcome, health authorities have had to supplement their provision for inflation from their existing resources. I agree that that pressure has led to increased efficiency, a better use of resources and a more streamlined and cost-effective system, but there is a limit to the savings that can be achieved in that way. The squeeze has, in many cases, made the pips squeak, but when the pips themselves are dry the service will suffer and the level of care will decline.

I accept that the demands on the Health Service are continuing to increase. That is for good reason. The benefits of medical advances keep people alive and well for longer and the expectation of a full life into old age is vastly greater than it was even 20 years ago. But that means that to fulfil its proper role the service must be adequately staffed on a cost-effective basis.

In my health authority area the use of agency staff has been growing rapidly. Low rates of pay and a high level of local employment are making recruitment more and more difficult. Agency staff are required and must be used in all disciplines. The premiums paid to agencies represent a loss of purchasing power to the health authority, and the presence of such agency staff, often on higher pay rates and sometimes with less commitment to the unit in question, creates problems with staff morale.

I highlight the problem of resources not as criticism of the Bill, which I support in principle and which I believe will provide the opportunity to deal with the issue of local wage rates more effectively, but because it is necessary continually to remind Ministers of local pressures and the problems on the ground.

I now turn to community care, for which the proposals in the Bill are positive. They tackle the problem that has bedevilled community care for years—the split responsibility between local authority and health service—thus providing a better base for dealing with what is bound to be a mounting social and financial responsibility in the years ahead.

I have important reservations, however, which I want to air. The first is that central funds for local authorities to cover community care should be ringfenced. I am not confident that without this local authorities will continue to direct those funds to the main purpose for which they are intended.

Secondly, I want to emphasise that removal of patients from mental hospitals must be strictly limited from now on to equate exactly with the provision of alternative facilities in the community. Those new facilities require buildings and adequate staff; until now, the arrangements have too often been the wrong way around—closing existing facilities before new ones are ready. I welcome the fact that recent ministerial statements have dealt with this important issue but we now expect to see the policy followed in practice. As I am sure the Minister of State knows, many professionals in the field exactly predicted the problems that have arisen when the wholesale closure was first mooted.

Finally, I ask my right hon. and learned Friend to do his level best during the passage of this important Bill through both Houses to listen and respond to the continuing anxieties of many who work in the Health Service and in the service of community care. Some of those concerns are not necessarily politically motivated. They are genuinely based on professional knowledge and a wish to see the Health Service improve. I accept that the BMA's propaganda got it badly wrong.

I shall support the Bill tonight, but with some reservations and with the firm expectation that a well-intentioned Bill can be improved during its passage through the House, provided that the Secretary of State is prepared to show flexibility and to respect views that may differ from his own. That is what well-respected doctors, highly qualified and thoughtful paramedics and sensible staff at all levels of the service in my constituency want, and I support their view.

8.34 pm

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): This Bill and the White Paper on community care do not face the real health demands of a growing elderly population who are becoming more frail by the day and more dependent on all of us. The Bill does not deal with the problem of caring for the mentally ill or handicapped, or the problem of those who are languishing in prison and on remand and who would not be so doing had there been proper care in the community.

The Bill does not address the problem of the large number of homeless people who have suffered from mental illness in the past—*[Interruption.]* If the Secretary of State would pay attention for a moment he might agree that it would be a good exercise to carry out a survey of the number of such prisoners on remand or of people who have ended up in cardboard boxes on the Embankment. He would then have to admit that his policies on community care have been a total failure; and to judge from the White Paper, they will get even worse.

The Bill and the White Paper do not deal with how to shift our policies towards preventing bad health and they offer no strategy for real care in the community. Most of all, the Government proposals will do nothing to improve the low morale that is endemic among NHS staff.

I have mentioned, in an intervention in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney), what is happening to enrolled nurses. It is scandalous that neither document contains a word about retraining of and proper training for nurses.

I cannot remember morale among nursing staff and everyone working in the NHS being so low. The Secretary of State said that I was not qualified to vote on the Bill; that highlights his attitude to the rest of us. At least I gave many years of my life to working in the NHS and I have a greater understanding of its problems and of the staff who work for it than he has.

The logical conclusion of the Government's proposals on opting out of district health authority control and setting up hospital trusts is privatisation, and no amount of denial by the Secretary of State, other Ministers or Conservative Members will convince the public otherwise. If these proposals go through, the hospitals in my area will be called "Halifax General plc" or "Halifax Royal Infirmary plc". Unless public pressure can make the Government change their mind, that will be the logical outcome. Once hospitals are set up as businesses, with information systems that show the cost of every treatment in the smallest detail and with the freedom to borrow in the City and to hire and fire at will, that will be the direction in which we shall move.

The Secretary of State treats the rest of us with contempt if he does not realise that we have rumbled him and his plans. What he says about doctors scaremongering is rubbish. I hope that they carry on with what they are doing. The only people who appear not to be listening to them are the Secretary of State and those who support him.

I asked the Secretary of State some months ago to give me a guarantee that the accident and emergency services in my district health authority area would remain there. He did not give that guarantee, and I warn all Government hon. Members that they could lose their accident and emergency services if managers decide that they can purchase them adequately from elsewhere. I am not willing to hand over that reponsibility without a damn good fight. The manager in my area came from British Steel, where he did a good job closing it down for the Government before being made redundant. Will a Minister give us a guarantee tonight that he or she has had a change of heart about this proposal?

There has been much talk about privatisation and the saving of money. There was a small example of privatisation in my local authority area when the Secretary of State was a Minister at the Department of Health and Social Security in 1983—he was not then top dog. There were proposals to build a new laundry in Calderdale before the 1983 general election. The proposals had been worked up and costed and we were going to go ahead, but we were told that a decision could not be made for some months because of other priorities. After the election the Secretary of State said that the laundry had to be put out to tender and that we could not build a new one. We put it out to tender and won by a margin of just over £12,000. The Secretary of State said, "That's not good enough. Try again." With the help of the trade unions which are much maligned by the Conservative party, we worked up another scheme and won the tender by a margin of £250,000. The Minister said that we still had to privatise. So we did. Since then, the laundry service in my district health authority has gone from bad to worse. Elderly patients have had no underwear and patients were sleeping on paper sheets. There has been a series of disasters because the Minister said that privatisation had to go ahead regardless of the fact that it would have been cheaper not to privatise by a margin of £250,000.

Mr. McCartney: The privatisation of laundry services highlights most effectively what goes wrong when a market philosophy is imposed on a health authority. The laundry services in my district health authority have been privatised. The district general hospital had to cancel operations because the privatised service could not provide clean linen when the hospital required it.

Mrs. Mahon: Many hon. Members have experienced similar difficulties in their constituencies.

Privatisation in the NHS is bad for the patients. The Government introduced managers into the NHS from the business sector and they propose to introduce more of them under the Bill. The community health councils are not to be strengthened and the local authority representatives are to be kicked off DHAs because Government-appointed managers do not want any opposition. In many instances managers do not have the interests of patients at heart, as the Minister would like us to believe. In my district health authority a couple of years ago a manager referred to elderly patients as "bed blockers". I cannot think of a more dehumanising statement than that.

The management have done their job for the Government. They have privatised the care of the elderly almost wholesale. What is left of that care is to be finished off under the White Paper. What choice does the White Papter offer to the elderly and their relatives? If all that the elderly have on offer is a private home, where is their choice to enter the public sector? There is no choice, as the Government are well aware.

The Government have based the White Paper and the Bill on the model that they saw in America. Under that disgraceful model, 40 million people in the richest country in the world have no access to any kind of free health care. The future for Britain can be seen in the provision of health care in America.

The Government do not want to improve access to decent free health care in this country. Their cynical and provocative attitude to the NHS staff over the past 10 years proves that. Indeed, nothing proves it more than the way in which the Secretary of State is upping the dispute with the ambulance service. We know what he is up to and we do not trust him.

It has been said that the Secretary of State is ambitious. In the past, I understand that his name has been put forward as a possible leader of the Conservative party. That has nothing to do with me and if I pursue that I might be ruled out of order. However, the writing is on the wall for the right hon. and learned Gentleman and his career. Just about every section of opinion is against his proposals in the Bill and in the community care White Paper. He cannot fly in the face of that tide of human hostility and hope to get anywhere in politics. He is finished and I for one think that that serves him right.

8.43 pm

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): I welcome the provisions in the Bill for community care, and I also welcome the presence of my hon. Friend the Minister for Health in the Chamber. I believe that this will be the first debate in which I have spoken to which she will reply, although I did speak in the debate on community care in October. I also support the points made about community care by my hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson).

In *The Times* today there is a headline

> "Hospitals account for over 80 per cent. of mental health care".

[Mr. David Nicholson]

The article states that a report published by the Office of Health Economics today points out that spending is concentrated in hospitals rather than in community provision. I welcome the fact that, since we debated community care in the House, my health authority in Somerset has produced a consultative document about the provision of services for health and community care and the measures it is taking to update those services.

The report states that the current pattern of services does not provide the ideal network for ensuring that the population of Somerset, which the district health authority serves, has an equality of access to a modern health service. It states that through the introduction of efficiency savings and income-generation programmes additional funding has been provided. A good example of that are the major funding strategies supporting the successful care in the community policies for the mentally handicapped and mentally ill.

The report states that large institutions, to which I referred in our earlier debate, such as Mendip and Tone Vale were an enormous drain on resources requiring huge expenditure every year on such items as fuel and maintenance. Many of the buildings in that care group have serious building defects and are uneconomic to repair and modernise. They are also too large and functionally unsuitable for modern mental health care practice. The sooner the authority's strategy of replacing those institutions with small community units can be implemented, the more it will be possible to avoid expenditure on repairs and fuel in those old buildings. I strongly commend that proposal by Somerset health authority and I hope that it will be able to serve the Bill's principles with regard to community care.

I want to make three basic points about the main issues facing the National Health Service and its future. I want first to refer to resources to which my hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Mr Hayes) and others have referred. I draw the attention of the House to the contrast between two sets of figures showing total NHS spending per head for England over the past 10 years. Over the four-year period1982-83 to 1985-86, inclusive total NHS spending per head rose by £52. Between 1986-87 and 1989-90 it rose by £104, the rise being from £340 to £444 per head. I have not translated those figures into real terms, but I believe that they show a marked increase in resources in the Health Service over the past four years.

Hon. Members asked earlier why the proposals in the Bill did not feature in the 1987 Conservative party manifesto. All of us encountered strong pressure in our constituencies with regard to NHS resources at the time of the 1987 general election. Since then the resources have been provided and we have produced proposals to ensure tht those resources are used properly. Within the context of resources, I support the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks with regard to the pay of certain NHS staff. I am not referring to the doctors, nurses or even the ambulancemen. I am referring to the semi-forgotten sections of staff who are badly paid. I hope that as a result of the thrust of the reforms in the Bill we shall see a certain negation of the trade unionism in the NHS. That trade unionism has meant low productivity and also low pay for so many people working in the NHS. I hope that the Bill will remedy that.

Mrs. Mahon: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Nicholson: I am afraid I will not give way, because, as the hon. Lady knows, several other hon. Members wish to speak.

Earlier this year we saw a concentrated argument about GP services. The Government have made clear their commitment to GP services and made clear pledges against the deceitful propaganda put out by the British Medical Association. Last Thursday my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State cited, as an example of the misuse of drugs under the present system, the fact that 1 million tablets had been found in the space of two weeks in Avon and Somerset. For me, that example was pretty close to home.

In recent weeks the controversy has switched to the issue of self-governing hospitals. Certain hon. Members have suggested a referendum, but it is impossible to hold a referendum on such a hypothetical matter when everyone is being bombarded with propaganda to the effect that the service will get worse. I would have no objection, however, to a local poll to assess the performance of self-governing hospitals—two years, say, after they had become self-governing—and I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will consider that suggestion. After all, if the measures in the Bill do not lead to an improved service, they are not worth enacting.

My final point is political. The Bill's opponents—the Opposition, the British Medical Association and, at times, my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton)—claim that the Bill will lead to lower standards of health care, and at the beginning of the debate the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) claimed, like others, that a two-tier system would result. Let me emphasise that I have no intention of allowing my constituents, my neighbours or indeed my family to be dragooned into using private facilities instead of the National Health Service that we have all used hitherto. They are committed to the service, as am I, and I believe that my right hon. and learned Friend also uses and is committed to it. I entirely reject the accusation that the Government's proposals are a Trojan horse to promote the extension of compulsory private facilities.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle (Mr. Day) spoke about health in the debate on the Queen's Speech. He and I were the only Conservative Members from the 1987 intake to vote against the abolition of free eye tests, a subject on which the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) has spoken forcefully, as he did in this debate. Many of us listened to the hon. Gentleman with rather more than respect on the earlier occasion; I am sorry that he did not find a rather more worthy cause to which to devote his talents today and on Thursday. Nevertheless, I think that lessons have been learnt from our experience in the Lobbies when we voted on eye-test charges, and that is one reason why I believe that the underlying principles of the NHS will be safe under the Bill.

I do not believe for a moment that our opponents are right. They are on a high-risk road, because they do not simply claim that the Bill would make no difference. That might be credible, for we have all witnessed the introduction of legislation accompanied by a flourish of trumpets—the Health Service legislation of some 10 years ago is an example—only to find its implementation and practice somewhat disappointing. Our opponents, however, have chosen to claim that the Bill will restrict and neglect the NHS, while my hon. Friends and I believe that it will enhance and expand it.

As we draw near the end of this two-day debate we must ask, "What if our critics were right and virtually every Conservative Member was wrong?" In that event there would, I think, be three consequences. Two are fairly obvious, being political and personal, but the third would be much greater local political interference in the NHS. No hon. Member worth his salt would tolerate a worse or more inconvenient service for his constituents: we all want and intend to enhance the present service.

As for the other two consequences, they would affect my party and my right hon. and hon. Friends who are in charge of the Bill. I do not believe for a moment that either my party or my right hon. and hon. Friends are bent on political suicide. For that reason, I strongly support the Bill and believe that, before the next general election, it will bring forth the fruits for which we aim. I therefore hope that the House will give it a powerful Second Reading vote.

8.53 pm

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): In the debate on the Gracious Speech, I spent some time comparing the amount that we devote to our Health Service with that devoted by Europe and America to its counterparts. The fact is that we devote a far smaller proportion of our gross national product to our Health Service, which means that our Health Service is very efficient. I wish that Conservative Members would accept that.

I also spoke about reorganisation, pointing out that over the past 15 years the Health Service had been reorganised three times, each time by a Conservative Government. The Conservatives seem to accept that those reorganisations failed; what frightens me is that, if the Bill becomes law, it will succeed—succeed, that is, in privatising the NHS. For that is what the Bill is about: it is a privatisation enabling Bill.

If we do not defeat the Bill, or defeat the Conservatives in the next election, within 10 years the spivs of the City, Wall Street and the Tokyo stock exchange will be picking over the bones of the National Health Service, and we shall see our local hospitals quoted on the Footsie index. The Secretary of State is encouraging such an outcome by attacking those who provide the care and deceiving the general public.

Was it not the Secretary of State who accused the doctors of reaching for their wallets? Was it not he who gave the impression that GPs earned £65,000, when in reality they earn half that? Was it not he who gave the impression that they were working 24 or 38 hours a week, when the flu epidemic is forcing doctors in my constituency to work 50, 60, 100 or 138 hours a week to care for the sick? That is happening in every constituency, but the Secretary of State tries to tell us that doctors do not work hard. Was it not he who attacked the ambulance personnel? He said at the Dispatch Box that they had not been responding to emergencies; in fact, they have not only responded but done so without being paid for it.

The Government told the nurses that their regrading and pay claim would be fully funded. I met a delegation from the Royal College of Midwives in my constituency. They were very perturbed that the core of the Bill made no mention of maternity services, and were also very concerned about regrading. They know that they are worth more than East Cumbria health authority is prepared to regrade them to, but the fact is that the health authority cannot afford to regrade those midwives.

I accept that a considerable sum of money went towards nurses' pay last year, but how the Government and Ministers can put that amount of money into a service and make such a hash of it that people are more demoralised after the pay increases than they were before is almost beyond me. The reality is that the Government are so inept that they squandered the resources. As a result, the nursing service is more demoralised now than in any of the 14 years in which I have been associated with the NHS. The National Health Service is the largest employer in western Europe. It needs great skills and great leadership in man-management at its head, yet we have a Secretary of State who goes around acting like a boorish bully.

I turn now to community care. The principles of care in the community are excellent, but during the past 10 years those principles have been degraded by the Government's efforts. To the Government, care in the community has meant saving money and closing wards. As we leave the Chamber tonight and go home to our nice comfortable flats, we shall be able to see the results of that care in the community—on park benches, sleeping in shop doorways in Victoria street, and in cardboard boxes under Waterloo bridge. That is what community care has meant under this Government.

I have received a letter from voluntary organisations in my constituency which are deeply concerned about the White Paper. In essence, they have said that they cannot be the substitutes for statutory services. The Government cannot get away with voluntary organisations doing that work on the cheap. Those volunteers volunteered to help society, or a specific part of it. They do not want anything to do with taking over statutory responsibilities.

Mr. McCartney: I have had experience of the way in which the Government are attacking the voluntary sector in my constituency. An elderly lady in her 80s has been looked after at home for several years by her daughter who is now in her late 60s. That saves the National Health Service and the community care budget between £300 and £400 per week. However, the daughter was notified only last week that the number of incontinence pads would be cut from 300 to 120. The daughter, herself a pensioner, will have to make up the difference because the health authority does not have the resources to maintain the supply of pads so that that elderly pensioner can look after her elderly mother at home. That is the Government at work.

Mr. Martlew: I accept what my hon. Friend says because there are similar cases in my own constituency.

The voluntary organisations are also concerned because there is no talk in either the White Paper or the Bill of extra funding for community care. Community care is not a cheap option. It needs extra resources and we are fearful that the Government will not provide them.

The question tonight is not whether the community cares, because the community that I represent certainly cares. The community cares for the sick, for the elderly and

[Mr. Martlew]

for the dispossessed. The question is whether the Government care, and the answer is that they do not give a damn.

9.1 pm

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I welcome the Bill and congratulate the Government on their necessary reforms. I am sorry to hear the view expressed by Opposition Members. The hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) talked about ideology, but he is blinkered by his own ideology and is turning his back on private sector funding initiatives that will give better patient care. He reminds me of the old guard in eastern Europe, which the people of eastern Europe are busy throwing out so that they can have the benefits of a mixed economy.

Mr. McCartney: Is the hon. Gentleman saying that I should not defend my constituents who are currently in beds in a National Health Service facility and who are suffering from senile dementia? My constituents, aged between 75 and 95, are being kicked out into the private sector without their relatives or the community health council having a say in whether the alternative facilities being provided are up to the standard required for their care.

Mr. Thurnham: The hon. Gentleman's constituents will benefit from the Bill.

I should like to speak principally about those aspects of the Bill relating to care in the community but, first, with regard to the National Health Service reforms, I was thankful of the opportunity to take a delegation to see my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State.

Care in the community is a challenging and radical part of the Bill. Perhaps my hon. Friend the new Minister of State will find the opportunity to visit Bolton to see the scheme that was introduced there at an early stage to pilot some of the ideas that are now expressed in the Bill. The pilot scheme has been described as successful, and that success relates to the commitment of the officers and staff of the health authority and the local authority. As a result of the pilot scheme, nearly 100 people have been settled in neighbourhood network homes.

However, although the scheme has been described as successful, there are problems, principally with funding. I have written to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State about those funding problems and now appeal to him to consider the funding deficit that has arisen in Bolton. As a result of the commitment given to the pilot scheme, there is a deficit of over £400,000 in the current year and a projected deficit of £200,000 for next year. The local authority has written to me, stating that it entered the pilot scheme in good faith. The local authority believes that it would be a betrayal of the initial good will if nothing could be done to help overcome the deficit that has arisen. The danger of leaving matters as they are is that we may end up with a two-tier service in Bolton. There is a good network scheme for some 100 people who have found places in neighbourhood network homes, but hundreds more people in Bolton desperately need a better service.

Two priority areas were identified in the recent Audit Commission report, "Developing Community Care for Adults with a Mental Handicap." One priority is the 19 or 20-year-old with challenging behaviour and profound handicaps, the other priority is older people with frail parents who can no longer look after them. In the normal course of events they might have looked for a home in one of the old institutions, but now they are unable to go there because the number of places has been run down. They cannot have a place on the neighbourhood network scheme because of the lack of funding for the provision of additional places.

Will my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State consider funding and ask the Audit Commission to examine Bolton's scheme to see what lessons can be learnt? The shortfall in funding arises from the need to have a ratio of one member of staff to three residents rather than one to four, which means that costs run nearer to £400 than £300. Those lessons can be learnt elsewhere in Britain. The more they are studied now, the easier it will be to introduce new proposals.

I commend the success of the Bolton Handicap Action Group to my right hon. and learned Friend. I helped to set up that group after the last election, when I was besieged by people who had problems caring for handicapped children and adults at home.

The action group has been extremely successful in lobbying local services and exposing scandals—for example, the fact that it takes a bus more than two hours to do a journey to a day centre and a further two hours to come back again. That scandal is just the tip of the iceberg of inadequate services.

The recent social services inspectorate report on inspection of day services for people with a mental handicap says:

> "Units frequently had little contact with families. Few families and no clients were involved in overall planning of services."

That is the most welcome part of the Bill.

I hope that parents' groups and carers' groups will be incorporated into family services.

Will the Secretary of State consider funding a pilot scheme allowing the Bolton Handicap Action Group to set up a charitable company to quote for the services that are so inadequately provided by the local authority at the moment? I mentioned the bus services, and there is also a problem with day centres that are grossly overcrowded and not sufficiently well-staffed to provide the service that people attending them want. It would be helpful if my right hon. and learned Friend would consider funding that pilot scheme so that the Bolton Handicap Action Group can provide those services itself.

I notice that the Bill will enable local authorities

> "to provide community care services by making arrangements with any organisation capable of providing them."

I think that a word stronger than "enable" is needed. Many local authorities will need a strong push to use a novel form of service that will provide better care to the mentally handicapped and to other patients.

The Audit Commission's report says that the fundamental change will be that

> "in future the care manager must be the principal budget holder . . . This will come as a shock to many social workers and councillors."

I am sure that we need a stronger Bill to ensure that reforms and changes are properly introduced.

Many groups need to benefit from the changes outlined in the Bill which we shall consider closely in Committee. There are more than 125,000 mentally handicapped adults, of whom about one half are at home and one half are in residential care. Those at home need the greatest help possible for carers, and a great deal more help than is available at the moment.

The survey of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys identified more than 5,000 handicapped children in institutional care. That is 5,000 too many. I appeal to my hon. Friend the Minister to do all that she can to help find families to care for those children, who should not be in institutions.

9.10 pm

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Conservative Members have said that they do not believe that Ministers are bent on political suicide. We beg to differ. An enormous amount of cant has been spoken about Conservatives' care for the Health Service. Conservative Members and Ministers say how they want to preserve a free Health Service and that it is safe in their hands, but that is cant. The professional organisations know it, the public know it and the Opposition Members know it.

To illustrate my point, I shall take the House back to November 1987, shortly after the last general election. Quite by chance, I happen to have the confidential minutes of the Carlton club political committee. The document is stamped "Confidential. Restricted circulation. Strictly private and confidential." I shall tell the House all it needs to know about the document in the few minutes available to me.

The minutes are of a top secret seminar at which the future of the Health Service was discussed. Who was there? Nurses? Doctors? Patients? People from voluntary groups with a record of concern and care for the Health Service? No. Bankers. Plenty of bankers. At least 50 per cent. of the people there were from private health care companies. There were people from the Institute of Directors, people from Central Office, a man from the No. 10 policy unit and, above all, Ministers. What proposals did they come up with? First, opting out. Surprise, surprise. Secondly, proposals to extend the principle of charging and to create a costed service. Does that sound familiar to Opposition Members? Thirdly, a joint venture between the private sector and the NHS was proposed. Fourthly, there were proposals for tax relief on private insurance. All of those will be familiar to the House and the country.

The seminar also came up with proposals which were too bizarre even for the Prime Minister. One was to rename the Health Service so that the public would know that the whole thing had changed. That seems to have been jettisoned. It came up with a proposal with which the Secretary of State seems now to be involved, to smash "old fashioned" Health Service unions such as the National Union of Public Employees and the Confederation of Health Service Employees to force the creation of a single union with professional sections for the Health Service. That appears to be the Secretary of State's aim with the ambulancemen.

The seminar also came up with proposals to privatise intensive care, pathology and the ambulance service. These are proposals which business men, people who run private hospitals and Ministers discussed in November 1987. It is no surprise to us that the Bill has emerged in this form. Behind it lies no concern for the Health Service. There is no real interest in what professional organisations and workers have to say. Behind it lies pure, naked ideology.

When Ministers tell us that the underlying principle of the Health Service is that free medical treatment should be provided regardless of need, how can they expect people to believe them?

Way back in November 1987 Lord Skelmersdale, a Government Minister, said at the secret Carlton club seminar:

> "the NHS has never been a full, comprehensive and entirely publicly funded system:"

Among other things he said that there may be a

> "need to allocate resources which could involve establishing priorities so that elective procedures were either paid for by the patient or only took place when more urgent needs had been satisfied"

The origin of the Bill is ideology and secret seminars. A major Bill has been introduced without proper consultation with nurses, doctors, patients or the public. The Government refuse to do pilot studies, but way back in 1987 they were consulting at the Carlton club. The Bill comes out of the Carlton club and ultimately will benefit only the members of such clubs.

We know the reality of the Government's position on the Health Service. We remember what they said about charging for eye tests. We remember the Secretary of State telling the House that charging would have no effect on the level of eye tests and that at most the charge would be £10. We know that the average is higher and that the number of people having eye tests has plummeted. That means that the elderly, the poor and the sort of people that I and my hon. Friends represent are not having eye tests. We know the Secretary of State's purpose because of what he told us about eye tests and because of his sustained campaign to starve the ambulancemen back to work as a preparatory project for privatisation of that service, among others.

We can see the reality of the Government's promises about the Health Service when we look around us at local areas. In my constituency in east London, St. Bartholomew's hospital, the oldest teaching hospital in London, is half empty because of Government cuts. The Government will not fund the nurses to keep the wards open. I receive letters every day from people who have spent years in pain waiting for surgery that the Government will not fund.

We know the Government's purpose for the Health Service. The Bill is the first step towards privatisation. The public know it, Health Service workers know it, professional organisations know it and the public know it. As someone whose mother worked for more than 30 years in the Health Service until her retirement a few years ago, one of the many millions of ordinary people who have worked to build the Health Service, I shall be proud to go through the Lobbies this evening and vote against the Bill.

9.17 pm

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): This debate has been conducted against a background of overwhelming opposition to the Bill. The only response from the Government and from Conservative Members is that people oppose the Bill because they do not understand it. People do not want the Bill precisely because they do understand it. They understand that the family doctor service will be cash limited and that, for the first time, people will receive the treatment and care that their GP can afford rather than the treatment and care that they

[Ms. Harriet Harman]

need. They understand that, for the first time, they will lose the ability to choose which hospital they go to for treatment and that, instead, that choice will be made by managers. Patients will simply have to go where the managers have placed the contract. People understand that when placing contracts managers will look at the cost rather than the quality. A patient will be sent where the care is cheapest rather than where it is best.

People understand that the Bill will enable the Secretary of State to allow their local hospital to opt out from the local National Health Service and that patients will have no way of stopping him. They understand, too, that the Government plan to cheat on community care spending and blame councils for the lack of local services. They understand that the Government are rigging the system so that people will have to go into private commercial care homes rather than have the choice of a council home or a NHS nursing home.

I shall deal first with community care. The Secretary of State for Health said virtually nothing and the Secretary of State for Scotland said absolutely nothing about it. It is lamentable that the community care provisions have been tagged on to the Bill as nothing more than an afterthought. Undoubtedly the Government hoped that community care would be an uncontroversial appendix to the Bill.

The publication of the White Paper and the clauses on community care in the Bill have met with widespread apprehension. In particular, there is anxiety that the Government will not make available the resources necessary to make good-quality care in the community a reality. Again and again the worry about resources surfaces from organisations such as Age Concern, MIND, Mencap and numerous others which represent those who will use the services in the community. Even the National Association of Health Authorities and the Institute of Health Services Management have expressed anxieties about resources.

Why should the Government command any respect in this area? The Secretary of State for Health is fond of quoting the increase in services for people with mental illness, such as day and hostel places. But he never mentions that the increase in provision is far outweighed and cannot nearly match the numbers leaving mental hospitals. He quotes the increase in local authority social services spending as if somehow he can take credit for it, when councils' increases in social services spending have taken place despite the Government, not because of them, as hard-pressed Labour councils have tried to improve and increase the services they make available in the community despite Government spending cuts.

The Conservative commitment to care in the community can be seen in action in Conservative-controlled local authorities where the provision of home helps and meals on wheels for the elderly, the vulnerable and the dependent takes second place because the priority is to keep rates down. Social services are already underfunded and my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) gave us a case in point. He told the House of a young disabled male constituent who lives with his parents. The social services authority could not provide enough domiciliary or respite care to enable that family to carry on caring for the young man, so he had to go into residential care. As no National Health Service nursing care or council residential care was available, he had to go into a private home. That family now faces the prospect of having to sell their house to pay the private nursing home fees.

Councils are already underfunded and their services are overstretched, yet downward pressure on spending, which is the intention of the poll tax, will reduce that already inadequate base still further. Councils throughout the country have been calculating what they will have to do if they are to levy a poll tax of £278, which is what the Government have said will be the average. A council in London calculated that if it had to rely on a poll tax of £278, it would mean a 30 per cent. cut across its social services. It would have to cut all its home help and all its meals on wheels services. A council in the north-west of England calculated that even to bring its poll tax down to £400 would mean that it would have to withdraw its home help services from 2,000 of the people who depend on it or find another way of cutting social services by £13 million.

It is against that background that the Government make local councils responsible for care in the community. That is why there is deep suspicion that there is to be no earmarked funding for community care. The Government and their Back Benchers criticise us for asking for earmarked funding and say that that shows that we do not trust councils. It is not that we do not trust local councils. It is because we and local councils do not trust the Government that we demand earmarked funding for community care.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) said, there is already little choice for someone who needs residential or nursing care in the community. As cottage hospitals and geriatric wards have been closed, those who might previously have been able to use their services have been forced into private nursing care. As my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) said, virtually no NHS nursing care is left. As council spending is squeezed, fewer places are available for the elderly and the disabled. Despite the growing demand, there are fewer places in council residential care, with the result that people have been moved into private residential care homes. A major privatisation programme has been achieved by means of a combination of Department of the Environment spending cuts on local councils and social security handouts by means of payments to private homes.

The Bill takes privatisation one step further. It is nonsense to say that it will provide a level playing field for private and council care. People will retain the right to income support and housing benefit only if they go into private care. To go into council care results in people losing their right to those benefits. Councils are unable to monitor the standard of care in private homes.

I have read all the decisions of the Registered Homes Tribunal. They tell an appalling tale of abuse, neglect and ill-treatment. Vulnerable and dependent people are tied to chairs, drugged and abused. People with strings of convictions have set up private old people's homes because they see the chance of making a quick profit.

I shall refer to two out of many cases. The first is Mrs. Scorer who ran a residential home in Cambridgeshire. According to the findings of the Registered Homes Tribunal,

> "There was mental cruelty . . . residents were . . . abused and insulted by being called names to their faces and humiliated by being shamed in front of other residents. They were physically abused in that some . . . were roughly

> handled, pushed and pulled unnecessarily, frog-marched, slapped; . . . some had their clothes yanked off . . . Mrs. Scorer shouted at residents; insulted and humiliated them by calling them names ('fat old pig', 'stupid', 'dirty', 'smelly' and 'filthy')".

Mr. Hind *rose*——

Mr. Hayes *rose*——

Ms. Harman: The other case concerns Mrs. Canning who ran an old people's home called Warwick Hall. Witnesses to the Registered Homes Tribunal spoke of her using obscene and filthy language and that,

> "She said to one resident, 'I do hate you, your family hate you, that's why you're here.' A former employee said of Mrs. Canning . . . she loathed children and said mongols should be gassed.' Another former employee told of Mrs. Canning's attitude to a resident who had chronic diarrhoea.
>
> 'If they mess the bed, don't change it, let them lie in it.' A relative said: 'New residents wanted to go home and stood by the door. She shouted at them loud and aggressive. It was awful and sad.'"

For all their lip service to quality—

Mr. Hind *rose*—

Mr. Hayes *rose*—

Ms Harman: —Ministers never talk about these cases. *[Interruption.]* Perhaps they do not even read the reports of such tribunals. Conservative Members do not care, because these homes are private. *[Interruption.]* The Government's commitment to the market takes priority over their commitment to the vulnerable and the dependent.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Ms. Harman: The Bill will—

Hon. Members: Give way—

Ms. Harman: The Bill will—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady has made it quite plain that she does not intend to give way.

Ms. Harman: The Bill will do nothing to ensure that councils have the resources to provide the care that people need to stay in their own homes. It will do nothing to ensure that councils have the resources to monitor private care homes, or to provide resources so that people can choose whether to go into a council home. It will do nothing about giving carers a voice or about giving disabled people the chance to have the services that they need. Having established the supremacy of the private market in residential care homes, the Government now seek to bring market forces into health care.

Mr. Hind: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In the circumstances, is it right that the hon. Lady should cast a slur—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have heard nothing out of order in the hon. Lady's speech and bogus points of order only delay the progress of the debate.

Ms. Harman: I have put on record on numerous occasions my condemnation of what happened in the Nye Bevan lodge. I should like to hear whether Conservative Members, and in particular Ministers, will condemn or at least show some concern about these cases.

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): Would the hon. Lady not concede that the Government introduced legislation giving local authorities and health authorities powers to inspect private nursing homes to expose just those cases? A moment ago the hon. Lady was making the absurd case that somehow such cases are typical of private nursing home care provision when hon. Members on both sides of the House are extremely anxious to stamp out all such behaviour whether it be in the private or the public sector. We are interested in the quality of care, not in whether it is run by the council or by a private owner.

Ms. Harman: The Secretary of State appears not to be interested in facing up to the inability to monitor what happens in private homes. The Registered Nursing Homes Association, the organisation which represents the owners of private nursing homes, has said that the Government's expansion of private nursing homes through the social security system has led to such an enormous increase in the number of those homes that a cowboy element has entered the market. The Bill, inasmuch as it will fuel further the private sector and stamp out council homes, will make it more difficult to monitor the quality of care in the private sector.

Having established the supremacy of the private market in residential care homes, the Government now seek to bring market forces into health care, and GP services are to be cash limited. Drug budgets will be cash limited as will GPs' practice budgets. That will have three disastrous consequences. First, some patients will not get the treatment they need because their GPs will be running out of money. Secondly, people with long-term chronic illnesses will be unattractive patients and will have less chance of getting the GP they want. Thirdly, it will poison the doctor-patient relationship. If GPs advise patients that they do not need drugs or tests, patients will not know whether that advice is based on their medical condition or on the GP's financial condition.

Miss Widdecombe: Did the hon. Lady hear the clear statement from the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) accepting that the drugs budget will not be cash limited?

Ms. Harman: The hon. Lady misunderstands what my hon. Friend said. What he said clearly showed that he understands that there will be a chilling effect on GPs' prescriptions. Although the Government deny that there will be cash limits, if there are not to be cash limits, why are family practitioner committees drawing up plans to dock GPs' pay if they overspend their indicative drugs budget? If there are not to be cash limits on GPs' practice budgets, why did the White Paper consider it necessary to set up a system of watchdogs in accident and emergency departments of hospitals to find out whether all the patients are emergencies or whether some of them have been sent there by their GPs who cannot afford to get them into hospital under a normal contract because they had run out of money and had advised them to go to accident and emergency?

The Government clearly believe that the family doctor service is costing too much. That is why in the Bill for the first time they have taken the power to restrict the number of doctors going into general practice. The Secretary of

[Ms. Harman]

State and the Secretary of State for Scotland talked about the money following the patient, but the Bill makes the patient follow the money.

Either the Secretary of State for Scotland has not read the Bill and the White Paper or, if he has, he does not understand how things work at present. Let me give the example of maternity services. A pregnant woman has a choice of hospital in which she can have her baby delivered. She may choose to have her baby at the hospital closest to home, but she may decide that a hospital in a neighbouring district provides the care that she would choose for her delivery. Every year, thousands of women make exactly that choice, but under the Bill it will be taken away and she will have to go where managers have placed the contract. The Secretary of State shakes his head, but what is the point of a contract system if no one has to follow the contract?

GPs, who at present advise their patients which hospital to go to, will find that they are locked in the straitjacket of the National Health Service contract and that they will no longer have the choice of where to refer their patients. That choice will have been made by managers and a patient who has a hernia will have to go where the block booking is for hernia—*[Interruption.]* I am basing my speech on the White Paper and the Bill, unlike the Secretary of State, who feels that he can make any claim whatever.

The only way that GPs will retain their rights of where to refer a patient will be if they opt out of the frying pan and into the fire by opting for a cash-limited practice budget. Otherwise, managers will make all the decisions.

What will a manager consider when placing a contract? The first thing will be cost. They are not recruited to know about quality, but they certainly will know about cost. To win contracts, hospitals will compete to cut costs. As they do so, they will cut corners, and that will cost lives. The lessons from America are clear—the fiercer the competition, the higher the mortality rate. Patients will be sent where care is cheapest rather than where it is best, and they will be required to travel anywhere managers see fit to place a contract.

The core services that were mentioned in the White Paper, which were supposed to guarantee patients access to local services and to some crucial services, have not found their way into the Bill; they have stopped dead in the White Paper. People will no longer have automatic access to their local hospital if the Secretary of State opts-out their hospital. My hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) rightly said that the people who use the hospital, those who work in it and even its doctors will have no say in whether it opts out.

Knowing how controversial the plans will be, the Secretary of State is going about them with secrecy and stealth, an example of which is the advertisement for shadow finance manager to make the application for the London hospital to opt out without telling the district health authority, its patients or even the general manager what will happen.

The Government have sought to disguise the aim of the Bill. The only response that they have made to criticism is to change its language. They know that to have a cash-limited budget for GPs is unpopular, so it is now called not a budget-holding practice but a fund-holding practice. Clearly, they got out their "Roget's Thesaurus" and thought that "a fund" sounded as though it had more money than "a budget". They know that local representatives are to be knocked off district health authorities, so we no longer mention the word "accountability"—that is a non-word—but use instead the word "leadership", which is a code for the Secretary of State deciding everything and local people having no say. The Government realised that people did not like the idea of people buying and selling health care, so we are told that the "purchaser" is to be called "the acquirer". The Secretary of State has just about trained himself to stop describing "opted-out" hospitals as such and now calls them "NHS trusts". We know that, whatever they are called—whether NHS trusts or anything else—they will be opted out of the local health authority.

The Government imply that anyone who is against the Bill is against change in the NHS. That is a travesty. If we had a Government who could listen, they would know that the Health Service and patients' organisations are abuzz with ideas for changing and improving service deliveries. The real reason that people do not want the Bill——

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I have no objection to the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) reading her speech, but I object to her reading it to the Serjeant at Arms rather than to the Chair.

Mr. Speaker: I think that the hon. Lady was turning from one side to the other.

Ms. Harman: The real reason why people do not want the Bill is that they do not want to see their Health Service broken into a thousand fragments ready for privatisation. That is why we shall vote against the Bill.

9.40 pm

The Minister for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): The Government's overriding aim is to achieve the best for the individual patient, the individual carer and the dependant who requires social care. Our policy depends on caring for the patients, not scaring the patients. What we have heard from the Labour party is alarmist, frightening misinformation, calculated to misinform and to stir up people's strongest fears.

We have had a lengthy debate about extremely important proposals. We speak at a time when the Government are spending more than ever before on the Health Service. The Conservative party has delivered improved health care. Where we have a competition in terms of the rhetoric of compassion, it may be that the Labour party could outbid us. If it comes to a competition in terms of delivery of health care, there is no doubt that the frail, the vulnerable and the sick have every reason to have confidence and to put their trust in the Conservative party. Every week of the year, 25,000 more patients are treated because of our investment in and commitment to the NHS. These proposals are intended to develop and build on our NHS.

The management changes, which are fundamental in terms of producing health care of the highest quality in an age of rapidly increasing science and technology, are intended to benefit the individual users of our health and social care services. All our plans put the individual at the heart of things. My hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Sir. M. McNair-Wilson) called last Thursday for a patients' charter. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State said after First Reading, the Bill is just that.

I pay tribute to all the hon. Members who so fulsomely participated in the debate. There has been a robust exposition of Government proposals and a rebuttal of many of the more ludicrous Labour suggestions by my hon. Friends the Members for Harlow (Mr. Hayes), for Ipswich (Mr. Irvine), for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe), for Wimbledon (Dr. Goodson-Wickes)—who speaks with special knowledge, having worked as a medical practitioner for many years—for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) and for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett). As they make clear, under the Labour Government, the National Health Service was run by the International Monetary Fund. We would rather leave our health care in the hands of the NHS.

Only today we are announcing an increase of about 25 per cent. in NHS consultants in the past 10 years. There are 60 per cent. more female consultants. The number of hospital medical staff has increased by over 17 per cent. in the same period and, again, many more women are working in the Health Service.

A major mechanism for improvement will be the new funding systems. Hospitals will be funded more directly for the patients whom they treat. Where they offer high quality service, they will find that additional patients and additional resources will flow towards them. The present system can all too often work against patients who are caught by a geographical boundary or by the so-called "efficiency trap". We are putting in place a system that will work for patients, not against them, and a system that will favour rather then frustrate the most efficient medical practitioners.

My hon. Friends the Members for Harlow and for Ipswich talked about the perverse incentives of the present funding arrangements. We want to have a virtuous effect, not a vicious effect. Managing that system will be the central task of the strengthened district health authorities. They will look at all suppliers of services in their areas to find the best mix of NHS contracts to provide comprehensive services for their residents. It will be an open process—far more so than it is now. Each health authority will undertake extensive discussions with local general practitioners to ensure that the pattern of contracts properly reflects local referral patterns. The community health councils will have their voice heard. It is a recipe for patients and their representatives to have a far greater input in the decisions about their care.

Much mention has been made about National Health Service trusts. Once again, this is not an attempt for hospitals to opt out of the NHS and it is not the first step to privatisation. The alarmist and irresponsible scare stories put about by the hon. Members for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton), for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) and for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) have no part in our proposals for the Health Service. The fact is that the opportunities offered by the National Health Service trusts are not simply freedom from the shackles of unnecessary central control, but a new freedom to use resources more flexibly to raise standards of care.

We mean standards in the widest sense. Shorter waiting time for admission is central, as are satisfactory systems of medical audit, better out-patient appointment systems and the personal treatment of all visitors and patients received from each member of staff. There is every incentive for quality to run through every aspect of National Health Service work. Both patients and staff will have reason to be proud of what their local National Health Service has been able to achieve. The importance of quality has been registered by several hon. Members and we fully and warmly endorse that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) asked about the definition of "core services". It will be for each district health authority to decide the precise pattern of services to meet its needs. We cannot and should not prescribe for that from the centre, but the Bill gives the Secretary of State powers of direction over the NHS trusts' ability to enter into contracts, which can be used to safeguard local access to services in the unlikely event of difficulties arising.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst raised a further point about NHS contracts being enforced if they are to have legal status. NHS contracts will contain provision for the resolution of any disputes that may arise. The Secretary of State will be able to investigate any disagreements and to enforce a solution. That is a more appropriate response than the sight of two NHS bodies fighting each other through the courts. These are management rather than legal documents.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) asked about the size of the NHS trusts. We shall not be prescriptive about the type or size of unit that can apply for self-governing status. The reason why the Bill refers to NHS trusts, rather than NHS hospital trusts as we called them in the White Paper, is that the concept is proving attractive to all kinds of candidate, not just to the major acute hospitals. Many other hon. Members raised points about the trusts, but I shall not be able to do justice to all of them. The key point is to release NHS units from some of the shackles of bureaucratic control and interference and to allow centres of excellence with a corporate ethos to develop and flourish.

Several hon. Members talked about the importance of dialogue with the medical profession. My hon. Friends the Members for Chislehurst, for Rutland and Melton, for Northampton, South (Mr. Morris) and for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) all spoke about the importance of discussion. I want to make it clear that all of us at the Department of Health have met about 100 different groups from the medical profession since last January. We are working closely on resource management and on many medically-led initiatives such as medical audit, and we shall continue to do so. Further, we are funding a range of pilot schemes so that we can learn lessons for implementing the Bill when it completes its passage through Parliament. I cite, for example, the enhanced role of the district health authority, the development of contracts, management budgets, and information to assist with the determination of cross-boundary flows.

I turn now to the substantial part of the remarks made by the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman)——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: There was nothing substantial in them.

Mrs. Bottomley: I appreciate that, but I want to talk about some proposals of great importance—those on community care. It is deplorable to exploit people's fears about divisiveness and scandals in the public or the private

[Mrs. Bottomley]

sectors. We want high quality community care for people; we want choice and proper standards and we shall ensure that we achieve precisely that in this Bill.

In the Bill we set out the framework for care in the community for the next decade. The proposals will secure the delivery of successful community care services, ensuring the best use of resources to achieve diversity and flexibility of provision. That is welcome for local authorities, which have long argued that responsibility for social care should rest with them. I wondered, as she spoke, whether the hon. Member for Peckham wanted to deprive local authorities of this important responsibility, which is intended to build on the substantial work that they already undertake planning for the overall social care needs of their populations. I know that local authorities are keen to rise to the challenge, and there have already been many examples of innovative and pioneering work providing community care.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I am grateful to the hon. Lady for giving way and for rightly emphasising the importance of local councils in social services. If the Government are determined to retain councils' part in this area, why are they excluding them from the district health authorities in which co-operation and knowledge of what is going on in the community are almost as important?

Mrs. Bottomley: It is clear from our proposals on district health management that the NHS—a £28 billion organisation—requires clear and decisive management. There will certainly be scope for consulting local people about their needs. I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman wants to deprive local authorities of their important new responsibility of providing care in the community.

Many local authorities are already developing excellent projects. I hope to take up the invitation of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham), whose scheme is one of 28 pilot projects set up some time ago by the Department to develop new forms of care in the community. There are similar projects and developments in Kent, Newcastle and Bolton to ensure that people can live dignified and independent lives at home.

Community care has too long been the victim of confusion over where responsibility lies for the public support of people in residential care and nursing homes. Not enough priority has always been given by local authorities to the development of high quality care, and we intend to set that right so that local authorities fulfil their responsibilities and high standards and choice are available.

Some hon. Members have suggested that the proposals have come forward too swiftly. That lies ill with the former allegation that there has been a certain amount of delay. After Sir Roy Griffiths' report on community care, a great deal of detailed consultation on his recommendations was entered into. My right hon. and learned Friend made a statement last July, since when there have been further detailed discussions about the proposals. There was a full day's debate in the House to which many hon. Members contributed; then, last month, we brought forward our White Paper.

It is right that the responsibility for providing all forms of community care should be entrusted to local authorities, but equally it is essential that we ensure that local authorities fulfil those important responsibilities. Community care extends from good neighbourliness to 24-hour-a-day residential home care provision. Having heard Opposition Members, it would seem that their course of action would be to nationalise good neighbourliness. Government recognise that the majority of care is frequently provided by family, friends and neighbours. Most carers take on those responsibilities willingly. However, many need help to manage before they become overwhelmed with what can become a considerable burden.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): The Minister referred to consultation. I presume that that was a reference to the week between the White Paper being published and the week the Bill was published. Does that consultation mean that the Government accept the view of the Association of County Councils and the Association of Metropolitan Authorities that allocations for community care should be ring-fenced?

Mrs. Bottomley: The key point is that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State made our intentions clear last July. At that time there were a great many allegations that it was high time that the proposals on care in the community were forthcoming. I shall refer to the particular point about resources shortly.

This is the first time that the needs of carers have been properly recognised. The Bill is a very important mark in terms of our legislation for the dependent and the frail. The White Paper states that the key components of community care should be that

> "services should respond flexibly and sensitively to the needs of individuals and their carers"

and to

> "ensure that service providers make practical support for carers a high priority."

That is an important step forward from the time when the Labour party was in office. At that time I was involved in an organisation concerned with carers which received no assistance under that Labour Government. The carers' national association, with which I was involved, now receives £77,000. We give about £350,000 annually to various organisations supporting carers. We recognise the pivotal role that carers play and that the views of carers, their ability to provide care and their needs for support should all be fully acknowledged.

It is important that there should be adequate resources for the provision of care in the community. We have made it clear that the amount of money presently used to fund those in private residential homes will be made available for the development of care in the community services. There have been several entirely unfounded allegations about the level playing field between public and private residential homes.

The present situation inordinately favours the use of private residential homes as the local authority involved does not need to find any money. In future, we will establish a more level and fairer system. We will ensure that those in local authority homes receive the same personal allowances. At the moment they receive less. We will ensure that everyone entering a residential home will have a full assessment to discover whether the money that is currently used for residential care could be more appropriately used to preserve their dignity and privacy and bring forward a package of domiciliary care to meet their needs.

It was deplorable of the hon. Member for Peckham to try to arouse people's greatest fears about the provision of care in private homes. All the residents of Nye Bevan house would have wanted the structure of care in the community including the inspections and local authority control that we are introducing in our measures.

There is much to be done to translate our community care proposals into a successful and working reality. This is a Bill for people—the people who need care, and the people who provide it—and concern for individuals lies at the heart of our action in the NHS and community care. It is because of their importance that we are right to act quickly and decisively.

We have clear and common aims: we intend to move from policy to implementation. The Bill is a key step along that road, and I heartily commend it to the House.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 323, Noes 247.

Division No. 12] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*

Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alastair Goodlad and
Mr. Tony Durant.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Sir Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Winterton, Nicholas
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ken Eastham and
Mr. John McFall.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put,

That the Bill be committed to a Special Standing Committee.—*[Mr. McCartney.]*

The House divided: Ayes 244, Noes 312.

Division No. 13] **[10.15 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
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Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
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Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
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Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ken Eastham and
Mr. John McFall.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Pe[illegible]
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*

Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alastair Goodlad and
Mr. Tony Durant.

Question accordingly negatived.

Bill committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills)..

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Ways and Means Motion may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Fallon.]*

Points of Order

10.28 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I bring to your attention the fact that the forcible return of the Vietnamese boat people has just started and involves the riot police in Hong Kong? I know that you do not decide whether a statement is made, but in view of the deep anxiety in many quarters about the way in which these people are being treated, can the Leader of the House make arrangements for a statement to be made as quickly as possible? Surely the House should have been involved—whether by means of a statement or private notice question—in such a serious matter which arouses so much anxiety. I hope that if not tonight then tomorrow we shall have a full statement on what is going on in the prison camps. It appears that even tonight the forcible return of these people will continue.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the same point of order?

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: It is on the same point of order, Mr. Speaker. If we are to have statements in the House that are meant to be fair and balanced, could we have a statement from the Leader of the Opposition, who seems to be so keen to criticise everyone else without putting forward answers of his own about what the Opposition would do to help the people of Hong Kong to deal with the problem? It is sheer hypocrisy to say what——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We cannot have a debate on the matter.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Is it the same point of order?

Mr. Nellist: Yes. Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will have noticed that the Leader of the House is in his place. Would I be correct to assume that it would be entirely in order for him now to ask for your permission and that of the House to make an announcement, if he so desires, regarding the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick)? I have just returned from East Berlin. Could the Leader of the House explain why one set of refugees from Stalinism can be said to be seeking freedom while another set of refugees from a Stalinist regime, who have been made even poorer because of the wars launched against their country by the West, are economic refugees? Should not the Leader of the House take this opportunity, through you, to state that the forced repatriation of those people from Hong Kong will cease forthwith?

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I support the calls that have already been made that a statement should be made to the House tonight about this most important question. Would it be possible to include in the statement details of what will happen to the unaccompanied children and orphans who are in those camps, many of whom have been there for many years and who are also facing forcible repatriation?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Sir Geoffrey Howe): The House will recall that what is now happening was first foreshadowed in a statement that I made in Hong Kong some 15 months ago. The policy has been repeatedly explained to the House, most recently by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary in his speech during the debate on the Loyal Address and during Question Time a few days ago. It has also been the subject of study by the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, which commended the premises upon which the policy is founded.

There should be no doubt about the background to these very difficult decisions. It is right, even so, that the House should look forward to a statement on the subject. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary intends to make a statement at the usual time tomorrow afternoon.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. There cannot be a point of order beyond that.

Mr. Corbyn: In the meantime—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I welcome the announcement by the Leader of the House that a statement will be made tomorrow, but, as on several other occasions in the past, the Government have got this the wrong way round. There ought to have been a statement before these events were set in train. That would have been the proper and appropriate course of action for any reasonable Government to take in the circumstances. They ought first to have announced in Parliament what was going to happen and then listened to what hon. Members had to say before taking their decision. I welcome the delayed acknowledgement that it is important that these matters should be announced first in Parliament. I hope that the Leader of the House has learnt his lesson and that in future statements will be made here before decisions are implemented.

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Nothing arises from that.

Mr. Corbyn: Yes, Mr. Speaker. It does arise from the statement.

Mr. Speaker: It cannot arise from it. It is not a matter for me, anyway.

Mr. Corbyn *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I repeat that it is not a matter for me. The Leader of the House has said that the Foreign Secretary will come here tomorrow to make a statement. I can do nothing further.

Mr. Corbyn: The problem is that I understand that a number of people have been taken from Hong Kong to Vietnam. There is no guarantee that Vietnam will accept them.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman will have to reserve that point until tomorrow.

National Health Service and Community Care Bill *[Money]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the National Health Service and Community Care Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any sums required by the Secretary of State for making loans to a National Health Service trust,

(b) any sums required by the Secretary of State for fulfilling a guarantee of a sum borrowed by a National Health Service trust,

(c) any amount paid as public dividend capital under any provision of that Act,

(d) any expenses of the Secretary of State under that Act, and

(e) any increase attributable to that Act in the sums so payable under any other enactment.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

10.34 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): We have a right to raise issues in the House. I am not deterred by the fact that it inconveniences some hon. Members who resort to vile shouts from a sedentary position.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster) *rose*——

Mr. Cryer: I would point out to the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman) that it will actually encourage me.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: It would be so much better if, instead of constantly speaking on money resolutions, the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) actually attended and took part in the main body of the debate.

Mr. Cryer: I wish to ask a few brief questions, which are not unreasonable bearing in mind that under the heading

"Financial Effects of the Bill,"

the Bill authorises some £200 million. Therefore, I hope that the Minister will be able to respond.

The first financial effect authorised by the money resolution includes an estimated £10·5 million in

"remuneration to non-executive members of health authorities and Family Practitioner Service Authorities".

As that is a fairly accurate sum, I have no doubt that the Minister will be able to tell the House the average payment to be made in that context.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I apologise to you, Mr. Speaker, and to my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) for interrupting, but I wonder whether you could ensure that those Tory Members who want to leave the Chamber do so quietly. I believe that while we have a debate on the money resolution which concerns many millions of pounds, at least we should be able to hear the arguments. I cannot do that because of the Tory rabble.

Mr. Speaker: Will hon. Members kindly leave quietly please? Is that better?

Mr. Nellist: Much better, thank you.

Mr. Cryer: I shall not detain the House too long, but comments made from a sedentary position encourage me to repeat everything again to make sure that the Minister has a thorough understanding of the matter. Therefore, I would discourage hon. Members from so doing.

The second paragraph relates to

"The arrangements necessary for establishing contracts for services and setting up NHS trusts".

The money resolution refers to loans to NHS trusts. Will the Minister elaborate on that and explain whether grants will be made or whether NHS trusts are to be bribed with loans?

The amount of money listed in the paragraph on the financial effects of the Bill is quite considerable—£155 million in a full year. I am sorry that the Minister has not allocated any money for the holding of local ballots so that the people of an area can decide whether there should be an opted-out hospital and an NHS trust in the first place. The Government are keen on ballots for trade unions and virtually everything else.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Mr. Cryer: I am trying to be brief——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: We have an hour and a half.

Mr. Cryer: The debate is limited to 45 minutes, so the hon. Lady is 100 per cent. wrong.

It would be better if the Minister allocated money for a local ballot so that there can be a clear democratic decision on whether an NHS trust is set up.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way on ballots?

Mr. Cryer: The third paragraph concerns GP practice funds which are quite important, but, as the hon. Lady is piercing my ear drums and making them oscillate rather wildly, I shall give way.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The hon. Gentleman did not give way when I asked him about ballots. In some specialties 49 per cent. of people being treated in Lancaster come from outside the district. What on earth would the hon. Gentleman regard as the catchment area for that vote?

Mr. Cryer: I am prepared to consider any proposal that the Minister might put forward. The Government have displayed much ingenuity in arranging ballots for trade unions, so I see no reason why they cannot have a shot at defining a catchment area for ballots for hospitals. I should like to see them show some political will to do that. Although they are spending £155 million on what appears to be loan finance to the NHS trusts, there is no provision to allow local people to take their own decisions. By and large, people in Bradford have shown themselves to be overwhelmingly against NHS trusts.

The third paragraph on the financial effects of the Bill says:

"There will be additional costs associated with the change in the functions of Regional Health Authorities".

That will cost £8 million in a full year, including extra tasks as a result of the introduction of GP practice funds. That significant sum of money will be spent on something that, by and large, GPs have said they are not enthusiastic about because they do not believe that it will strengthen the National Health Service.

The fourth paragraph says:

"Under the GP practice fund scheme . . . the costs to practices of undertaking work in anticipation of becoming fund holders and in administering these funds will be reimbursed subject to a specified maximum amount."

Together with additional computer support, that will cost a total of £15·6 million. That is a lot of money for something about which GPs are not enthusiastic. No doubt the Minister will justify it by saying that it will produce greater efficiency, but these sums are for administrative measures, none of which is of direct benefit to patients. I should like the Minister to say how he foresees that £15·6 million producing greater value for money.

The fifth paragraph says that the initial capital cost of the information systems for the management of drug expenditure will cost £9 million,

"with ongoing costs thereafter of £3·3 million a year."

Is expenditure on drugs in the Health Service so lax that such an amount of money is necessary to provide information about it?

The sixth paragraph mentions audit costs and links with the fifth paragraph, because there will be an increase in the cost of auditing of between £12 and £16 million as a result of the transfer of the National Health Service audit function to the Audit Commission. I can see sense in transferring auditing to a central body, but one of the aims of doing so would be to reduce costs rather than increase them. Surely one of the aims of a central audit body would be to obtain economies of scale, expert knowledge and a reservoir or repository of audit knowledge and efficiency, yet it will cost an extra £16 million, which so far has not been explained.

The seventh paragraph, on asset registers, caused me some concern. I understand that the introduction of capital charges and the upkeep of asset registers will cost £5·5 million. Does not the Minister think that that will put pressure on authorities to get rid of assets that have a realisable value? Much concern has been expressed in Bradford, because Westwood hospital, which stands in attractive grounds, would be worth much money if it was sold to a speculative builder. It is a hospital for mentally handicapped people, and its staff and the relatives of its patients believe that it would be far better if the grounds were used for developing a village community.

When I raise this point, Ministers say, "That sounds like a reasonable idea, but it is not one of the schemes that is being promoted as an experiment in community care." The hospital provides a potential community. Decanting handicapped people into the community without adequate care provision and resources might result in the erosion of this valuable asset. If mistakes are made and the hospital's grounds are sold, there will be no reserve available to which people can be transferred back. Sometimes people are returned to the community, but there is mutual suspicion by patients and the community. The patients therefore return willingly to places such as Westwood hospital.

I hope that the paragraph reflects an administrative measure to keep a check on what assets the NHS has and to make good use of them and that this is not simply an asset-stripping pressure imposed on the NHS.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): My hon. Friend is voicing deep and widely held concerns about these hospitals. We wish to retain those hospitals for the very purposes that he has outlined. Is he aware that in London the realisation of so-called surplus assets, especially by the North East Thames regional health authority, amounts to between 40 and 50 per cent. of the expected capital investment in new hospitals? These amounts have recently been cut because of the drop in the value of land sales.

Would not a transaction such as that described by my hon. Friend place an unenviable pressure on the regional hospital boards—to say nothing of the Secretary of State —to get rid of assets which should be retained for capital investment? That investment should come from the Exchequer, not from land sales which are supposedly surplus but are probably not.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend makes the very point that I was outlining. There should not be pressure from central Government, saying, "You should realise the assets on the register and sell them at the highest possible price. Speculative builders want to purchase them, so you must sell them as part of your resources to provide community facilities."

Westwood hospital is a precious publicly owned asset. It is situated in grounds that look like college grounds. There are rolling acres. It could be part of an important pilot project. A village community could use the common resources of the hospital, providing a sheltered environment for patients. The patients would not live in the harshness of the community, where they and other members of the community may view each other with mutual hostility. The patients could be encouraged to achieve some independence in a protected environment. That is very much the aim of the patients, the staff and the relatives. Both the relatives and the children in the hospital are growing older, and aging parents are worried at the thought of their children being moved to an area where they do not receive the necessary care and attention because of a lack of resources. That is an important paragraph. I should be grateful if the Minister would assure the House that this village concept will be encouraged rather than scorned.

I greatly welcome the last paragraph on the removal of Crown immunity. Ten years ago, I argued that Crown immunity for all sorts of bodies should be removed. That was viewed as a slightly wild, Left-wing dictator's position. That is certainly not an accusation that can be levelled against the Secretary of State. It is right and proper, and the costs involved are relatively modest in view of the step forward that it represents.

On page xi, the Bill says:

"The changes enabling local authorities to make arrangements for the provision of nursing home care . . . amount to £20 million."

Will the Secretary of State give us the basis for the £20 million charge because it seems a rather small sum? The question of community care is important. I hope that the Secretary of State recognises that many people are extremely apprehensive about the resources that will be made available and that £20 million does not seem an adequate sum.

10.49 pm

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I congratulate the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) on his ingenuity in getting into the Health Service debate. Other hon. Members come during the debate, listen to other people and speak before we vote on the principles behind the measure. That does have inconvenient points, such as having to seek to catch your eye,

[Mr. Kenneth Clarke]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in competition with other hon. Members. The hon. Member for Bradford, South prefers to steam in some time after we have voted and to speak on the money resolution, although he has raised some valid points. It also saves him from having to read the whole Bill. He always turns up the pages that describe the financial effects of the Bill and works steadily and carefully through them, paragraph by paragraph. I am genuinely in awe of his ingenuity and if there is ever a prospect of the Labour party winning an election, I hope to have a chance to do the same to him some day. Meanwhile, I shall seek to answer his points briefly.

We believe that payment for non-executive members is right, although we expect to make very modest payments, such as those that would be made to the non-executive director of a substantial board in the private sector. Nowadays, membership of a health authority or, in future, an NHS trust is not a minor matter of public service which people can take on for an hour or two a week, for which they can be quite unremunerated and in which they can expect to have some fairly honorific duties. The turnover of district health authorities can be £50 million or £80 million a year and such authorities are involved in crucial decisions about the use of assets and the development of services in their locality. To pay such members nothing would mean that the people making the appointment would have to go to a restricted group of the population. We are talking not about a full-time salary, but a small honorarium, which is now appropriate and compensates in part for the attendance allowance monies that are paid to councillors——

Mr. Nellist *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I believe that the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) wants to ask me about that.

Mr. Nellist: That thought had occurred to me. Will the Secretary of State tell us how small the honorarium will be? Many local authorities' budgets are handled by people who receive a pittance for their attendance. Those budgets may run to many hundreds of millions of pounds. Does this reflect a change in Government thinking? The Department of the Environment still says that it does not intend to pay decent allowances to councillors, whereas the Secretary of State for Health appears to be saying that large sums will go to non-executive members. Can he give us some figures?

Mr. Clarke: I know some local authority members who appear to regard their local authority work as their sole source of income and make a full-time job of it. Admittedly, that tends to happen in councils in which large numbers of committees are formed and in which committees sit almost daily, so causing almost daily attendance. I do not contemplate any sum that we pay using this power would enable anybody to regard the membership of a health authority as a full-time source of income. People may devote many hours a week to it and on some regional health authorities some of the members are, in practice, full time. I was thinking of a few thousand pounds only to mark the fact that this is no longer an honorific or titular post.

The next paragraph on page x refers to the sum of £155 million, which is the best estimate we can make of the initial cost of strengthening the management of the National Health Service in a variety of ways, such as the establishment of contracts for services, the setting up of NHS trusts and the general strengthening of management at all levels. I am sure that the sum will justify itself when one reflects that we are talking about the management of a service which gets through £28 billion each year at present. Financial and personnel management are not up to the strengths that one would expect of an organisation of this size. I am sure that the costs will be outweighed by improvements in the operation of the service and by the improved value for money that the strengthening of management should produce.

The next point the hon. Gentleman raised was about the additional costs of family practitioner service authorities. They do not arise solely from the Bill; in recent years we have changed the role of the old family practitioner committees. They play an important part in managing the contracts of the GPs, opticians, dentists and pharmacists in their locality. As they are staffed at present, they exist only to pay the cheques to doctors, so some strengthening of the service is required to enable them to carry out their new duties properly.

The amount spent on the GP practice fund scheme will depend on the number of participating practices. This is a modest investment for a part of the Bill that will prove popular with the GPs who take advantage of it, and with the patients in the affected practices. It is a great breakthrough for general practice that the more go-ahead GPs will have the chance to control the use of resources in their areas for the benefit of their patients in a way that has not been permitted them before.

The cost of the information systems for drug expenditure, at £9 million, is splendid value for money when one contemplates the huge expenditure of the Health Service on drugs. Despite all our discussions on drugs from time to time, every hon. Member agrees that it is worth seeing what we can do to avoid wasteful and unnecessary spending on drugs, as long as we ensure that the money goes back into the Health Service, as the Government intend that it will. Only the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) still believes that our proposals might involve cash limits on GPs' prescriptions of drugs—she is the last survivor of an ever dwindling band. Everybody else welcomes the proposal.

Audit costs are also modest, given that they will extend value-for-money audit of the huge sums that we spend. Asset registers are concerned with ensuring that proper regard is paid to capital costs when determining value for money in the NHS. They will not have much bearing on longstanding policy on the disposal of surplus land which might occur in the case of Westwood hospital. When examining the best way of developing services, those responsible in the health authorities will not just go for capital-intensive solutions all the time—because they get a grant of capital, they can disregard the cost compared with the revenue they must seek. They will make the best judgments, taking account of the cost of the capital and comparing it with the revenue costs that might be incurred by other methods. That is a sensible accounting change.

This might result in some hospitals being retained for longer. In future, authorities will determine how to make better use of their premises, instead of always thinking in terms of great new capital building.

I am glad that the hon. Member for Bradford, South and I agree completely about Crown immunity. We are moving towards abolishing it altogether. All hon. Members agree that there is no place for the continuation of Crown immunity in the NHS, and no reason why health authorities should not be liable to the same controls——

Mr. Nellist: What about this place?

Mr. Clarke: This is not the time to give my opinion on the House of Commons having taken on responsibility for its own affairs some time ago. We have enough difficulties trying to improve the management of the NHS; improving the management of the House would be a labour of Hercules on which I have no intention of embarking.

Mr. Cryer *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I hope that I have dealt with most of the hon. Gentleman's points. I am grateful to him for drawing attention to these important financial matters. I trust that he will now allow us to vote on the money resolution in the same way as we did on the Bill.

Mr. Cryer *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I do not think that the Minister is giving way.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the National Health Service and Community Care Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any sums required by the Secretary of State for making loans to a National Health Service trust,
(b) any sums required by the Secretary of State for fulfilling a guarantee of a sum borrowed by a National Health Service trust,
(c) any amount paid as public dividend capital under any provision of that Act,
(d) any expenses of the Secretary of State under that Act, and
(e) any increase attributable to that Act in the sums so payable under any other enactment.

NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE AND COMMUNITY CARE BILL [WAYS AND MEANS]

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the National Health Service and Community Care Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the imposition of charges to value added tax by a provision relating to the treatment of National Health Service trusts for the purposes of section 27(4) of the Value Added Tax Act 1983;
(2) payments into the Consolidated Fund.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

European Communities (Budget)

[Relevant documents: European Community Documents Nos. 8848/89, Letter of Amendment No. 1 to the Preliminary Draft Budget of the European Communities for 1990 and 9627/89, Letter of Amendment No.2 to the Preliminary Draft Budget]

10.59 pm

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Richard Ryder): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. COM(89) 175, the Preliminary Draft Budget of the European Communities for 1990, 8271/89, the Draft Budget of the European Communities for 1990, and 9704/89 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by Her Majesty's Treasury on 6th December 1989 relating to the European Parliament's proposed amendments and modifications to the Draft Budget; and welcomes the impact on the 1990 Budget of the new arrangements for budgetary discipline agreed at the European Council in February 1988.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Mr. Speaker has not selected either amendment.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will be aware that there is a very important amendment on the Order Paper in the name of the leader of the Liberal party. You will also be aware that the leader of the Liberal party made a very passionate intervention on a point of order earlier today about the importance of this great debate in terms of the strategy of the European Community. As he is not in the Chamber yet, although it is obvious that he will arrive at some stage, is there some way in which we can delay the commencement of the debate until he arrives?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I do not think that that would be at all popular with the House. As I have already said, Mr. Speaker has not selected either amendment.

Mr. Ryder: Earlier today I spoke to a Liberal supporter who told me that at the next general election their slogan will be "We're all mild about Paddy."

The European Community is central to Britain's foreign policy. Since 1979, the Conservative Government have been playing an active role in the Community's affairs. Today, Britain leads the way in searching out practical solutions to the practical problems that confront Europe and the European Community. Not least because we are the second largest net contributor to the Community budget, our political commitment to the Community is backed by a firm financial one.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Does the Minister regard the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system as a practical way of tackling the problems faced by the Community? Why is Britain not taking a lead in that?

Mr. Ryder: That particular point is not central to the budget. However, I reaffirm, no doubt much to the hon. Gentleman's surprise, that the Government have committed themselves to entering the European monetary system once the Madrid conditions are met. The question is not whether we shall enter the ERM, but when.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend the Minister said that we are the second largest net contributor to the Community budget. We are all aware of the historic efforts of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in reducing the United Kingdom's contributions some years ago. However, we are now net importers of European agricultural services and massive net importers of European industrial products. As I understand it, we are still contributing a massive £2,000 million to the European budget next year. That is obviously wrong. What are the Government going to do to ensure that our budget contribution is reduced to a much more modest figure, in keeping with the other benefits that we provide for other Community nations?

Mr. Ryder: But for the efforts of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister the present position with regard to the budget would be even worse for this country.

Not long ago the common agricultural policy was out of control, the finances were chaotic and the budget had huge imbalances. The food mountains were piling up and the single European market was no more than a dream. Today's Community is no longer crippled by those problems. Reforms, proposed and supported by Britain, have transformed the Community so that today the Community budget is in surplus and agricultural expenditure in 1988 is estimated to have been some £750 million below the ceiling agreed.

Britain pays a much fairer share to the Community budget. Rebates likely to amount to £10 billion by the end of 1990 have put an end to the grossly inequitable contributions passed on to us by the previous Labour Government. The food mountains are dwindling fast, too, as the CAP comes under better control. The completion of the single market has moved from near the bottom of the Community's agenda to the top with a firm deadline for completion. As Jacques Delors stressed in his report at Strasbourg last week, of the 88 single market directives that should have cleared all legislative hurdles, Britain has passed 69. Our record is better than that of any country except Denmark, and it once again underlines the need to judge a country's commitment to the European Community as much by its deeds as by some of the claims that emanate from European capitals.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Will my hon. Friend confirm that, although the United Kingdom has passed 69 such directives into law, the European Community average is nearer 35?

Mr. Ryder: Unhappily, I confirm that. Jacques Delors talked about it when he gave his report to the Strasbourg summit last week.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Ryder: I have given way once to my hon. Friend. I know that several hon. Members on both sides of the House wish to speak, but I will give way once more; then I must proceed with my speech.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend has said, rightly, how much better we are as Europeans than are other Community countries, but—sadly—we are not one of the wealthiest Community countries. Can my hon. Friend explain why we are still a massive contributor to the European Community budget? That seems most unfair.

Mr. Ryder: If my hon. Friend will allow me to proceed, the answer will become apparent to him.

This year's budget procedure has been overshadowed by the Community's commitment to underpin economic and social developments in Poland and Hungary. It is encouraging that the Budget Council has been able to respond promptly and generously, while at the same time respecting the budgetary rules and parameters that were put in place after the February 1988 session of the European Council. Today's debate provides a useful opportunity to review how the new arrangements for budgetary discipline have been working, and how they have coped with developments in eastern Europe that could not have been foreseen when they were drawn up.

Two aspects of the arrangements are particularly relevant. First, there is the inter-institutional agreement, or IAA. The House will recall that that is a political agreement under which the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission have bound themselves to respect ceilings for each of the main categories of Community expenditure between 1988 and 1992. Those ceilings are set out in the so-called financial perspective, which was initially drawn up at 1988 prices. A technical revision to update the price base was made in April 1989. The Commission may propose a more substantive revision of the ceilings under article 12 of the IIA; that requires a qualified majority in the Council and the equivalent in the Parliament. So far no such proposal has been made, but a revision will be needed early next year to allow for Community aid for Poland and Hungary, which was discussed at Strasbourg last week. I shall return to that later in my speech.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Is the Minister aware of the statement by Walter van Dieren, director of the Amsterdam environment and system analysis institute, that five guilders spent in Holland are worth only one guilder spent in eastern Germany? Environmental problems have no frontiers, and therefore expenditure in eastern Germany is more productive for the environment of Holland than is spending in Holland itself. Could that view at least be taken into account?

Mr. Ryder: It is inconceivable that such issues should not be taken into account now that the shape of Europe is beginning to change as a result of the transformation of eastern Europe during the past two or three months.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Ryder: I will give way once more, and then I really must proceed apace.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: I am much obliged to my hon. Friend, who is now dealing with a germane problem with which we are all concerned.

A good deal of sentiment—happy sentiment—has been prompted by the fact that the east European community is heading towards democracy. The Common Market, with its usual flabby attitude, talks about the vision splendid and the money that we are all going to give. When I was at the World Bank in late October, however, the experts talked about the need for $40 billion for Poland alone, and $15 billion for Hungary. Now we have Czechoslovakia and East Germany. It is super that they are going to join the free world, but what will two members of the Common Market hegemony—Greece and Portugal—think if the money that was going to go their way suddenly goes to eastern Europe? Who is going to pay for all these happy, joyful thoughts and items?

Mr. Ryder: The crucial programme for Poland is the IMF programme which my hon. Friend doubtless discussed on his recent visit to Washington. That programme is being drawn up at the moment and I understand that an announcement about it will be made in the relatively near future. That is the key programme, but in addition we have believed that direct inward foreign investment into countries such as Poland and Hungary is of greater benefit to them than anything else. When Mr. Walesa was in Britain recently, he met a number of my right hon. Friends and agreed with them that supply side changes and reforms were desperately required in Poland. Indeed, it is inconceivable that the Polish Government will not introduce those supply side measures as a result of the IMF programme that is now being drawn up.

The Council has undertaken to apply the IIA in accordance with paragraph 14 of the conclusions of the February 1988 European Council. This paragraph distinguishes between "privileged" and "non-privileged" expenditure. "Privileged" expenditure includes the structural funds, the research and development framework programme and the integrated Mediterranean programmes. The growth of this category of expenditure between 1988 and 1992 has been pre-ordained by Council decisions. However, for the remainder of non-compulsory expenditure—the "non-privileged" element—the Council has agreed to respect the maximum rate of increase calculated by the Commission at the start of each year's budget procedure, within the framework of article 203(9) of the treaty. The calculated maximum rate for the 1989 budget is 6·1 per cent.

The second aspect of the new budget discipline arrangements about which the House may wish to be reminded was to a large extent a product of our determination to prevent a recurrence of the overspending which brought the Community tottering to the edge of bankruptcy in 1987. I am referring to the financial guideline for agriculture. The guideline sets a legally binding limit on agricultural support expenditure. The annual growth of that limit is confined to 74 per cent. of the rate of growth of Community GNP. The guideline is buttressed by automatic, legally binding stabilisers that trigger price cuts whenever production of the main commodities exceeds maximum quantities set by the Council.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Ryder: I have given way five times already in a one and a half hour debate. I must proceed with my speech——

Mr. Taylor: That is shocking. What happened to cereal stabilisers?

Mr. Ryder: Cumulative expenditure in 1988 and 1989 was over 5 billion ecu below the guideline, and a further large shortfall is in prospect next year.

It may be helpful if I set out a chronology of this year's procedure so far—a ball-by-ball commentary of the highlights of the procedure, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland used to describe it when he spoke in these debates.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am sorry to disrupt the Minister's speech, but will he explain some of the technical terms that he is using so that the House can follow? I am sure that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are following what my

[Mr. Bowen Wells]

hon. Friend is saying, but will he tell me what IAA means and what are obligatory and non-obligatory expenditure, and preferential and non-preferential expenditure? It is not easy for those of us on the Back Benches to follow what is being said.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not asking me to explain these terms. Perhaps the Minister can.

Mr. Ryder: It is just as well that someone explained them to me, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I shall not go into all of them because as I have proceeded through my speech after each term or acronym I have said what it stands for or means. In fact, the IAA is the IIA, which stands for the inter-institutional agreement. The Council begins with the preliminary draft budget—*[Interruption.]* For my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells), that is the PDB, which the Commission presented in July. The PDB was around 4·5 per cent. bigger than the adopted budget for 1989, but it was nonetheless more than 4 billion ecu within the overall ceiling in the financial perspective. Total provision was equivalent to around 1 per cent. of Community GNP and almost 2·5 per cent. of public expenditure by member states.

Two aspects of the PDB exemplified underlying trends in EC expenditure. First, the proportion of the total budget accounted for by expenditure on agricultural market support was down for the second year running. This largely reflected developments in the world market for agricultural produce, but the new budget discipline arrangements have also played an important part. For example, price cuts have been triggered by the automatic stabilisers—3 per cent. cuts in cereals have resulted this year and next.

Secondly, the PDB provided for an increase of over 20 per cent. in expenditure on structural operations and research and development. These areas now account for almost one third of the total budget.

I should also mention that the PDB included provision of 70 million ecu for measures to combat fraud. This was further tangible evidence of the Community's new-found determination to root out fraud. The Government spearheaded efforts in Europe to persuade our partners to combat fraud more robustly. That has led to the creation of the anti-fraud co-ordination unit, and anti-fraud cells are now in place in key directorates in Brussels.

The PDB was given a first reading at the Budget Council on 28 July. The United Kingdom argued strongly that the Council should stick rigidly to the letter of the Brussels conclusions and confine the growth of non-privileged DNO to half the calculated maximum rate —to 3·01 per cent. A majority in the Council agreed, and the Commission's proposals were accordingly pruned by around 280 million ecu in commitments and payments. Overall, the draft budget established on 28 July was some 700 million ecu in commitments and 650 million ecu in payments lower than the PDB.

It was at this point that the dramatic developments in eastern Europe started to occupy centre stage in the 1990 budget. In September, the Commission presented a letter of amendment to the 1990 PDB which provided for assistance of 200 million ecu towards the economic restructuring of Poland and Hungary and for a Community guarantee for loans to those two countries from the European Investment bank. The 200 million ecu is on top of the emergency food aid package of 100 million ecu which the Community agreed last July. It is intended to cover such things as special import programmes for pesticides, agricultural machinery, business training and environmental improvements.

When drawing up the letter of amendment, the Commission took the view that expenditure on economic aid to Poland and Hungary should be over and above the relevant ceiling in the financial perspective. The Commission accordingly included in the letter a so-called "negative reserve" of 200 million ecu. This was a stopgap measure enabling expenditure on the aid package to go ahead, pending a formal revision of the financial perspective under article 12 of the IIA. The Commission intends to propose such a revision in February next year.

Publicly funded aid is by no means a complete solution to the problems of the Polish and Hungarian economies, as I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark), who has left the Chamber. The crucial role belongs to the private sector. The Government have nonetheless unreservedly welcomed the proposed EC aid package, as well as the fact that the Commission and the Council have managed to respond to those developments within the framework of budget discipline. Thus, when the amending letter was established at ECOFIN on 9 October, the Council made two important statements for the minutes. The first was that it would agree to the proposed revision of the financial perspective for 1990, provided that this was confined to the amount of the aid package for Poland and Hungary. The second was that the application of article 203(9) of the treaty in the 1990 budget procedure would be unaffected by the financing of the aid package. The purpose of this latter statement was to underline the need for genuine co-decision between the Council and the European Parliament on the overall level of DNO in the 1990 budget.

The first letter of amendment was quickly followed by a second one. The purpose was to bring to account 800 million ecu of savings in agricultural expenditure in 1989 that had been transferred to the monetary reserve. The monetary reserve is symmetrical in operation. It allows for expenditure on agricultural support of up to 1,000 million ecu above the guideline if, and only if, that is needed as a result of the ecu appreciating against the dollar. Conversely, budget appropriations of up to 1,000 million ecu which are no longer required because the dollar has appreciated against the ecu must be transferred to the reserve. In 1989 the latter situation has prevailed. The effect has been to create a budget surplus which, when carried forward to 1990, will reduce member states' contributions to the budget for that year.

In fact, the budget surplus in 1989 will be much larger than 800 million ecu, due mainly to underspending on agricultural support which has occurred for reasons other than exchange rate movements. The Commission declined to include this additional amount, which totals over 1 billion ecu, in the second amending letter, and thereby provoked the Council to take action at its second reading of the budget in November. I will come to this in a moment. But the next event in the chronology was the Parliament's first reading of the budget at the end of October.

The Parliament took the view that the current ceilings in the financial perspective could not accommodate the expenditure consequences of new legislation which the Community had adopted since 1988. It therefore demanded that the Commission propose a general revision of the financial perspective before the second reading of the budget.

In terms of numbers, the Parliament voted for amendments and modifications, adding over 1·2 billion ecu in commitments and almost 1 billion ecu in payments to the draft budget. Three amendments were especially significant: first, an increase of 100 million ecu in the package of economic assistance for Poland and Hungary; secondly, the removal of the negative reserve of 200 million ecu to which ECOFIN agreed on 9 October; and finally, the introduction of a so-called operational reserve of 184 million ecu over and above the relevant ceiling in the financial perspective. All that added up to a bid by the Parliament to increase the ceiling in category 4 of the perspective by 484 million ecu: 300 million ecu for Poland and Hungary and 184 million ecu for the other policies covered by the operational reserve.

The Budget Council on 14 November tried to persuade the Commission to revise its second amending letter by including a reasonable estimate of the agricultural underspending in 1989 stemming from factors other than exchange rate movements. The Commission was unwilling to do that and the Council therefore revised the letter on its own authority. It increased the figure by 1 billion ecu to a total of 1·8 billion ecu. That underlined the important principles that surpluses should be stripped out of the budget as soon as they are identified, and that own resources raised from member states should not exceed the amount strictly necessary to finance the budget.

The Council then turned to the Parliament's amendments and modifications. Its key strategic decision was to resist the Parliament's pressure for an immediate, wide-ranging revision of the financial perspective. In effect, the Council reaffirmed the position which ECOFIN had adopted on 9 October. That was that the revision to the financial perspective for 1990 should take place next February and should be confined to expenditure on aid for Poland and Hungary.

The Council did, however, agree to increase the aid package to 300 million ecu as the Parliament had proposed. The intention is that 200 million ecu of that will be inscribed in the 1990 budget before it is adopted, together with the corresponding negative reserve. The remaining 100 million ecu will be provided for in a supplementary budget next spring, following a revision of the financial perspective sufficient to cover the whole of the 300 million ecu, and thereby to cancel the negative reserve.

As regards other DNO, the Council accepted amendments totalling 219 million ecu in commitments and 96 million ecu in payments. That brought the growth of non-privileged DNO in the revised draft budget to a little over 5 per cent., comfortably within the calculated maximum rate of 6·1 per cent.

The upshot of all that is a revised draft budget in which commitments are around 4·6 billion ecu below the overall ceiling in the financial perspective, and in which member states' contributions are equivalent to less than 1 per cent. of Community GNP, compared with the annual sub-ceiling for own resources of 1·18 per cent.

We have not yet reached the end of the road. It remains to be seen whether the Parliament, at its second reading later this week, will try once again to push the Council further and faster than it has been prepared to go in relation to a revision of the financial perspective. At the very least, the Parliament can be expected to push DNO back up towards the relevant ceilings in the perspective.

The Council for its part has agreed the basis on which the Presidency can enter into a process of co-decision with the Parliament, under article 203(9) of the treaty, to agree the overall growth of DNO in the 1990 budget.

The Parliament's strategy in the 1990 budget has been to try to use the relative depressed level of agricultural spending as a pretext for a major hike in expenditure on other policies. The Parliament has tried to pressurise the Commission and the Council into an immediate revision of the financial perspective to cover aid for Poland and Hungary and a range of new policies for which the Council has allegedly failed to make adequate provision.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Ryder: I am coming to the end of my remarks and I must press on.

This strategy cannot easily be reconciled with budget discipline. The figures in the financial perspective are ceilings, not entitlements and still less targets. Spending on agriculture is below the relevant ceiling for largely fortuitous reasons, including the continuing effect on world prices of the United States drought in 1988. There is no case for recycling this surplus to other areas of the budget.

Moreover, even the Commission has refused to accept the Parliament's view that insufficient provision has been made for new policies in the 1990 budget. The Parliament is therefore alone in its wish to break through the existing financial perspective for 1990.

The budget procedure is always a tortuous affair and this year, as I have explained, has been no exception. The Community's ability to respond to events in eastern Europe must not be stifled by inflexible procedures. That response, however, must not become a pretext for chipping away at the fabric of budget discipline. I believe that the Council has managed to tread the line between these two essentials with some skill. Against that backcloth, I urge the House to agree to the motion.

11.27 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): Before dealing with the substance of the matters that are before us, perhaps I might be permitted to voice two complaints. My first complaint is about the manner of presentation of European Community budgetary details to the House, which is far from satisfactory. The explanatory memoranda from the Treasury do not explain much. There is a mountain of indigestible paper. Documents are unavailable from the Vote Office until well after they are presented in Brussels or Strasbourg. Even now, we do not have the full details of the most recent Council decisions on the budget. It is surely unsatisfactory that the House should not have the full details when trying to address itself to the extremely important issues that apply to the nature of the budget.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does the hon. Gentleman agree with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in her insistence that there should be political accountability for national parliaments in matters of this sort? If her views were to be agreed within the Community, we would get far more control and better surveillance over these matters.

Mr. Smith: There is little on which I agree with the Prime Minister. I would wish, however, to see the action of Ministers from national parliaments in the Council of Ministers being much more readily accountable to the national parliaments.

It seems that there is a lack of proper time—this is my second complaint—fully to debate these issues in the House. The budget has already gone to the Commission, to the Council, to the Parliament and back again. It is due for final decision by the European Parliament on Wednesday. Ministers have given their views and contributed to decisions at the Council of Ministers, and only now do we in our Parliament have a chance to discuss, and then only in a relatively academic manner, the decisions that are being taken. There must be a better way of going about the process.

From the point of view of the Opposition, there are some welcome features to the budget, and I shall draw attention to three in particular. First, the overall expenditure figures have been kept well within the ceilings imposed by the inter-institutional agreement and the financial perspective. The perspective imposes a discipline, especially on agricultural expenditure. It has its drawbacks, but the whole picture makes for an increase well below our rate of inflation. That perhaps says more about our rate of inflation than it does about the financial discipline imposed. We welcome the seriousness of approach that all parties have used in drawing up the budget.

The second feature to welcome is that the budget represents, whatever the Government may try to say, a shift in the balance of expenditure. There will be in the coming year less spending on agricultural guarantees and more on such sectors as regional aid, research and development and the social fund. That shift in expenditure priority within the Community budget is welcome. The decrease in the agricultural expenditure has come partly through the favourable position of the ecu in relation to the dollar, partly through changes in patterns of food consumption and production around the world, and partly as a result of some of the disciplines imposed by the financial perspective.

The improvements in expenditure on a number of social matters are those that even the Council of Ministers identified as its priorities from the outset, in sectors of expenditure such as the environment, education, research and international aid. The European Parliament added others, and from our point of view the more that the Community moves away from budgets overwhelmingly dominated by the CAP, the better.

The third point to welcome in the budget is that, from the early stages of the budget-making process, everyone has agreed that substantial economic aid should be made available for Poland and Hungary. With the enormous and exciting changes that have been taking place in eastern Europe in the past few months, it is surely important that the European Community—not just the national Governments of the Community, but the Community as a body—plays its part in supporting and facilitating those changes.

We shared the doubts of the Government and the European Parliament about the device of a negative reserve—a suggestion put forward by the Commission. This was an attempt to get round the constraints of the financial perspective that militate against unexpected and major items of essential spending that become needed during the course of the budget-making process. It was an unattractive way to go about solving that problem. The Council now appears to have decided on a revision of the financial perspective, to allow an increase at a later stage. It is a better way to do it, although we would have preferred a change to have occurred now so that the money could have been committed immediately.

As a result of the Strasbourg meeting over the weekend, the one point on which all the Twelve seemed to be unanimously agreed was that a new financial framework should be established to assist and provide economic aid to the whole of eastern Europe as it democratises. How will this new financial framework mesh with the provisions of the budget? That question is important even if the precise details of the framework proposed at Strasbourg have not yet been worked out.

I must ask a further question of the Government because the explanatory memorandum and the details from the recent Council of Ministers is unclear. The European Parliament recommended a budget total of 49,397 million ecu in commitments and 47,132 million ecu in payment. The Council has agreed to commitments totalling 48,375 million ecu and to payments totalling 46,200 ecu. That represents a cut in the European Parliament's recommendations of about 1 billion ecu in each category. We have to ask, since we have not yet been given the full information by the Council of Ministers, where the cuts are to be made. The Economic Secretary said that it was allowing only some 240 million ecu and 96 million ecu, respectively, of the European Parliament's recommended additional expenditure. It would be useful to know in more detail what items the Council agrees to and what items it is cutting from the European Parliament's recommended items of expenditure.

I hope that cuts will not be made in some of the progressive proposals that are to be found under the new policy and non-privileged headings that have been put forward by the European Parliament. I draw the Minister's attention to a few of the specific items of expenditure that were recommended by the European Parliament. They represent initiatives, ideas and programmes that this country sorely needs and that we shall not get from our Government. Under amendment No. 623 there is support for improvements in transport infrastructure. Under amendment No. 625 there is support for training in new technologies and for bringing together universities and industry in new training initiatives.

It is worth noting the European Parliament's comments, because it describes exactly Britain's needs when it states:

> "Several regions of the Community have been affected by acute skill shortages which limit their prospects for future economic growth even though there is unemployment in these regions. These facts point to a mismatch of vocational training and the needs of industry in these areas."

That precisely describes one of the central problems of the British economy. The European Parliament has proposed a number of extremely important initiatives to tackle it.

Amendment No. 630 provides for assisting moves towards a more social Europe and the implementation of the social charter, which would provide enormous benefits in terms of the smooth working of British industry and better labour relations. Amendment No. 654 provides for a highly imaginative programme to regulate the trade in tropical hardwoods and to encourage tropical forest management and conservation in developing countries. That is a much-neglected area that greatly needs support and assistance.

Many other progressive and imaginative examples could be cited. The European Parliament was frequently supported by Conservative MEPs. It was proposed that these initiatives should be added to the budget. I hope that the British Government will not join the Council of Ministers in its attempt to scrap many of these extremely important initiatives.

While taking note of the documents and the budget proposals, it is worth remarking on the Government's lack of constructive thinking about the opportunities that developments in the European Community and beyond its eastern borders are opening up. If only our Government were willing to enter into prudent but constructive negotiations about membership of the exchange rate mechanism, if only they were able to embrace the social charter, because of the positive benefits that it could provide, if only, while acknowledging, as we do, the profound imperfections of stages 2 and 3 of Delors, they were willing to come forward with more positive proposals than the rather daft idea of equal validity for 12 circulating and competing currencies, andif only they were prepared to be more constructive, perhaps we would have a more powerful voice and a greater influence on the forward movement of the Community and a better chance to create new links with the East. In the meantime, we can welcome many of the budget proposals as steps in the right direction. However, I fear that our own Government still have a great deal to learn about the budget and the progress of Europe.

11.40 pm

Sir Richard Body (Holland with Boston): The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) spoiled his speech by decrying what the Government have been doing in the Community in the past few years. He should remember that we are one of the two principal paymasters of the Community and, as such, we should have some right to express our views a little more loudly than some. That applies particularly to the draft budget.

It is a bad budget and it will always be bad so long as agriculture is treated in the wrong way. My hon. Friend the Minister said that agricultural expenditure is under control. That is true when one considers the total figure which has shown a slight decline, but I draw his attention to the proportion of the budget spent on the guarantee section and the guidance section. The guarantee section receives 57 per cent. and the guidance section receives 3·5 per cent. and has been pegged at roughly the same figure for many years.

It is wrong that we are holding down the guidance section at the same time as the guarantee section. That is a clear contradiction. If we are to have a common agricultural policy there is some sense in having a guidance section to enable farmers to adapt, to allow them money to farm with regard to the environment and for other noteworthy purposes of which my hon. Friend has had great experience. But it is wrong to maintain the level of expenditure on guarantees. The purpose of a guaranteed price is to goad farmers into producing more. If it does not have that effect it has no effect at all because a guarantee must be above that market price. Once again the budget is putting the farmers of the Community into an intolerable position. It is goading farmers into producing more with guaranteed prices and maintaining the same proportion of expenditure as before, yet at the same time it is doing nothing to make life easier for them by increasing the money available in the guidance fund.

I hope that my hon. Friend will take one message with him. As one of the two principal paymasters of that policy, we should raise our voice and say that it is not fair on the farmers, the taxpayers or the consumers. It is not fair on millions of people, particularly in the Third world, who have to compete in the world market against dumped commodities and excessively high duties on imports from the Third world into the Community.

My hon. Friend the Minister dealt rather hastily with agricultural spending. I hope that he will not forget that only a few days ago the Council of Ministers showed its true colours in its attitude to agricultural expenditure by disregarding stabilisers for cereals. We were given to understand that they would be binding and that there would be no more nonsense about cereals, yet only a few days ago they were disregarded, at a cost of £38 million. We may say that £38 million is neither here nor there in a budget of this size, but it shows the attitude of the Council of Ministers, which the House should thoroughly deplore. As one of the two paymasters of the Community, we should raise our voice and say, "It is not good enough."

11.45 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): A little earlier in the debate your assistance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was sought to elucidate some of the terms being used by the Minister. That was, perhaps, an unfair burden to place on you. These debates could be conducted with a little less use of the jargon and abbreviations that pass in the European Community. Such habits are probably unwelcome to most citizens of the Community, and are a product of the bureaucracy at the centre. There is no need to talk about mecus, becus, IIAs and DNOs to such an extent that nobody has the faintest idea what is going on, least of all those who are responsible for scrutiny of these proceedings. Those outside the House and the European Parliament can hardly be expected to follow them, so let us do our best to reduce them to sensible and intelligible terms.

I want to refer particularly to some of the main features of the recent budget discussions, of which perhaps the most significant and widely reported was the assistance to eastern Europe. The Minister decried on the strictest budgetary grounds the transfer of any surplus in the Community's budget to any other activity, yet he acknowledged that the position in Poland and Hungary justified significant expenditure, which would not have been possible had the surplus in the budget not arisen. He did not try to argue against what Parliament and the Council have supported. Like most other people in the country, hon. Members support that, although I heard one or two murmurs of criticism from hon. Members, one of whom is no longer present.

It is clearly in the interests of democratic western Europe that the processes of economic recovery and democratic change in eastern Europe do not collapse because of an economic crisis. It is in the long-term trading interests of western Europe that it should have viable trading partners in eastern Europe as well as, we hope one day, viable partners in democracy. The moves in that direction have gathered pace quite remarkably since the new budgetary provisions were made, which has led to questions being asked about Czechoslovakia and East Germany, which are different in their economic character and achievement from Poland and Hungary, so the same considerations do not apply. The need for western Europe to have regard to the problems in eastern Europe is no less, despite that.

Questions are now being asked about the Baltic states and the Soviet republics and our attitude to their needs. Their economic and democratic needs seem to come to light simultaneously. The possibility of further developments was clearly recognised at the summit.

It would be helpful if the Minister said a little more about the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, about which a major decision was made at the weekend, with the idea that negotiations about it may begin in January 1990. It will clearly have long-term budgetary implications and many other implications. The Council will receive support for what it is trying to do across the Community, but we need to know a little more about what is planned.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): I have closely followed the hon. Gentleman's comments. He is right to say that we must do as much as possible to help eastern Europe. The European Commission is already co-ordinating many measures, including aid from the 24 countries, as agreed at the Paris summit. I hope that the hon. Gentleman did not imply that part of that process could be a reallocation of any savings on the agricultural budget. It would seem to be an important principle that that is not redistributed and that it becomes part of a separate decision in the Council as to whether any extra funds should be devoted to eastern Europe.

Mr. Beith: I am strongly in favour of the most careful examination of what is done with surpluses that arise from the budget and the application of budgetary disciplines. At different stages, the Parliament, Commission and Council have become committed to expenditure for eastern Europe which would otherwise have had to be financed by new contributions from member countries. As the Minister explained, the reasons had nothing to do with the need that had arisen, but these funds have made meeting that need a little easier.

Regional policy is another aspect which will be important in European budgetary matters and which already features in the budget. The Minister gave the impression that the Government often give—that most Community expenditure, except that on the common agricultural policy, is viewed with great suspicion by the Government. I have no doubt that regional policy falls into that category. The Government must recognise that developments which are taking place, including some that they oppose, will lead to a greater, not lesser, need for active regional policy. The developments towards 1992 will generate a need to ensure that the various parts of the United Kingdom that are furthest from the present transport to the Community can gain full access to the single market. That will involve expenditure which was previously assisted under the heading of "regional policy", particularly regional and transport infrastructure.

That will become more important in the context of monetary union. The Government—or at least the Prime Minister—are very much opposed to a commitment to monetary union into which they have entered by treaty. They must recognise that, because other member countries will proceed at a pace that they choose, developments will take place in Europe which will give rise to a need to ensure that the peripheral regions in Europe can compete effectively and play a full part. That means that expenditure on regional policy will become more, not less, necessary.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): On the question of regional policy——

Mr. Beith: I should like to give way before the hon. Gentleman launches into the subject of his intervention, but I give way.

Mr. Gill: I am interested in the hon. Gentleman's comments about regional policy. Does he agree that we have two regional policies—a regional policy as expressed by the European Community and a regional policy as expressed by the domestic Government? Does the hon. Gentleman contend that we should have one or the other, or that we should continue twin-tracking?

Mr. Beith: In this country, we do not have two regional policies. We have one, which is that of the European Community. In effect, there is no regional policy as expressed by the domestic Government. I have been interested in the map for assisted area status because of the removal from it of parts of my constituency with high unemployment. The only interest in getting assisted area status is in getting access to European regional policy. There is virtually nothing left of British regional policy. I lament that, because the British Government could play a role. If I am offered a choice, experience would lead me to believe that we will get more of a regional policy out of Europe than out of the kind of British Government under whom we have been living for the past 10 years.

I am prepared to put my support behind the development of European regional policy. It seems to make sense in an examination of Europe as a whole to accept that needs arising on the periphery of Europe differ from those in London, Paris, and the main centres of industrial and financial Germany. The needs in the north of England, Scotland, Wales and the west of England and in southern Italy, Greece and Portugal contrast markedly with the needs of places in the geographical centre of the Community which are most immediately connected by the Channel tunnel—all the places to which advantage is already conferred. That strengthens the reasoning behind the European regional policy.

Mr. Gill: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Beith: No, because I gave way to the hon. Gentleman and I sought to give a full and detailed answer to his question.

As we look back on the events of the past weekend in the circumstances of this budget debate, we are bound to inquire whether this was the summit at which the Prime Minister finally gave in, not to our European partners, but to her colleagues in Government, in adopting a more conciliatory public line on Europe. Was it the summit at which the Prime Minister finally recognised that there are few votes to be gained by posing as someone who wishes that she had never voted to enter the European Community in the first place? By doing so, she might win the enthusiastic support of the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) and one or two of the other hon. Members who stay for these debates not just because of their genuine commitment to budgetary discipline, but because they wish basically that we were not in this show. They were against it from the start and they are still against it.

Mr. Chris Smith *rose*——

Mr. Beith: I give way willingly to the hon. Gentleman, who will certainly have something interesting to say on this topic.

Mr. Smith: Is the hon. Gentleman not wrong in one respect? The line at Strasbourg was not more conciliatory. It was the same as before, but the tone was more conciliatory.

Mr. Beith: That is what I sought to convey. I hope that no such criticism could be made of Opposition Front Bench Members in their attitude to Europe, because they have taken a more conciliatory line of late. I refer not especially to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), but to some of his colleagues, not least the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), who is now having to adopt a conciliatory line on Europe. I have known him for 25 years and his conciliatory line on Europe has come as a great surprise to me at a late stage in my long acquaintance with him. I am not yet convinced that the substance is there to match the conciliatory line.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Beith: No, because I have given way many times. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman wants to take part in the debate and I should like to leave him the opportunity to do so.

One particular point that intrigued me about the Prime Minister when she was being nice about Europe was that she said:

> "The moment . . . that you go from the rigid and valuable discipline of the German central bank and people . . . you lose the very thing that helps you get inflation down."

The Prime Minister has at last found something in Europe of which she should be in favour, but it does not seem to have influenced her line in general. She has rightly recognised, as I sought to explain to the Minister earlier, that a practical solution to the problems of inflation and exchange rate volatility has been found in the exchange rate mechanism and in the influence that the Bundesbank exercises in that exchange rate mechanism. Only the other day the Prime Minister seemed to argue that the reason why she could not stand the exchange rate mechanism was that it led to the undemocratic central bankers of Europe having an influence. Now she has discovered that that influence was no bad thing.

The Prime Minister must sort out the basis of her attitude. If she continues to try to cling to sovereignty on the basis that otherwise we shall have undemocratic central bankers across Europe influencing our policy on inflation, she will continue to look like a Prime Minister who is hanging on to sovereignty because it gives her the power to inflate, to print more money and to devalue the currency. That Prime Minister has not faced up to the reality of Europe or to the leading role that Britain should be playing in Europe.

11.58 pm

Mr. James Cran (Beverley): I associate myself with those who, in previous years, spoke about this debate being a waste of time. Having sat through this debate thus far, I go as far as to say that it is a charade and nothing else. We have an hour and a half to debate this enormous subject, of which the Government and Opposition Front Bench speakers took up—and I counted it—40 minutes. There will, no doubt, be an answer by my hon. Friend the Minister, which will make the total 45 minutes. That means that Back-Bench Members will have had only half of this debate in which to register any point. I regard that as an absolute disgrace.

Unusually, I agree with the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) that the Treasury memoranda on the budget were singularly unhelpful. I found them wholly uninformative and indigestible. Perhaps the Treasury should have a look at how it puts these documents together. One might be forgiven for thinking that the Treasury regards this debate as a waste of time, too.

All I can do in the time available is highlight one point of the 29 budgetary headings. It is an important one concerning the internal market. The budgetary document outlines a considerable increase in the budget item termed "Industry and internal market". I hope that the Economic Secretary will be able to tell me in the fullness of time how that budgetary increase will bring about what the United Kingdom wants—the completion of the single market. All the signs are that we are nowhere near it. How will those budgetary increases dissolve the political objections of those in the Community who want to delay the single market? There are certainly plenty of such people.

I shall mention only three examples of delay in this connection. I am told that there are good and bad Europeans. We have been lectured on that subject by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), so let us examine the Germans. I discover that the Germans do not want to open up their insurance market to competition, for the good reason that they do not want to encounter the competition from British insurance companies.

We are told that the French are good Europeans. Why do the French—this is but one example of many—refuse to allow other European Community countries' ships to pick up and offload goods in France? We allow that, but the French do not. Who, therefore, are the good Europeans? I should have thought that we were. This therefore indicates that the debate on the internal market is oversimplified. Moreover, the French, Italians, Spaniards and Belgians do not want the full-scale liberalisation of telecommunications in Europe, but the United Kingdom does. Which country is a good European in those circumstances? I should have thought that again it was the United Kingdom.

We are in favour of the completion of the internal market; why are not many of the other states of the Community? Why are we called bad Europeans when under our presidency 40 single market measures were agreed—a record? Why are we accused of being bad Europeans when the United Kingdom has voted against only three of the 152 measures that have been enacted for the internal market? All that seems to show that we are

[Mr. James Cran]

good Europeans. Lastly, why has the United Kingdom agreed 66 of the 68 measures that are presently in place for the internal market?

Clearly a great deal remains to be done for the completion of the market. That fact was notably missing from the speech of the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed. Only half the 300 measures that must be agreed on the internal market have been. That is a disgrace. How will the budgetary increase for industry and the internal market help? Even worse than all that, only seven of those measures for the internal market have been agreed by all the countries of the Community. Bearing in mind that we agreed to 66 of them, that shows who in the Community are dragging their feet—the United Kingdom is certainly not one of those.

As I believe that other hon. Members should take part in the debate—little time for which is left—I will bring my remarks to a close. I am particularly in favour of the single market in financial services. It represents 10 per cent. of the United Kingdom's gross domestic product and 1·2 million people work in that area. Financial services account for about £8 billion in the invisible trade surplus in this country. We want the free market in financial services, but several other Community countries do not. They want a liberalised United Kingdom market place for financial services so long as they can keep the barriers up in their own market places. That is wholly unfair.

The Select Committee on Trade and Industry, of which I am a member, recognised this and reported on financial services in the European market and made 37 recommendations. How many of those recommendations, referring to action by the Community, will be aided by the budgetary increase which it appears the Government have already agreed?

I should have liked to discuss many of the other subjects in the budget. I should have liked to discuss agriculture and the increases for the structural fund. Above all, I should have liked to discuss the controls, if they exist, for this budget. Alas, poor Back Benchers such as I do not get a look in in this debate.

12.6 am

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): In any debate on Europe this week we should reflect that last week saw the death of Eduardo Amaldi, one of the architects of European science development since the war, a distinguished pre-war nuclear physicist and colleague of Belgium and friend to Britain. He should be mentioned in the House.

I want to ask several questions. First, what is the Treasury's view of the Sofia conference on co-operation? How much money is the Treasury prepared to put towards work with Poland? I do not think that we should say that we should slosh money to every country in eastern Europe, because conditions differ. I would rather stick to Poland, which has pollution problems like London smog, instead of aiding Hungary which seems to be doing much better.

Does the Treasury agree with the Amsterdam analyst, Walter van Dieren, and others who say that one guilder put into East Germany is worth, in terms of the European including the Dutch environment, five guilders spent in Holland? Surely there is an element of self-interest, to put it at its lowest, in helping to resolve the ecological troubles of eastern Europe. What is the Treasury view on that, and how much money is it prepared to put into the proposed European economic environment agency?

My next point occupied a large part of the day on 14 November at the interesting conference in Carlton gardens which the parliamentary and scientific committee had in conjunction with the Royal Society. That topic affects us directly in this House. Are we going to go the same way as the Bundestag in relation to embryo research? If so, what is the assessment of the British and international pharmaceutical firms in the light of the fact that Hoechst has, at short notice, become one of the great German firms which will have to transfer considerable sectors of their research elsewhere in Europe, or more likely to the United States, unless a British decision is forthcoming as a matter of urgency?

This is not the time to discuss the embryology Bill, but I think it fair to ask Treasury and other Ministers for an economic analysis of what would happen if we took such a course. Hon. Members should be under no illusions—whatever the final verdict that they reach in their personal capacities on a free vote—about what will happen to significant sectors of British industry if we decide to inhibit embryo research.

Let me couple that with a second question. In a Committee chaired by the hon. Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall), we heard David Baldwin of Hewlett Packard issue a strong complaint supported by a powerful array of figures, just one of whom revealed that, for £900,000 given to charity, in Britain £135,000 had to be paid in VAT. What is the Treasury's attitude to charity payments in Britain compared with those in France? David Baldwin simply says that the French are entirely flexible in such matters. The great multinational firms, as they donate huge and significant sums for education and training, say to themselves, "Our good work will be much more valuable in France, Italy, Germany or the United States than it is in Britain", because of our unique tax laws. I believe that Baldwin's submissions—known to the Treasury—must be taken into account.

My third question was also raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith). I am not going to ask about the Government's attitude to the import of hardwoods, which is outside the bounds of the debate; what concerns rain-forest countries, however, is the extent of their debt—and here there must be either a co-ordinated response or no response at all. One reason why some of us are so reluctant to urge the case of Hungary, Bulgaria or Czechoslovakia is the desperate plight of south American and other rain-forest countries. Something must be done, or we shall be in enormous danger of having precious little rain forest left —let alone the threat of a botanical and biological holocaust.

Have the Government contemplated what is likely to happen to Brazil if its new president should be "Lula", representing a massive Left-wing force and giving expression to the aspirations of many people? I think that it is high time that European Governments got together on the question of debt—although that is no easy matter, as Kit McMahon found when he went out to Brazil on behalf of the Midland bank.

Other hon. Members wish to speak, so I shall leave it at that.

12.12 am

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): It is noticeable that, despite all the fine words that we have heard about the common agricultural policy, it continues to swallow up vast sums; it is also interesting to reflect that European countries spend twice as much money on protecting themselves from Third world agricultural imports as they contribute to developing countries. Because of the time pressures under which we all find ourselves this evening, I cannot develop the CAP theme; but let me say a bit about the structural funds and some of the other aspects of the budget.

I wonder whether the people of this country appreciate the fee that Britain pays for membership of the EEC. This year it is some £2 billion, that being our net contribution to the EEC. Without the efforts of our present Prime Minister, and had we still been governed by the arrangements of the last Labour Administration, our contribution would have been infinitely higher. What we do know is that the EEC budget has grown by 189 per cent. over the past 10 years, from £9,800 million in 1980 to £28 billion in 1990. I am still old-fashioned enough to translate all the figures that come to us in ecu into pounds. That represents an increase of over 100 per cent. in real terms because inflation during that period has averaged 75 per cent. throughout the Community. How much the National Health Service, the building programme or the education service in this country would have loved such an increase.

We know of the CAP's profligacy, but the two areas that have seen the greatest explosion in expenditure are the regional development fund and the social fund, the budgets of which have risen during the past 10 years by 547 per cent. and 352 per cent. respectively, to total nearly £5 billion in 1990. It is the Commission's objective to double the structural funds by 1993. Indeed, that is reiterated in the foreword of the preliminary draft that we are debating. Most of the support, which is designed to help the most disadvantaged regions, goes to the southern member states, such as Greece, southern Italy, Spain and Portugal. Whether my constituents are aware that £2 billion is flowing out of this country and, it could be argued, straight into those countries is debatable, but I doubt whether they would approve of it. I reckon that they would want any spare money that is leaving this country to be used to address the structural problems of some of the most poverty-stricken countries in the Third world.

What I object to is that, having just about succeeded in pulling the British people away from the idea that the economic prospects of the regions can be improved by pouring Government money into them, the EEC, in a rather grandiose fashion, is carrying forward exactly that policy throughout the Community, much of it with our money. Indeed, that is what the disagreements over the social charter and the exchange rate mechanism are all about. As we know, the social charter would impose increased costs on industry, and entering the exchange rate mechanism would take us back to the days of the operation of exchange controls. Anyone would think that membership of the ERM would solve all our economic problems, but since March 1979 the lira has fallen 40 per cent. and the franc 33 per cent. relative to the deutschmark despite being inside the ERM, while sterling has fallen only 17 per cent. Furthermore, during that period Britain performed better on inflation than both Italy and France until, I regret to say, about a year and a half ago when British inflation became higher. Far from being a reflection on the efficacy of the ERM, Britain's recent increase in inflation is, I am sorry to say, a reflection of my own Government's failure to run a proper and tight monetary policy.

The growth of the structural funds makes it all the more difficult for those countries which benefit so much from them to disagree with some of the more unacceptable interventionist proposals which are put forward by the European Commission. I find the reference by Commissioner Schmidhuber in the draft general budget to

"the Commission's political determination to continue the orderly growth of revenue and expenditure in its budget"

particularly unfortunate. The reference to the Commission's "political determination" is revealing. The Commission clearly knows what it is about.

I am afraid that time is against me and as other hon. Members wish to speak I shall not develop what I had been going to say. However, I hope that my hon. Friend will give his full support to our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister when she continues to stand firm against some of the EEC's worst excesses.

12.19 am

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): I see from the briefing that I have here that non-obligatory expenditure represents nearly 50 per cent. of the budget. I believe that it is the same thing as the non-privileged expenditure to which my hon. Friend the Minister referred. It is that which the European Parliament can influence, amend or modify to increase the budget.

In general terms, the House has welcomed the major increase of expenditure in favour of Poland and Hungary, but throwing money at the problem will be counterproductive, especially if my hon. Friend the Minister and the Community do not pay attention to their serious indebtedness. The EC should take a lead, finding a way to restructure those countries' debts so that they are not overhanging problems, and Poland and Hungary can invite investment from the public and private sectors to restructure productively. I hope that we are not simply throwing money at those countries through this budget.

I do not think that the House has noticed that the European Parliament is increasing expenditure but has no obligation or responsibility for raising the necessary revenue. In the context of an intergovernmental conference in which we shall have to participate, is it not time that we cut—stopped, indeed—that privilege? Is it not an important constitutional issue which the budget presents to this Parliament?

12.21 am

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): There was one thing that I found strange in the Minister's difficult-to-understand speech. I think that he found it difficult to understand himself, but that does not matter as we have no power in this regard and nobody is listening at this quite ridiculous hour to a discussion of the budget.

When, once again, we agreed to give the EEC lots more money, we were given two assurances: first, unlike in the past, budgetary controls were to be legally binding and, secondly, the new stabilisers were to be automatic. When we last heard of binding controls, the Europeans found a way out, and decided to have a 10-month year for spending and a 12-month year for raising income. That

[Mr. Teddy Taylor]

made 1987 a rather bad year. The EEC also did something wholly illegal—it agreed to the transfer of spending on butter dumping to member states. The Court of Auditors said that that was illegal, but the Council of Ministers decided not to consider the matter.

We were told, "Things have changed. We now have a new deal." The Minister must, however, be aware of what happened 10 days ago. We had the first breach of the stabiliser. Unfortunately, the automatic cereal production level, of 160 million tonnes last year, was breached. What happened? The Council of Ministers had a meeting and decided to disregard it. It disregarded a problem to the extent of £38 million. How on earth can the Government expect us to take them or the EEC seriously when the most clear and specific assurances are given to the House and simply do not work? Even more distressing, we find that there is nothing that we can do when assurances do not work. When the Court of Auditors told the EEC that it was acting illegally, nothing happened. When it decided to have a 10-month year, nothing happened. Now it has gone through the stabiliser which we were told was automatic, nothing will happen.

Therefore, it is understandable that my hon. Friend's excellent speeches show a feeling almost of despair. We have heard the usual reassuring messages from the Minister. We are told that contributions are down, yet the Library tells us that they are at an all-time high of £2,050 million, which is £3 a week per average family. We see scandalous expenditure. There is a new programme to combat alcohol abuse—a splendid idea for the Common Market—but at the same time it is dumping about 4·2 million hectolitres of wine at the crazy price of about 2p a pint. How on earth does it make sense to pump in money to fight alcohol abuse while spending hundreds of millions of pounds on dumping alcohol at crazy prices throughout the world? It is the same with tobacco. The Community has told us to change our advertisements, yet we are dumping 25,600 tonnes of high-tar tobacco at crazy low prices in Africa and the Third world, spreading all the damage with our alms.

Finally, does anyone look at how the Common Market spends its money? If the Minister would like education, I plead with him to find out what happened to the £130,000 which the Common Market out of its generosity gave to the institutions of Broadwater Farm. He will find that the money is handled by trustees, who are former solicitors struck off the list. There he will find the only nursery schools in the world with masses of receipts for whisky and vodka, which is a strange way for nursery schools to spend their money. I hope that the Minister will realise that it is sad for the country that we are talking about all this nonsense when we have no power to do anything about it and nobody is listening.

12.26 am

Mr. Ryder: In the brief time remaining to me I shall reply to as many points as possible. If the clock beats me, I shall write to the hon. Gentlemen concerned as soon as possible.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) and my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran) drew the attention of the House to the fact that documents are not made available early enough. I shall look into that and I assure both of them that I shall make every effort to remedy that problem. I shall ensure also that my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord President is made aware of the hon. Gentlemen's wish to bring forward this debate in future years.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the new financial framework for economic aid to eastern Europe. Further aid may well have implications for future budgets and we shall strive to keep it within budget discipline as this year's aid has been. The Strasbourg Council meeting has had no direct bearing on this.

My hon. Friends the Members for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body) and for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) understandably complained about last week's decision by the Agriculture Council. The Commission put forward a proposal to the November Agriculture Council that we should give it powers to waive the additional cereals co-responsibility levy in this and future years on unspecified de minimis grounds. The United Kingdom opposed the proposal and was prepared to abstain in the vote on condition that, first, the proposal should apply only to the current marketing year and, secondly, that a retrospective adjustment mechanism be introduced which would both tighten up the stabiliser by reducing the likelihood of underpayment of a levy and obviate the need for any future de minimis arrangements. Those conditions were met. I agree with my hon. Friends that it was a disappointing decision, but it could have been worse in the circumstances.

As a result of what has been said this evening, particularly by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East, the House may like to know more precisely about some of the figures on the United Kingdom CAP market support in real terms. The CAP market support based on 1987-88 prices was £1,393 million, in 1988-89 it was £1,079 million and we estimate for 1989-90 is £870 million——

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted Business).*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. COM(89) 175, the Preliminary Draft Budget of the European Communities for 1990, 8271/89, the Draft Budget of the European Communities for 1990, and 9704/89 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by Her Majesty's Treasury on 6th December 1989 relating to the European Parliament's proposed amendments and modifications to the Draft Budget; and welcomes the impact on the 1990 Budget of the new arrangements for budgetary discipline agreed at the European Council in February 1988.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think that you will have noticed that virtually every contributor to the excellent debate on the European budget commented that our procedures for debating such issues are thoroughly inadequate. I ask you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to ensure that Mr. Speaker knows of the strength of feeling that ran through the debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I shall do so but, as the hon. Gentleman knows, Mr. Speaker is bound by the Standing Orders of the House. I have no doubt that what the hon. Gentleman has said will be noted by those who sit on the Government Front Bench.

European Community (Research and Development)

12.30 am

The Minister for Industry (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 8375/89 and COR 1 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Department of Trade and industry on 22nd November 1989 relating to the Framework Programme of Community research and development activities 1990 to 1994; and supports the Government's view that the Commission's proposals for expenditure need to be more clearly justified before the Programme can be agreed.

Despite the late hour, the debate is timely and important as the Research Council is to meet on 15 December and will discuss proposals for a third framework programme for Community research and development for the years 1990-94. I am therefore extremely grateful that I have this opportunity to learn both the views and the concerns of hon. Members. I shall endeavour to highlight the main areas of interest, but I will leave to the end of the debate my response to queries on the more detailed aspects of the proposal.

The first framework programme was for the years 1984-87, and the budget was of 3·75 billion ecu, or £2·5 billion. The second framework covers the years 1987-91 and has a budget of 5·4 billion ecu or £3·6 billion. It is that programme which is now in existence. The Commission is now proposing a programme of significantly expanded research activities in six main areas with a total cost of 7·7 billion ecu, or a programme of about £5·1 billion. Further details are given in the explanatory memorandum before the House. There would be a two-year overlap with the present framework programme.

The origins of the present proposal lie in the review required in the third year of the present programme. The Commission produced a paper on the state of science and technology in Europe. In addition, a report on the operation of the current framework was produced by a review panel of five eminent figures in European science and technology. The Commission concluded that a further five-year programme should be proposed. The framework programme sets out the broad objectives, technical coverage and funding of the main lines of activity. The detail of specific programme proposals would be the subject of subsequent decisions.

The Government have taken a constructive and prominent part in negotiations. Our objective is, if at all possible, to reach agreement on 15 December. We have a number of reservations, some of which are shared by other countries and most of which have been expressed at the past two meetings of the Research Council.

First, the Government were and indeed are not satisfied that the Commission has adequately justified the size and coverage of the new programme. We thought it essential that the proposal was fully supported by adequate technical information and that the Commission demonstrated the added value required for action at Community level. The original proposal was clearly deficient in both these regards.

To correct this lack of detail as to technical goals and purpose, we and other member states have worked with the Commission to produce a completely revised technical annex to the proposal.

I am glad to be able to tell the House that, not least as a result of our efforts, the revised draft decision is now a great deal more satisfactory than it was and broadly accords with out expectations. Thus, the objectives for each area of proposed activity are made clear. It emphasises that Community research and development should concentrate on pre-competitive work and should avoid near-market activities. Support of product development is excluded. The importance of Community research and development in the context of setting European norms and standards is fully recognised. The programme will also include selective feasibility projects to validate such standards.

So far as the technical annex is concerned, only a relatively small number of technical issues remain to be resolved at the Council on 15 December. I can assure the House that I shall press for improvements where we deem them to be necessary. I shall also press for a more detailed breakdown of the proposed financing as between the lines and sublines of the programme. I also favour a larger number of specific programmes than the six originally proposed by the Commission. This is essential for coherent programme management and for satisfactory financial planning.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): What are the additions that are proposed?

Mr. Hogg: At the moment there are six programme lines. The problem with having such a limited number of them is that too much is subsumed within them. Therefore, we should like to expand the number of lines. We have in mind 20, but it might be possible to reduce that if the Commission would come to an agreement on a slightly lesser figure. We should be better able to define the exact context of the proposed work within a larger number of lines, and as we hope that each of the lines will have a management committee, it would be better to provide a more coherent system of management than we have. At the moment the programme has 37 lines, but I concede that that is too many.

Mr. Dalyell: What does Mr. Pandolfi think about a national Government interfering to this extent in what he might think is his business? Some of us had the impression at the Royal Society conference on 14 November that the Commission was less than happy about the attitude of the British Government.

Mr. Hogg: I do not think that that is right. We have a great deal of support for increasing the number of lines. I recall clearly, at the last meeting of the Council, the Dutch delegation arguing in favour of 20 lines, and I was able to support what it had in mind. There is considerable support in the Council for expanding the number of lines because it is felt that six lines are too few to reflect accurately the amount of work that is being proposed and does not permit of sufficiently direct and detailed control of that work. We are not isolated in this regard.

A second concern is the nature of the decision to be taken about the funding of the programme after 1992. The current budgetary perspective for the Community under the 1988 inter-institutional agreement runs to 1992. It is essential that any new funding proposals for research and development do not prejudge any arrangements which replace the IIA.

[Mr. Hogg]

There must therefore be a clear distinction between budgetary resources in the period covered by the present agreement and any new commitments beyond 1992 which must be subject to further decision, once the current IIA has been reviewed in 1992. That further decision will of course have to be unanimous.

By accepting the proposal for a new 1990-94 programme overlapping with the current 1987-91 programme, we are moving towards a series of rolling programmes, themselves subject to a mid-term review. As yet, the Government have not taken a final view on the desirability of continuing rolling programmes. However, it is obvious that they have real managerial and scientific advantages.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): I understand that the projected figures would simply carry forward the present spending levels. The Minister has said that such a level of spending would be unacceptable. May we assume, therefore, that there will be reductions in the Commission's research and development budget?

Mr. Hogg: I find it difficult to understand the hon. Gentleman's point. I shall be dealing with funding. If the hon. Gentleman thinks that I have done his question less than justice, when I have done so, I shall certainly give way again and he can make such criticism as he thinks fit.

Another concern is the lack of detail regarding management and evaluation. The Commission has suggested that these details can be resolved later. However, I have been insistent that these important issues should be clarified at the outset. Clear objectives, the procedures for programme management, including the role of member states, procedures for the appraisal of research and development proposals and the evaluation of programme results, together with specific provision for a mid-term evaluation of the whole framework programme, should all be included in the text.

Finally—this is the point that concerns the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor)—I come to the overall cost of the new framework programme. We have always thought that 7·7 billion ecu is far too high, on grounds of affordability and of programme content. It is this issue which will probably occupy most of Friday.

For the period 1990-92, 3·1 billion ecu is of course still available from the current programme. The present IIA includes a ceiling of 2·7 billion ecu for further work. That would be additional to the 3·1 billion ecu to which I have just referred.

In my view, the figure of 2·7 billion ecu for the period 1990-92 is too high. It is not justified by the content of the technical annex and should be reduced.

Mr. Dalyell: First, has any provision been made for the European proposals on means of research? Secondly, has environmental aid been taken into account, either through the proposed European environmental agency or by some other means, to assist research in eastern Europe?

Mr. Hogg: My recollection, after reading the technical annex, is no. However, I shall have my answer checked and if I am wrong I shall correct the error.

I have dealt with spending in 1990-92, but there are two elements to the spending during that period. The 3·1 billion ecu, which is the outstanding balance of the existing programme, is the first element in the budget. The second element in the budget is the sum we can add up to a ceiling of 2·7 billion ecu. Our judgment is that that second element is too high and I shall be pressing for a substantial reduction in that figure.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: The Minister has certainly clarified his position. In principle, under the IIA those spending figures are already agreed and so the process of carrying them forward for another two years produces the 7·7 billion ecu figure. It appears that the Minister is pressing for a cut in a figure that has already been agreed.

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman misunderstands the position. The word, "ceiling" does not imply entitlement. It is a sum that is available, subject to a decision being made that it should be drawn down. That decision depends, for example, on the financial requirements of the work contained in the technical annex. Our judgment is that on grounds of programme content a spend of 2·7 billion ecu could not be justified. Therefore, I do not accept that the programme is being cut, merely that the programme in place does not justify a spend of 2·7 billion ecu. I shall be resisting such a suggestion and pressing for a lower amount when we discuss the matter on Friday.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: I assume that the Government would still seek to count the money that is put into European research and development against our own national budget on research and development spending.

Mr. Hogg: It is true that all those sums are drawn from a common pool. The hon. Gentleman has a detailed letter on precisely that point which explains the interrelationship between moneys that are available for domestic spend and moneys that become available for supporting the European research and development programme. The hon. Gentleman will find a fairly full explanation of the interrelationship between those two items in the supplementary memorandum which is now before the House. I hesitate to summarise it at this late hour, especially as it is already in written form. As it is about 12.45 am I am quite capable of misinterpreting it.

Mr. Dalyell: As a recipient of a number of letters, I should like to put on record that I am extremely impressed by the quality of much of the regular input by the British Civil Service into the European scientific decision making. One may have questions about the decisions, but the quality of our Civil Service in Europe is a credit to this country.

Mr. Hogg: The fact that the technical annex is now so much better than it was when first published by Mr. Pandolfi owes a great deal to the work carried out by civil servants in the DTI and in Brussels. I am grateful for the work done by officials and I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his kind remarks.

I have laboured slightly over the 1990-92 spending programme. I have still to deal with the period 1993-94. I suspect that additional resources will be proposed by the Commission as a result of the 1992 mid-term review. Therefore, it would be appropriate for the figures agreed at Friday's Council to taper down towards the end of the period. We are probably looking at only one part of the funds that are likely to be available for that period. If we proceed to rolling programmes further funds will be provided in 1992 for the forthcoming period. The

Commission proposes 5 billion ecus for the period 1993-94, which we believe is too high and requires substantial reduction.

In the course of my speech, I have tried briefly to highlight the main issues in the knowledge that, with the leave of the House, I may be able to respond later to specific issues raised by hon. Members.

Since discussions first began with the Council, considerable progress has been made. In concert with other countries, the United Kingdom has succeeded in securing important changes, which have greatly improved the proposal that the Council is to consider on Friday. We enter those discussions with the hope that an agreement can be secured. We shall endeavour to reach an agreement, but the House will expect us to protect the proper interests of the United Kingdom, which we will seek to do.

12.50 am

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): If the Minister will forgive me, I shall speak in pounds rather than billion ecus because I want to make a comparison with the United Kingdom's domestic funding of research and development.

The increase in Community funding of the framework programme from £3·7 billion over the five years 1987-91 to £7·2 billion over the overlapping five years 1990-94 is substantial. The average United Kingdom contribution to funds through the Community budget at 18 per cent. of the total would increase, therefore, from £133 million to £260 million a year. The House will forgive me for eliding the difference between the approved, the ceiling, the later years and so on. The increase from £133 million to £260 million is large.

By comparison, the United Kingdom's budget for 1991 for all the research councils will be £897 million and for the medical research council perhaps £200 million. The European Commission proposes that United Kingdom spending through the framework programme should just about double in three years—from two thirds the size of the medical research council's budget to four thirds. If it were a choice between the medical research council and the framework programme, I would choose the medical research council every time, but it is not.

As many of the Community's programmes are in industrial areas, it is perhaps more appropriate to make the comparison with total United Kingdom Government spending on civil research and development, which is projected to be £1·1 billion in 1990-91. The Commission proposes that the framework programme should increase from about one eighth to one quarter in three years. That is serious money. Is it worth it, or to the poor starved body of British science is it manna from heaven? What scientist will quibble about whether his money comes through the research council or the European Community?

The Council of Ministers, we are told, has not yet considered in detail the overall level of funding or the relative balance between the different lines of research. In total disbelief, or whatever it is that goes beyond scepticism, the Minister tells us in his supplementary memorandum of 22 November that the Commission and the Presidency hope for agreement by the Council by the end of 1989, and that the next Council discussion will be on 15 December. We wish him a happy Christmas in Brussels. As the Council will act by unanimity, I take it that the Minister is seeking the support of the House for delaying action. Our appropriate response is a flea in his ear. The Government's fault lies not in their stars—be they the stars of Europe or of science—but in themselves.

The House is indebted to the Select Committee on European Legislation, as always, for its prompt report on the draft Council decision, the Government's explanatory memorandum and the supplementary memorandum. The Select Committee has given us a comparison of Government funding of civil research and development at 0·58 per cent. of GDP in the United Kingdom, 0·71 per cent. in Italy, 0·92 per cent. in France and 0·96 per cent. in Germany. As usual, Britain is at the bottom of the European first division.

The Government perpetually speak of their nominal and, indeed, real increase in research and development since 1979, but as a percentage of GDP—which is the best measure of research intensity—Government funding of civil research and development stays paralytically fixed while, in an increasingly science-based world, other countries have been increasing their research and development rapidly to well above our previously higher levels. For example, the science budget in the United Kingdom was 0·16 per cent. of GDP in 1979-80 and is forecast to be 0·16 per cent. in 1990-91.

With the more direct effect on competitiveness of support given to industry, between 1964 and 1986 civil research and development funded from all sources increased from 1·5 to 1·8 per cent. of GDP in Britain, while in Germany it increased from 1·3 to 2·6 per cent. and in Japan from 1·3 to 2·8 per cent., leapfrogging the British effort.

For the United Kingdom, therefore, if the Government will not increase their funding of research and development and will take no serious steps to encourage industry to increase its funding of R and D, Britain cannot afford to look the gift horse of the European framework programme in the mouth. That is a tremendous pity. Britain and British science have a major contribution to make to European Community science. It does not lie in nagging away at the drafting of Council decisions which, with the best will in the world, can give only general guidance to the administration of major support programmes.

I agree that the drafting in the annex to the supplementary memorandum is an improvement on the original memorandum, but to expand the treatment of biomedical and health research from seven to 21 lines and to come up with statements such as

> "325 million Europeans wish to maintain or improve their state of health by way of scientific advances"

is not a terribly profound statement on the management of scientific research.

The contribution from Britain does not lie in trying to impose criteria which, as the Select Committee correctly observed, cannot in practice be applied to Community expenditure in the same way as to domestic expenditure. United Kingdom Government Departments have only limited control over the cost and shape of Community research programmes. The Committee may agree with the Government that the information provided by the Commission remains insufficient for a proper appraisal of the programme, but can bureaucracies and assemblies appraise good research programmes properly? Does it really improve matters to increase the lines from five to 20

[Dr. Jeremy Bray]

or 30? Is it a matter of the Government satisfying themselves that a process has been set up among the scientists which works and produces results?

We do not ask in the House for details, line by line, of the expenditure of research councils. There are five research councils and they have discretion within the sums granted to them to conduct their research programmes. How can we hope to direct the far more complex aspects of European research programmes by proxy, through ministerial representatives on councils, which then give instructions to officials, who then set up advisory bodies, which then consider proposals put to them?

The Commisssion's tactics in proposing the extension of the framework programme have been to go for the greatest freedom that they can get away with in the administration of the programme and the largest increase. What will be the Government's response? Will it be to whittle away the increase in the framework programme as much as possible and then to deduct what remains from departmental expenditures on research and development?

United Kingdom Departments are not in charge of the European programmes in their areas. Will they fight their hardest to reduce those programmes and will their own urgent and perhaps quite different programmes be cut to the extent that they fail to reduce the European programmes? That seems to be the worst of all worlds. That would alienate others, lose us influence in Europe and starve activity at home.

An alternative approach which might eventually cost no more is to enter positively into the European programmes and thus be able to influence them in directions that can contribute to urgent United Kingdom priorities. With Britain a significant, but not dominant, partner in European programmes, the Government's aim should be first to encourage and help British scientists to use the European programmes effectively and, secondly, to improve the European programme systems from within, working with the grain of the European debate.

Britain probably has most to contribute, and will be most listened to, in the direction of research in basic science. We have much to learn about the organisation of industrial support services from Germany and in the management of big, high-tech projects from France. There are, of course, exceptional individuals and areas in which British management has been and will be superb, but we should not be afraid to learn from our European partners.

Having said that, we come back to the framework programme. Should we support the proposed virtual doubling of expenditure? Even if the whole increase is added to the British Government's civil research and development expenditure, we should still be below the level of Italy, our lowest European partner, in the percentage of gross domestic product that the Government spend in support of civil research and development. As the Government will not increase departmental research and development expenditure, the European framework programme increases cannot be objectionable in principle and should not be deducted from British departmental programmes.

Different approaches will be appropriate to different programmes. In some, it would be appropriate to depart from the shared cost contract which is the Community's principal instrument of research funding, flexible though it may be. In others, support should be given to a single research contractor, if that is the best way in which to do the work. An example outside the framework programme is that I hear more aircraft builders today asking whether the next generation of European aircraft would best be built by a single European corporation rather than by a consortium of separate national corporations.

The framework programme may be a suitable way in which to organise European participation in the proposed international astronomical institute to plan the next generation of space telescopes. What may be appropriate is still more flexible rolling funding in which a programme that does not need all its funding does not spend the money just because it is there and in which a programme that clearly deserves better funding can obtain it without having to wait for the rolling on of the next framework programme. That condition is met partly by the very broad lines of research that have been proposed and may not be quite as stupid as the Minister has suggested. It should still be possible even to switch funding between the broad lines that have been given. It is all a matter of building confidence in the administration and peer groups of the framework programme, to which Britain should make its full contribution.

With what seems likely to end up as a significant increase in the funding of the framework programme, whatever the British Government say or do, the basic end of research should not be neglected at the European level. That is well represented by the European Research Foundation, a modest body which is supported by our own research councils and science vote, and by corresponding bodies in other countries. The foundation should be encouraged to grow towards the status and role of a full European research council, for which it deserves modest additional funding, although it is small by comparison with the framework programme.

We wish the Council of Ministers success in its further consideration of the framework programme and we shall follow its development with great interest.

1.3 am

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): I find it difficult to object to anyone—or any organisation—who suggests that we should, as a Community, spend more on research and development. If we do not, some of our competitors elsewhere will outperform us in activities that are essential to provide the wherewithal for our everyday life. Having said that, I have a feeling that the way in which the Community seeks to undertake research and development, as outlined in the extensive documents before us, is not the most successful way in which to proceed.

I have read that after the war we adoped a scatter gun approach to R and D and many of the projects that this country embarked on were subsequently found to be no good. The Bristol Brabazon leaps to mind—an aircraft which was supposed to conquer the world but which could barely get off the ground because some of the basic technological innovations in it—the engine, for instance —were ill engineered and ill devised.

We moved on to atomic energy, in the form of the Magnox reactors, which found a market in the United Kingdom but nowhere else. Then our engineers and scientists developed the AGR system, which found some favour in this country, although its performance has been open to doubt for many years. But as a product that could bring wealth to the country, it was a lamentable failure, and we have sought to embrace designs developed elsewhere in the world.

It is not as if the Community will spend small amounts of money. Since 1984 it has been engaging in R and D, and between 1987 and 1991 it will spend £3·6 billion on it. There should be accountability for the spending of that money, to see what it has produced in terms of everyday consumer goods and of an improvement in our factories. We need evidence that money spent by the Community for research's sake has benefited us.

I am reminded that research by committee is never the best way to push back the frontiers of technology. Scientists need a target at which to aim, a challenge to meet. The United States and Japan realise that. Much of what they do is commercially based and they do less research for its own sake.

The letter from Filippo M. Pandolfi is illuminating. One or two paragraphs in it clearly explain the difficulty that many of us have in accepting the merits of the proposals. For example, paragraph 10 on page 6 says:

> "Against this, the funds allocated to research in the area of energy represent a net percentage reduction. This is due to the fact that, in the energy sector, one sees, on the one hand, the development of important projects arising from the current framework programme which, in many cases, will take several more years".

Presumably this research programme has been rolling at least since 1984 and we do not really know what these important projects are—yet we are being asked to carry on allowing this sort of expenditure.

On industrial and materials technology, page 24 of the letter states:

> "Priority will be given to major integrated projects; among these, the development of the 'clean car'".

That does not mean a car that never gets dirt on its bodywork; I assume that it means a car that does not harm the environment. But every world car manufacturer is rapidly researching that, and the project hardly needs funds from a central bureacracy concentrated on it.

The European Commission and countries thoughout the world have made laws on exhaust emissions, thereby driving manufacturers to produce clean cars. They will not be able to sell cars that do not conform to these standards. Community taxpayers should not have to pay twice for this—once for the cars that they buy, at a price that includes development costs, and again through taxes, to enable someone else to develop what manufacturers are already developing.

I wonder what kind of system would encourage another agency to develop that kind of research. Perhaps such an agency would fund existing car manufacturers to develop those technologies. However, how could we fund that fairly among all the car manufacturers in Europe so that they all got the same slice of the cake and not one manufacturer was able to benefit from Community grant to press ahead with clean car technology?

Concentrating on the car industry for the moment because these points are relevant to our debate, the document from which I have already quoted states in relation to energy:

> "The research includes the use of hydrogen and other suitable substitutes for liquid fuels in the transport sector."

That research is already being undertaken by virtually every car and vehicle manufacturer in the world. In the United States, California is taking the lead in introducing higher and more stringent restrictions on the internal combustion engine. California is obliging American, Japanese and European manufacturers that want to sell cars in California in the latter part of the next decade to develop engines that will run on alternative fuels. Those manufacturers hardly need another agency to spur them on. To stay in business, they must develop alternatives.

Throughout the memoranda, it appears to me that, although the research is worth proceeding with, it is already being undertaken by companies in their respective disciplines. We are aware that if we do not push ahead with that research and development, companies will cease to exist. The spur of global competition is probably already strong enough to promote that research.

If I had a choice, I would welcome the amount of money being allocated to research and development being channelled directly into companies to carry out their own research and development and to make bids for that money to carry out that research themselves. We do not need a concentrated bureaucracy in the centre of Europe deciding which way the Community should progress in research and development. Companies are best able to make that choice and can best decide what their lines of research and development should cover.

I welcome all kinds of funding for research. However, I am not happy that we are going about it in the right way. I am not sure that we are not creating a technological version of the common agricultural policy.

1.12 am

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): To address the debate sensibly we must consider the background issues, the first of which relates to the low level of civil research and development in this country over many years under both Labour and Conservative Governments. That dates back to the 1960s. Although we now manage to spend a lower level of our GDP on civil research and development than previously, the position is becoming worse.

Although the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) said that we should by and large leave research and development to the private sector, a policy of not putting large amounts of money into research and development has not led to that development being carried out in the private sector. This country has been falling behind for want of research and development and for want of taking a technological lead in world markets. I do not believe that this country's policy has paid off. Even if that were not the case, as we watch developments occuring in the world market with the great advances by Japan and, not far behind, America—which sees the threat from Japanese research and development as substantial—it is increasingly important that we recognise that one-nation let alone one-company research and development programmes are unlikely to generate the kind of progress that we need to get back on to the world stage in terms of being leaders in research and development. That is where the role of Europe comes into play, and that is why I think that it is such a shame that the Government's attitude has been to slow things down and backtrack on the plans that Europe has tried to introduce—plans that have already been approved in principle under the inter-institutional agreement, as pointed out earlier in a question to the Minister.

I have four criticisms of the Government's approach. First, I think that they are justified in saying that the

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programmes are so loose—certainly in the original draft form—that the result is what has been described as "research and development by committee". There is insufficient democratic control over what programmes may be pursued. I do not believe, however, that the answer should lie with Ministers asking for more and more detail, which can only end in a process that we have seen before —Ministers swapping programmes and saying, "We'll have a little of this because it is of advantage to Britain; a little of that, because it is of advantage to France; and none of that, because no one has a particular vested interest in it."

I think that that is precisely what Europe has been trying to get away from. Moreover, I do not believe that the Government are providing a solution to the problem of the programmes' present form. On the contrary, I think that they are offering a trawl back to narrow nationalism, which is certainly what the hon. Member for Northfield was advocating. We should be democratising the whole process, opening up decision-making on what programmes to pursue and ensuring that those who make the decisions are held accountable for them. The best way to do that is to make Europe itself more democratic, and to give power to those who are democratically elected to represent the European interest—that is, MEPs.

My second criticism relates to the narrow nationalism that I mentioned earlier. I do not believe that anything lies behind the Government's actions other than their steadfast rejection of the principle of research being undertaken at European level. Everything that the Minister said tonight suggested that.

My third point is this. One good reason—in a sense —for the Minister to object to the spending increases is that he intends to take the money directly out of our own research and development programme. Whatever he may have said tonight, I think that the underlying reason for his objection is his belief that he will have to come back and start cutting into British programmes. That would be a valid objection if it were not open to the Minister to invest more in research and development—which he ought to be doing, rather than attempting to block what is happening in Europe. He should tell the Treasury that not enough money is going into research and development in Britain —and in Europe—and that we should not only be embarking on this programme but expanding our R and D activities elsewhere.

That is all the more true when we consider the balance between our civil and our defence research and development. The best of our competitors—Germany and Japan—are concentrating on commercially oriented R and D and ensuring that it is put to commercial use, whereas our own research is overwhelmingly in the defence sector. Indeed, because much of the research is classified as secret: it never gets out or, if it does get out, it is too late to provide a competitive advantage.

Turning to the specific examples that we see in the papers, it is worth my making one point about the programmes outlined. Again, the hon. Member for Northfield referred to the energy programme and complained that there was insufficient detail. I found that there was more than sufficient detail to make one important criticism of the plans. As a whole, the research and development plans outlined turn more towards the environmental and green agenda than did the predecessor framework programme. However, on energy, where there is no intention of increasing the spend, we find a divison of resources, which go overwhelmingly into the nuclear sector. Fossil and renewable fuels and the use of energy are all lumped together with only 10 per cent. to 15 per cent. of the envelope spend. In my view, that is an extraordinary balance of priorities. It lumps together three areas between which Europe could take a lead far more significantly than could be the case in respect of anything that it is likely to do in the nuclear area and where we could be far more certain of success.

I find it particularly extraordinary that more investment is not directed towards energy conservation which, ultimately, must be the greenest of the approaches. Indeed, from most independent studies, it is also the area that would show the greatest financial return. I hope that if the Minister is to go into the detail of every programme and to argue out the rights and wrongs of every pound or ecu spent, he will at least take on board the fact that our Government are moving away from the nuclear option. Perhaps he should argue the same when he is in Europe.

Nevertheless, my overall view is that we would do far better to seek to encourage the research and development plans that are outlined and to take advantage of the opportunity to increase our research and development spend in order to increase our competitiveness and to live up to the realities of the world as it develops into the 1990s. When Ministers have valid criticisms about accountability and decision by committee, we should take advantage of the opportunity to seek to democratise these processes and to hand Europe to the people of Europe and away from the bureaucrats. We should not seek to grab the power back for the Ministers around the table who are all too inclined to bargain among themselves rather than to stand up for the interests of the Community as a whole.

1.22 am

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): Two things are to be welcomed about the European framework document. The first is that it is less vulnerable to the criticism that has been made by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) than either it or our own national research programmes have been in the past. There is much less focus on single large blockbuster projects. Indeed, far less of that appears in this framework programme than appeared in the previous one or in our national research programmes.

I have some sympathy with continuing the one large blockbuster commitment that survives, nuclear fusion, expenditure on which has given rise to the criticisms made by the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor). It is clear that if nuclear fusion is to be pushed forward to the point where it becomes a workable energy system, that energy expenditure and those commitments cannot be made by single countries. Indeed, the results of such research should not be the property of any single country. Therefore, although I do no like large blockbuster projects, and nor am I a particular enthusiast for nuclear power, there is something to be commended in Europewide research into nuclear fusion. The participation and influence of our advisers and researchers into the quality of the programme are to be welcomed.

Others have drawn attention to the vast improvement in quality between the first document, drafted by Mr.

Pandolfi, and the second, which appears as annex B in the Government's report. That improvement is substantially due to the involvement of British researchers, co-ordinated in Brussels. If I thought that British scientific research was as well co-ordinated in London as it appears to have been in Brussels, I should be a lot happier about the future of British research. Our influence on the document has clearly been systematic, highly intelligent, well co-ordinated, extremely well crafted and effective. In all respects, it is unlike our national efforts.

The Government's stance seems much less than adequate in regard to money. I am not talking simply about the quantity of money or the old arguments about additionality and the impact of the European spending programme on our domestic spending. I agree with what other hon. Members have said about that. The relationship between domestic and European spending, as described in paragraph 21 of the Government's supplementary report, is worrying. Spending is to be conducted at the level of individual Departments. That is a recipe for disorder. If the Minister's suggestion of 20 lines of research rather than six were accepted, that would be a recipe for still greater disorder. It is not possible to tell from the documents that the Government have presented to us how the research is to be organised. It is not possible to tell which Department is responsible for which line, and how it is to conduct itself. If Departments adjust their expenditure programmes randomly, as expenditure is incurred in Europe, we shall have disorder in our national expenditure programmes.

This is one matter on which the Government must clarify the issues if we are not to find ourselves in an appalling muddle. Our researchers will not know, if they go to Europe, whether they are disrupting their companies', colleagues' or institutions' efforts to get domestic research spending for similar projects. We must be clear about the organisational relationship between domestic and European spending.

The Government's insistence on the distinction between near-market research and other forms simply will not hold up. The excellent contribution made by British scientists to the revisions of the framework programme show clearly the falsity of that distinction. The spirit that dominates the framework programme in annexe B is looking for standards which will be the basis of performance and regulation, and which will enable the efforts of researchers, users and producers to be combined. They will lay the basis for future European performance and technological progress, standards, which in pharmaceuticals, telecommunications and materials technology, do not permit of any clear distinction between near-market and non-near market.

For that reason I have great sympathy with the hon. Member for Northfield who asked, "Why not simply throw the research programme open to the companies and let them apply for the money?" That is entirely within the spirit of seeking a research programme that will develop and hone new standards of performance and regulation. But that approach stands in contradiction to the Government's approach. Far from throwing open research programmes to companies, the Government seek to put up a completely false Chinese wall between the market and research. That distinction will not hold up.

There is much in this framework programme that should commend itself to us. Perhaps the single most important aspect is the way in which the framework programme does not allow this false distinction between markets and research to exist. In its search for comprehensive standards which can be the basis for technical performance and environmental protection, it is a model for how we should conduct research in the United Kingdom.

1.31 am

Dr. Lewis Moonie (Kirkcaldy): The House will be grateful to know that I do not intend to fill up the remaining time with my concluding comments.

It has been an interesting debate. Perhaps the sparse attendance is a reflection of the hour rather than hon. Members' interest in this important subject. The framework proposal for Community research undoubtedly represents the single most important programme in the EEC for the next five years. It comes at a time of major political and economic change in Europe. On the one hand, there is the move towards the single market in 1992 with all the opportunities and dangers for British industry that that represents. On the other, there is the prospect of enormous upheaval in eastern Europe, the welcome return to democracy there and the challenge for the EEC that it represents in providing the economic underpinning which that democratic process will require and a largely untapped market for our goods and services which will develop in consequence.

We broadly welcome the proposal. It covers all the most important areas of applied research which we need to extend and develop if we are to compete successfully with the United States and Japan in the 1990s and beyond. If carried through to the market, these efforts will undoubtedly be repaid with a new generation of products for making Europe a dominant force in the new technologies under development.

To summarise the proposals briefly, the six areas are information and communication technologies, industrial and material technologies, the management of natural resources, covering environment, applied sciences and energy and, equally important, the management of intellectual resources, human capital and mobility. Each of those is a key area in the future development of our industry.

Unlike the Minister, I believe that the EEC has probably got the number of programmes about right. It leaves enough flexibility within these to direct money towards the projects that are likely to show the most promise over the next few years. In particular, in information technology it is clear that much research needs to be supra-national. In life science and technology, which unfortunately is not given much of a mention in the background documents although it is a major area, recent reviews in *The Economist* and other perhaps more appropriate professional journals have suggested that single markets in products which are coming through towards testing in human beings may be worth upwards of £1 billion each a year in total world markets. Clearly, that is an area where we require to spend a great deal of money.

I agree with some of the comments of the Select Committee on European Legislation: some issues remain to be clarified. The Committee agreed with the Government that the information provided with the proposal was insufficient for a proper appraisal of the programme. It mentioned the need for global environmental research into the problems that will be caused by future

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ocean levels. That is an important issue on which we would welcome some clarification. The Committee endorses the Government's concern that there should be appraisal of proposals and evaluation of results. That may be significant in the light of the comments of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King). Many of the major projects of the past to which he referred suffered from a lack of ongoing appraisal. If they had been subject to that, they might have been modified, or even abandoned, at an earlier stage.

How does the programme fit into our own research effort? It is generally agreed that the current predominance of military research in the United Kingdom has had an adverse effect on the civil research programme. Happily, the reduction in spending on arms in Europe, which is an inevitable consequence of the changes, always assuming that they persist, will free more resources for efforts elsewhere, especially in basic research where we have long held a commanding position in Europe. Perhaps that factor is less well covered in the proposals than it might be.

I say in passing that we could consider fruitfully European co-operation on military research and development, with Britain perhaps taking a lesser share of the burden than it has in the past.

Our contribution to EEC-wide research must not be seen as a substitute for our own efforts. Instead, it must be seen as an adjunct to them. It would not be acceptable for us merely to deduct the moneys from limited resources within the United Kingdom.

All these fine proposals will come to nothing if we fail to act to take advantage of them. Two serious matters must be addressed. First, there is an increased need for British companies to invest in their own research and development, especially in what the Government call near-market research. That is essential in a competitive market. Secondly, we must not lose sight of the fact that we face a critical shortage of skills in all the areas that we have been discussing, especially in the biological sciences, engineering and information technology.

It is said that the Government, with their hands-off approach, have not yet grasped the serious implications for our future in the deficiencies to which I have referred. Either we compete effectively and provide the skills needed, or Britain in the 1990s will face a sombre future. The Labour party welcomes the proposals for the next five years, but it recognises that they cannot be a final solution to our problems.

1.38 am

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have the feeling that most of the criticisms that have been made of the Government's attitude were written and crafted before I made my speech. The hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) was somewhat less than generous. He might recall that the United States Government's expenditure on civil research and development is 0·4 per cent. of gross domestic product, which is significantly less than our own. He will recall—no doubt the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) will remind him if he does not remember himself—that industry's investment in civil R and D over the past four years has increased by 30 per cent. in real terms. That is an extremely encouraging development and reflects in part industry's satisfaction with the increasing prosperity that it is achieving as a result of Government policy.

On the hon. Gentleman's second point, I should make it plain—to be fair to myself, I have already made it plain—that we are enthusiastic supporters of the framework programme. We are also determined to ensure that we get value for money, and that the ordinary criteria for European programmes, such as subsidiarity, are respected. He would expect us to do that, and we shall ensure that we do.

I have some sympathy with the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King). In particular, he focused on the clean car, and the presence of the clean car in the technical annex. I agree with much that he said. We are not in the business of product development or, for that matter, of near-market activity. It is not for the Commission to fund the manufacture of a clean car. However, it is for the framework programme to establish some common standards by pre-competitive research that enables manufacturers in general to make a product to common standards.

The hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) accused me of narrow nationalism. I do not understand that criticism. I suspect that he crafted it—although to use the word craft in the context of his speech is, I am afraid, to flatter those remarks—before he heard my speech. I say again that there is great merit in a framework programme. We support the concept of it, and its contents, but we are determined to get value for money and to ensure that the ordinary criteria are satisfied.

As to the impact on domestic funds of spending on European programmes, the funds come out of a common source of United Kingdom expenditure. It is right that increasing expenditure on the European programme should have an effect on domestic programmes. Clearly, if there be a reduction in baselines for domestic programmes it is possible for an attempt to be made to reinstate programmes, but the fear expressed by the hon. Gentleman—that existing domestic programmes would be cut as a consequence of an expansion in European spending—is not a legitimate concern.

Dr. Bray: International comparisons are important in a proper assessment of the European programme and its effect on different national economies. The Minister has to compare like with like. On civil research and development, I made a comparison with other European countries, and he made one with the United States of America. The sources used by the Select Committee show the United States of America spending 1·28 per cent. of total research and development, including defence, and the United Kingdom spending 1·13 per cent. If the Minister had had as much benefit from the United States of America's research programmes as I have had in the office of naval research, which supports fundamental research in mathematics and other subjects right across the spectrum, he would realise that one cannot compare United States of America defence research with British defence research and say that they are the same thing. The former covers a great deal of fundamental research that in Britain would be counted as civil.

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman protests too much. He was careful, in his analysis, to focus on civil research and development, and I did him the courtesy of following him down that road. If we consider Government expenditure on civil research and development as a proportion of GDP, which is what he urged me to do, we have the consequence that I outlined. He wriggles too much.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: The Minister is not very convincing. Further to the point that has already been made by the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray), much of the American defence research and development would not be classified as civil research and development in this country. Moreover, the Americans make much better use of their defence research and development in the civil area, whereas in this country our defence research and development tends to remain classified and not brought to the market.

Mr. Hogg: Both the hon. Member for Truro and the hon. Member for Motherwell, South are trying to have it both ways. First, they try to pin me down to civil research and development. When I give them a figure that is based on that assumption which they do not like, they tell me that I should take into account the military research and development budget. However, when they consider the overall spending on British research and development, they accuse the Government of spending too much on military research and development. They cannot have it both ways. They do themselves less than justice by trying to have it both ways.

The rather bizarre and foolish suggestion that the European Parliament should determine the content of the scientific and technical annex was based on two premises: first, that there would be no horse trading in that august body and, secondly, that the European Parliament knows better about the scientific programme. There is no place that does more horse trading than the European Parliament. The idea of a gaggle of European parliamentarians setting out the details of the European framework programme in a technical annex is sheer folly.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) made an interesting speech. However, it is worth remembering that most of the work that is being done within the framework programme is carried out by companies. It is not done by a central organisation.

The Government are an enthusiastic supporter of the framework programme. We believe that we should get value for money. It is a valuable adjunct to our scientific programme, especially our research and development. We hope to reach agreement on Friday. We shall do our best, but we must obtain value for money and protect this country's interests.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 8375/89 and COR 1 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Department of Trade and Industry on 22 November 1989 relating to the Framework Programme of Community research and development activities 1990 to 1994; and supports the Government's view that the Commission's proposals for expenditure need to be more clearly justified before the Programme can be agreed.

Pensioners (Winter Heating)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

1.47 am

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): I am grateful for this opportunity to discuss the problems of British pensioners this winter. Their problems have not been eased by the spread of 'flu. The reality for many is that to be old is also to be cold. The epidemic unfortunately means that the elderly are particularly vulnerable. The virus is exceptionally virulent, a point that ought to be borne in mind in the debate.

Pensioners' problems are not helped by the Government's mean-minded decision not to link pensions to earnings. The Labour Government's policy led to a 20 per cent. increase in real terms for pensioners, as against the 2 per cent. increase that they have experienced under the Tories since 1979. Pensioners face grave problems, particularly that of fuel poverty. That is a national scandal, on top of their private grief.

There is a constant and real worry about hypothermia, which leads to a substantial increase in the number of deaths during the winter months. High fuel prices lead to debt and disconnection, including self-disconnection, which has increased greatly since privatisation. There are still worries about standing charges which should have been phased out long ago and which do not help to solve the problems faced by pensioners in Britain today any more than the notorious social fund with its emphasis on loans rather than grants.

Severe weather payments have been debated each winter, certainly since I arrived in the House seven years ago. The provisions for triggering the system which existed a few years ago have been abolished, but the new system is not much better. It calls for 0 deg C for seven consecutive days. In reality that offers very little help to pensioners suffering from bad weather conditions. I understand that only two weather stations have been activated under present procedures. In Scotland, only stations in Dumfries and Glasgow have been triggered, although the Minister may be able to give the House other information about the rest of the United Kingdom. That means that in many parts of Scotland and the United Kingdom the system has not been triggered and elderly people have suffered in extremely cold conditions. If old people live on the east coast of Scotland or in Edinburgh where it is very cold in the morning and evening, simply because it may be mild in the afternoon they would not qualify under the rigid requirement of a seven-day consecutive period of 0 deg C. or less, and therefore would suffer hardship. Even if people qualified far more extensively it would have to be said that the system is restricted.

Last year the Department of Social Security in Scotland and in the United Kingdom paid out a paltry figure, although Scotland has more cold-related deaths than anywhere else in western Europe. The cold weather payments are completely inadequate to meet the problems that thousands of our pensioners are facing. Many pensioners who qualify for cold weather payments under the existing system are simply not claiming them. Many of them are confused and that is not at all surprising given the complex nature of the system.

The figure of £5, despite inflation, increased fuel costs and the consequences of electricity privatisation, is already

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three years out of date. We know that the average price of heating is £8 a week during the non-winter months and £16 a week during winter. Therefore, £5 hardly reflects the real cost of heating for elderly people today.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way as I recognise the importance that he attaches to this short debate. Does he accept the need for zoning as people in the north of Scotland are in very different circumstances from those in the south? Perhaps we should consider automatic payments to pensioners and to the handicapped to ensure that, wherever they live in the United Kingdom, they receive payments that recognise heating requirements.

Mr. Clarke: I accept that means testing is entirely inappropriate. Automatic payments should be made nationally.

The payments, inadequate though they are, have not been given to pensioners whose incomes are just above income support level. The Government's mean-minded attitude is that nobody should be in receipt of the miserable £5 if they have savings of £500 or more, which most elderly people would regard as the cost of a funeral. That is entirely unacceptable in modern times.

In 1986-87, only 500,000 of the 1,500 million pensioners who are entitled to claim did so. It is obvious that the Government's scheme is not working, and its administration is expensive. The money spent on publicity over the years could have made life much easier for many pensioners.

Throughout the United Kingdom, the plight of pensioners has been compounded by the 1988 change from supplementary benefit to income support, which led to the abolition of heating additions for the elderly, disabled and those with young children. Previously, payments of £5·65p a week were paid throughout the year regardless of the weather.

There is another great problem that all of us have constantly in mind. We know that in 1987 600 people of all ages died of hypothermia in Britain. The figure for 1988 was about 400. In Scotland, 138 people died of hypothermia last year, and many more were admitted to hospital with cold-related conditions. Everyone knows that the figures for hypothermia underestimate the extent of the problem that pensioners face. Most of the voluntary organisations with which I have had discussions over recent days suggest that some doctors believe that to place the word "hypothermia" on a death certificate is like stamping it with "neglect," and that doctors are therefore reluctant to do so.

Even more revealing than the figures for hypothermia are those for cold-related deaths, which I draw to the attention of the House and the Under-Secretary of State for Social Security. We are told by such organisations as Winter Action on Cold Homes, Age Concern and many others that a marked feature of British trends, even in mild winters such as that in 1987-88, is that the number of extra winter deaths is substantial—an annual average of 30,740 deaths each year over the past five years. Excess winter mortality among persons aged 60 and over has ranged from over 48,000 for the 12 months up to 31 March 1985 to just over 21,000 up to 31 March 1987.

International comparisons are important when we consider these serious matters. The difference between the number of deaths reported in the winter months compared with the spring and summer months is significant. In February this year, we saw an increase of 24 per cent. in England and Wales, of 19 per cent. in Scotland, of 6 per cent. in France, of 6 per cent. in Sweden, which experiences much colder weather than the United Kingdom, and of 8 per cent. in the United States. I accept that the precise reasons for those differences need further analysis, but the evidence seems to suggest that other countries, which often have colder temperatures than Britain, manage to safeguard the lives of frail citizens in a way that does not happen in Britain. That invites serious examination.

Room temperatures clearly matter. The World Health Organisation recommends a minimum indoor temperature of 18 deg C, and 2 to 3 deg C warmer for rooms occupied by elderly or handicapped people or young children. For millions of people, this is clearly not happening. Forty-two per cent. of pensioners living alone have no central heating. More than most, and particularly in Scotland, they experience the great problems of dampness and condensation, which call for a more urgent response than the Government have given so far. We have not had a survey of these conditions since 1972, when we discovered that 54 per cent. of people aged over 65 lived at or below the minimum temperature specified for employees under the Offices, Shops and Railway Premises Act 1963.

The tragedy is that many pensioners have to choose between proper heating and proper eating. That is unreasonable in modern times. Pensioners face the problems of debts and disconnections. The South of Scotland electricity board has introduced "Power cards". In many ways, this has added to the problem. We are seeing the new dimension of self-disconnection. Pensioners, having used up the £15, which is the cost of the cards, feel that their money has been spent and simply discontinue heating. I make a plea to the Minister to encourage social work departments in Scotland and social service departments elsewhere in the United Kingdom to monitor this closely. The Government seem to have no major strategy to match the public worry about these matters and to co-ordinate activities, even between Government Departments.

On 22 November, the Government launched their "Winter Warmth" line. It was set on its journey by Ministers, with the help of Eddie "The Eagle" Edwards. That is a refreshing change from the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) telling pensioners to wear woolly hats and the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department—the hon. Member for Fareham (Mr. Lloyd)—encouraging pensioners to go to jumble sales. Like Eddie, the Government's policy on these matters is all high hopes and poor performance. Of course, we can all laugh at Eddie, but most of us regard the Government's policy as pitiful. The most eloquent comment on the Government's scheme came from Mr. Malcolm Wicks, the chairperson of Winter Action on Cold Homes, who said:

> "Beneath the glitter and gloss, there was a hole where there should be action".

Of course, nobody would discourage the use of the freephone "Winter Warmth" line, but it is no substitute for practical services, such as draught proofing and insulation projects. Those services have been hit hard by Government policies which often represent neglect. Changes to the employment training scheme have meant fewer projects, less practical work and parts of the country not being covered by it.

Fuel poverty among pensioners should be a priority in the Government's approach. However, apart from public relations exercises, there is little evidence that the Government see the matter in that way. According to Neighbourhood Energy Action in "Energy Efficiency and Employment Training One Year On", the number of jobs that were carried out by projects from October to December 1988 fell by 15,500 in draught proofing and by over 3,000 in loft insulation, compared with the same quarter in 1987. The period from September to December saw a huge drop in the number of operating energy projects, from 450 to 196. Between August 1988 and August 1989, there was a 54 per cent. drop in the number of projects giving energy advice and a drop of 74 per cent. in the number of clients who were advised. Moreover, under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, low income groups will find it harder to obtain loft insulation grants from April 1990. From that date, there will no longer be a specific allocation of funds, which currently stand at £11·5 million, for this purpose. If they were honest, the Government would announce a closing down sale for those grants.

The House is right to be concerned about several policy questions that affect pensioners deeply, including social security, housing, insulation, energy efficiency and the impact of poverty, and to be concerned that our pensioners—our people—are facing year after year the cold facts of the misery of winter conditions. We cannot continue to accept a cold crisis which continues to blight Britain's pensioners' standard of living more than those in any other developed nation and which offers so drastically the prospect of a diminished quality of life for many elderly people and others on low incomes each winter.

The problem of fuel poverty for our pensioners is one of the most important issues that the House addresses this winter. The Government should respond and the British people should encourage them to do so. Surely pensioners deserve more than the cold approach of a Government who seem to have a cold attitude about the cold climate. Pensioners deserve far more than that and I hope that the Minister and the Government will seize the opportunity in response to this debate to give a positive reply to the drastic problems that British pensioners are facing.

2.7 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mrs. Gillian Shephard): I congratulate the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) on bringing this important matter before the House. As is customary for the hon. Gentleman, he has spoken with conviction and sincerity, and has demonstrated concern for the welfare of pensioners in winter which is, I am sure, shared on both sides of this House.

I shall begin by making some general points about pensioners' incomes because I was sorry that the hon. Gentleman's contribution ignored the broader context of Government achievements in improving those incomes. I want to remind the House of several points. Between 1979 and 1986, the average total net income of pensioners increased by 23 per cent. in real terms. Of those retiring now, 80 per cent. have incomes from other sources in addition to their state pensions.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned the achievements of his party in government and said that pensions increased by 20 per cent. He failed to mention that the actual increase was 3 per cent. because of the inflationary policies that were pursued by his party. However, he is right to raise the question of those who, because they retired before the state earnings-related retirement pension opportunities and the change after SERPS, missed the opportunity to opt out. I must remind him that income support is available for all those who satisfy the income and capital rules. At May 1988, some 1·7 million claimants aged 60 years or more received income support. Where appropriate, those people would have also qualified for maximum help with housing costs of 100 per cent. for rent and 80 per cent. of general rates or, in Scotland, community charge. Even people whose income is above income support levels, and whose savings are less than £8,000, can claim housing benefit.

In addition to this normal help, the hon. Gentleman will recall that with effect from October this year help has been made available for poorer and older and disabled pensioners. This will help over 2·5 million pensioners on income support and housing benefit, with £2·50 a week extra for single people and £3·50 a week for couples.

We mounted a successful campaign to bring these new benefits to the attention of pensioners. Although it is too soon to judge the full effects of the campaign, over the four months from the start of the publicity in July until the end of October nearly 200,000 pensioners were newly awarded income support. That helps with the problem that the hon. Gentleman described.

Turning to help with heating costs through the social security system, I would remind the hon. Gentleman of the social security reforms introduced in 1988. He will know better than many hon. Members the unsatisfactory complexities of the old system. Although the Government made many improvements in the system to cater for the needs of individual groups, the system remained very difficult to understand. The new arrangements have provided a modern system of income maintenance through allowances with premiums for vulnerable groups such as the elderly. All the £417 million that was spent on heating additions in 1987-88, the final year of the old scheme, was incorporated in the income support premium support structure which, of course, is uprated each year. And, as I said, we have already used the new structure to direct extra help to those most in need.

In addition, when the weather is very cold, as the hon. Gentleman said, payments can be made under the social fund cold weather payments scheme. I note what the hon. Gentleman said about the capital limits on the social fund, and we are monitoring the position carefully.

The hon. Gentleman said that £5 was inadequate, but I remind him that income support already covers everyday needs. We believe that £5 is a reasonable amount to pay towards the extra expenses incurred for heating in cold weather.

We have kept the arrangements for claiming cold weather payments as simple as we can, for both claimants and the staff who operate the scheme. Each of the Department's local offices is linked to one of more than 60 national weather stations run by the Meteorological Office. The hon. Gentleman said that weather stations in Scotland are not always reliable. That claim is often made by hon. Members representing many different parts of the country. I am sure that my constituents would claim that they enjoy especially cold winds from Siberia. We feel,

[Mrs. Gillian Shephard]

however, that the system is as fair as it can be. It is triggered automatically by the temperature reaching 0 deg Celsius, so if it is colder in Scotland and the temperature is 0 deg, the cold weather payment system will be triggered more frequently——

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Is there any system of monitoring the difference between places in Scotland and the stations where temperatures are monitored? The highest village in Scotland is Tomintoul in my constituency, and the weather temperatures are measured in Kinloss. There is a vast difference between the climates of the two places. The Government have a responsibility to monitor those differences with regard to the triggering system.

Does the Minister agree that the notional fuel element in the state benefits to which she has referred takes us well beyond the £5 that she mentioned? The realistic figure must be nearer £8·80.

Mrs. Shephard: I assure the hon. Lady that the Department continually monitors the effectiveness of the triggering of the cold weather payment system. We consider the present £5 arrangement, plus the element within income support, adequate.

I must move on briskly because the hon. Gentleman raised several other matters. He referred to standing charges, which have fallen over the past five years. In the five-year period to October 1989, domestic gas prices fell in real terms by 16 per cent. Gas now costs less than in 1970. Similarly the price of domestic electricity has also fallen—by 8 per cent.—in the five-year period to October 1989.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned hypothermia. Any deaths from cold or from illnesses in winter naturally concern the Government. While the Government would never be complacent about those matters, it is encouraging to consider the fall in the excess winter mortality rate over the past 30 years. However, we would never be complacent about that and that is why we are continuing the "Keep warm, keep well" and "Keep warm this winter" campaigns. The hon. Gentleman criticised those campaigns, but it is worth running campaigns that will increase awareness of the dangers of cold weather among those at risk, their friends, relatives, and neighbours and so assist those agencies that care for them in multi-disciplinary statutory and voluntary co-operation in running campaigns.

It is worth reminding people that simple measures such as draughtproofing, sensible clothing, diet and exercise can help reduce the risks associated with cold weather. The hon. Gentleman referred to insulation and the problems caused by poor housing. I remind him that in 1988-89 local authorities spent £2 billion on renovating housing and on energy efficiency work. In Scotland this year £16 million is being spent to combat dampness and £62 million to combat condensation. I fully acknowledge that there were problems with the community insulation project network last year. However, I understand from Energy Action Scotland that there are now projects in every Scottish district council area. For the future, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy announced recently, it is intended to include powers in forthcoming social security legislation to introduce a new scheme of grants towards the costs of basic insulation measures in low-income households in England, Scotland and Wales.

I thank the hon. Gentleman for raising this important matter so that I could have the opportunity to explain three prongs of Government policy——

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock on Monday evening, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at seventeen minutes past Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 12 December 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

ASSOCIATED BRITISH PORTS (No. 2) BILL
Order for Third reading read.
To be read the Third time on Thursday 14 December.

Oral Answers to Questions

HEALTH

Ambulance Dispute

1. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will meet representatives of ambulance staff to discuss pay and conditions.

7. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the future of the National Health Service ambulance service.

16. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations he has received regarding ambulance men's pay.

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): The pay and conditions of ambulance staff are the responsibility of the NHS management executive and I have no intention of meeting staff representatives myself to discuss this with them.

As for the future of the ambulance service, health authorities will remain responsible for operational arrangements.

Mr. McKay: Will the Secretary of State give his blessing to the talks that are likely to take place on Thursday? Will he assure the House that neither he nor any Government Department will interfere with those talks in any way, and that any increase will not have to be met from the existing budget but will be Government-funded? Failing that, should we not take the matter to arbitration and stop pussyfooting about?

Mr. Clarke: I followed with interest the announcement of a fresh meeting on Thursday, which I heard of when I left the Chamber last night. The management made its final offer to the trade unions in the Whitley council and the other negotiating body last week. The management made it clear this morning that its last offer is final. Nevertheless, it has agreed to talks, and I hope that Mr. Poole will have something new to say when he arrives at the talks on Thursday.

Mr. Adley: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that approximately 10 per cent. of ambulance service work deals with emergencies and that approximately 90 per cent. is important but routine transportation? If that is the case, does it not make sense to respond to demands for parity with the other emergency services by restricting parity to those who provide an emergency service? Does he agree that, not to put too fine a point on it, NUPE's record on public service industrial disruption is second to none?

Mr. Clarke: The final offer made by management last week would provide £500 each year on top of the general offer for those with paramedical training. People involved in the service tell me that they are sure that the future lies in developing the accident and emergency part of the service and giving the necessary training, status and pay that follow to those who require it. Northumbria and Wiltshire have found that the same rules need not apply to the important but routine services that account for 90 per cent. of the work. NUPE's campaign reminds me of some of its other activities. The union has taken extreme action against patients from time to time in the past.

Mr. Yeo: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that Conservative and Opposition Members who are concerned about the NHS should oppose industrial action under any circumstances? Does he further agree that the best way in which people can have their claims reasonably considered by management is to withdraw any form of industrial action?

Mr. Clarke: I agree strongly with my hon. Friend. In comments on the dispute, it has sometimes been lightly assumed that people who fall outside the TUC guidelines and are not emergency cases can lose the service without suffering hardship. Many elderly and sick patients have great difficulty getting to hospital for the treatment that they require, because of the industrial action that has been targeted at them. That is no way to solve problems of pay and conditions in the NHS. For that reason, management was right to keep revising its offer until it put forward the final offer which, I am glad to say, is still being considered by one of the trade unions involved.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the Secretary of State take this opportunity to pay tribute to the ambulance staff in London who have maintained a 999 service without pay for the past two months, while the Army and police simply could not cope? Does he think that the best way of dealing with the problems of the ambulance service in London is to pay and equip the staff properly and stop abusing them and trying to break the union and the dispute as he has done?

Mr. Clarke: I gladly pay tribute to the work of the ambulance service in London and elsewhere when it is working normally, as it was until the dispute started. Obviously, we are grateful to it for the accident, emergency and other services that we are accustomed to it providing. But the idea that it continues to offer those services in London is a myth that has been completely exploded by events. We should also pay tribute to the Army, the police and the members of St. John Ambulance and the Red Cross. The people of London must be grateful to them for the provision of the accident and emergency services which the trade unions sought to deny them.

Mr. Shersby: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that there is already a significant pay differential between ambulance staff with paramedical skills and those without? Does he further agree that that fact has not come out during the dispute?

Mr. Clarke: There is, and the offer by management concentrates on recognising those skills yet further. That has not been brought out; nor have many other facts. The figure of 6·5 per cent. is no longer used by anybody, but until recently it was being trailed about as the offer made to ambulance men in London. The present 18-month offer is worth at least 9 per cent. to everybody, but for those people in London who acquire the paramedical skills that we want more people to have, it is worth more than 16 per cent. That is why I trust that on Thursday the unions will tell management that they accept the offer.

Mr. Robin Cook: Is the Secretary of State aware that in the week before Christmas the London ambulance service can receive 200 calls an hour? How can the Government hope to respond to those calls with only 100 Army and police vehicles? Does the Secretary of State realise that Thursday's talks are the last chance to make sure that those calls are answered, and that he cannot leave it all to Roger Poole to make a success of the talks?

Has the Secretary of State yet answered the letter from the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier), a Minister of this Government, who has written from the safety of his constituency to say that he can see the logic of the ambulance staff claim? If the Secretary of State cannot even convince the man who was once his Parliamentary Private Secretary, is it not time that he stopped pretending that everybody but himself is wrong about the dispute?

Mr. Clarke: I would take the hon. Gentleman's concern about the accident and emergency service in London more seriously if he would condemn the actions of those who have withdrawn it and made it necessary for the police, Army and voluntary bodies to provide that necessary service. I am astonished that Labour Members are prepared to maintain the fiction—that the service is being offered by the unions—which union leaders have largely abandoned.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier) may not yet have received a reply from me. If the hon. Gentleman is trying to purport that my hon. Friend supports the ambulance men's industrial action, I do not believe him. The information on which he relies sounds like the same sort of partial quotation that has come from too many people in the trade union and Labour movement during this dispute.

NHS Reform

2. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the latest figure he has for the number of hospitals, health districts and specialist units which have expressed an interest in becoming a self-governing National Health Service hospital trust.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: One hundred and eighty-eight units have expressed interest in NHS trust status, including a number with more than one hospital. Seventy-nine of those units intend to proceed with preparing applications for the first wave, of trusts, which we would expect to be established in April 1991. However, applications will not be invited until Parliament has approved the necessary legislation.

Mr. Evans: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the Opposition's scaremongering, directed almost entirely at senior citizens, has proved to be complete nonsense and that hospital trusts will be publicly owned and paid for by the taxpayer? Will he confirm that the campaign of preprinted cards which Labour Members told us would arrive at the Department in their millions has been a complete shambles, with only about 50,000 arriving? Does that not show that Conservatives are the caring party and Labour the scaring party?

Mr. Clarke: The NHS trusts will be NHS hospitals providing free treatment paid for from taxation. Local people who run them will strive to improve the service, particularly to elderly people, because theirs is the fastest-growing area of demand to which an ever-growing amount of resources will be distributed. I agree with my hon. Friend that the cards were a complete fiasco. Back in August I read accounts of the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) promising me hundreds of thousands of them. In the end, even with the complete membership of the Labour party undoubtedly filling in and buying the postage stamps for as many as possible, they could produce only 50,000.

Mr. Kennedy: The Secretary of State is fond of saying that self-governing trusts will enhance patient choice. He will agree that for that to make any sense, a proper information system must be available. There have been reports that some of those considering self-governing trust status have submitted figures to the Department of Health suggesting that some hospitals will require as much as £3 million to upgrade computer systems. What estimate has the Department made of the proper systems technology that will be required for the aims to which it aspires in the proposals to be reached?

Mr. Clarke: The entire National Health Service requires investment in information technology. Quite apart from the White Paper, it will be necessary for this giant organisation to invest in catching up on modern methods of collecting management information and then using it. It is not necessary for our reforms for there to be vast investment in computers and software ahead of the 1991 implementation. The development of computers and software should proceed at a sensible pace with systems being worked up and proved in practice before they are widely adopted. As we develop the idea of NHS trusts, we shall explain to those interested that they should not be misled into believing that millions of pounds worth of information technology are a prerequisite of a more sensible method of matching resources to patients in the service.

Mr. Flannery: Why does not the Secretary of State admit that it is useless to massage the facts and figures about hospitals showing an interest, as he calls it? I wrote to the Secretary of State asking for the names of the people in Sheffield hospitals who had shown an interest so that I could provide them to all the people of Sheffield. The Under-Secretary of State replied that that information was private. Eventually, we met representatives of Sheffield health authority, which admitted that a group of working parties composed only of consultants had asked for it——

Mr. Speaker: Briefly, please.

Mr. Flannery: There is no democracy in that. It is a travesty of the truth. Why does not the Mininister come clean?

Mr. Clarke: If and when we receive a formal application for self-governing status from Sheffield or anywhere else, it will be worked up by those sponsoring it and subjected to public consultation next summer. There is no point in the hon. Gentleman trying to get partial information at this stage about expressions of interest which he no doubt wishes to see to confuse still further the political debate that he is trying to set off in Sheffield. The hon. Gentleman should wait until we have proper applications that explain what the proposal is really about. That will make it more difficult for the hon. Gentleman and his friends to go on about opting out of the National Health Service and other such nonsense.

Patient Services

3. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether there has been any experience within the National Health Service of using contracts for patient services.

18. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the use of contracts for patient services within the National Health Service.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Roger Freeman): We believe that about 60 per cent. of health authorities have used contracts to obtain patient services from the public and private sectors. As part of the development work to prepare for the implementation of "Working For Patients", the Department is currently supporting projects working on various aspects of contracts.

Mr. Nicholson: My hon. Friend will recall that yesterday's debate and my contribution to it emphasised the importance of raising quality and standards in the National Health Service as it moves forward. Will he confirm that contracts placed by district health authorities will have to take account of service standards and quality of care as well as cost? Does he agree that they will enhance the power of general practitioners, as they will be consulted and the new system will have to reflect their referral patterns?

Mr. Freeman: I very much agree with my hon. Friend —*[Interruption.]* It is no great surprise. A great advantage of contracts is that the health authorities, which will be responsible for drawing them up, will be able to specify quality targets for the supply of not only hospital services but community health services.

Mr. Amos: Will my hon. Friend confirm that, under the proposals to improve the Health Service, district health authorities such as those in Northumberland would be obliged to maintain a reserve of resources to meet the demands of special cases? Will he confirm that that will satisfy the criteria relating to GPs' freedom of referral and patient choice?

Mr. Freeman: I can confirm that. We expect health authorities to begin consulting GPs about the existing referral pattern of their patients now, so that the authorities can draw up contracts reflecting that pattern. Given that referrals may take place outside the contract pattern, a contingency fund will be provided in all health authorities—including those in my hon. Friend's constituency—to cover such non-contractual referrals.

Dr. Kim Howells: How are local health authorities supposed to place contracts with anyone when they are in a position like that of the authority in my constituency? It has already spent £1·5 million over its budget, and is so desperately short of resources that it has no beds for victims of the current flu epidemic.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State recently announced an increase of 8·4 per cent. in cash terms for the hospital and community health services next year. That is a substantial increase in the resources available to district health authorities. After April 1991, health authorities will have the job of placing contracts to acquire health services, and they will have the resources to do that.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Given his previous answer, will the Minister join me, and a consultant at the Freeman hospital in my constituency, in condemning as wild and bizarre the decision to spend about £200,000 transferring heart patients from that centre of excellence in Newcastle to Wythenshawe in Manchester? What a waste of money. Should not the money be invested in the region?

Mr. Freeman: As I am sure the hon. Gentleman knows, that is a supra-regional service. People who require complicated heart operations should not necessarily seek service within their own districts; such complicated and expensive treatment should be provided as quickly as possible wherever it can best be provided.

Dentists

5. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dentists are employed by the National Health Service now and in 1979.

Mr. Freeman: There were 15,300 dentists in the National Health Service in England in 1979, and just over 18,000 last year.

Mr. French: The whole House will welcome the excellent news about additional resources for dentistry. Will my hon. Friend confirm that that means that the teeth of the nation—particularly those of the nation's children —are receiving more attention and are consequently in better condition, and does he agree that that is a good reason for smiles all round?

Mr. Freeman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, and I can confirm that, over the past 10 years, the teeth of the nation have been in far better shape. There has been a dramatic reduction in decay caused by dental caries in children under the age of 16—a fall of about 40 per cent. between 1973 and 1983—and a reduction in the number of adults with false teeth from about 30 per cent. in 1978 to about 20 per cent. in 1988.

Mr. Ron Brown: Does the Minister accept that people are not smiling so much in Scotland? Although it is not his responsibility, he will understand that Scots are angry about the closure of Edinburgh dental school. Will he have a word with his Scottish colleagues, and advise them to keep the school on? We need it: it is important to the health of Scotland's people.

Mr. Freeman: The hon. Gentleman should take a broader national view. The number of dentists that Britain will need over the next two decades will increase, but at present we are training too many.

Miss Emma Nicholson: As one who spent the morning at the dentist, I am not sure that I welcome extra money being spent on dentistry. Does my hon. Friend agree that the number of dentistry courses has increased dramatically over 10 years,—from 27 million to 32 million—which is a welcome sign that the expense of dentistry is clearly not putting people off having their teeth repaired?

Mr. Freeman: My hon. Friend is right. There are more courses, and people are going to the dentist more often. The use of fluoride toothpaste, particularly by children, has made a big difference to the health of their teeth.

Community Care

6. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received on the White Paper on community care; and if he will summarise the views expressed.

11. **Mr. Alfred Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received on the community care White Paper.

The Minister for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): We have received several representations following publication of our White Paper "Caring for People: Community Care in the Next Decade and Beyond." Most have expressed a general welcome for our proposals.

Mr. Cohen: Have there not been many protests about the proposal to privatise care for the elderly? Are the Government not about to treat home helps in the same way as National Health Service cleaners, by undercutting the low-paid and penny-pinching in the service that they provide? Why is it that the care of the elderly and the disadvantaged is acceptable to the Government only if it makes a profit?

Mrs. Bottomley: Unlike Opposition Members, the Government have no obsession about the ownership of services to help the elderly and the frail. We are establishing a framework of care for the next decade and beyond. Individuals want their needs to be properly assessed and choice of provision. Wherever possible, they want to stay in their own homes. We want resources to be used effectively and properly, high standards to be maintained and choice and dignity provided to those who need care.

Mr. Alfred Morris: Will the Minister clarify the Government's intentions regarding section 3 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986, which was so ably promoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke)? Also, if in the words of the White Paper,

> "promoting choice and independence underlies all the Government's proposals",

will the Minister accept amendments to the National Health Service and Community Care Bill to allow local authorities to pay disabled people to employ the personal assistants they so often need to preserve their independence? If the Bill becomes law, just how much are the Government prepared to spend on community care during its first year of implementation?

Mrs. Bottomley: The existing provision for disabled people will be unchanged by the introduction of our proposals for care in the communiy. What is important is that all people will have their needs assessed before care is provided.

As for the hon. Gentleman's second point, the key aim is to provide effective care and to make plans in collaboration with health authorities. The local authorities have been given the responsibility to provide care in the community. They will be required to produce and publish their plans. But it is important that they should work closely with health authorities to ensure that disabled people, whom the right hon. Gentleman has championed so greatly over the years, receive the services that he and I wish them to have.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Does my hon. Friend accept that it is a crying shame that community care proposals have been tagged on to a Bill that relates to the NHS, when community care relates mainly to local government? Will my hon. Friend, and my right hon. and learned Friend, consider ring fencing community care expenditure so that it is not lost within the general expenditure allocated to local government?

Mrs. Bottomley: I resent my hon. Friend's comment that these matters are being "tagged on" to the end of the National Health Service and Community Care Bill. In my view, they are extremely important proposals. The Bill provides an ideal opportunity to establish our plans for those who need health care alongside the plans for those who need social care—a group that my hon. Friend, too, has championed greatly over the years.

As for my hon. Friend's question about a specific grant, the key point is that we want to establish local accountability and flexibility. We want to promote diversity according to local needs and opportunities. If my hon. Friend is concerned that local authorities may not arise to the opportunity and the challenge, I point out to him and to others that this is a moment for which they have long waited. Local authorities will be entrusted with these responsibilities. They will be required to produce and publish their plans. We intend to ensure that they deliver everything that my hon. Friend and I wish them to deliver.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: Does my hon. Friend agree——

Hon. Members: Oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Members who have just come in should realise that it is bad form to walk in front of the hon. Member for Newbury when he is asking a question.

Mr. Skinner: Send them to Sardinia.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Settle down please.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: Is my hon. Friend aware that voluntary bodies such as the Children's Society are disappointed that the provisions of the NHS and Community Care Bill do not consider the needs of carers and users of the services, and that there is no scope for the incorporation of review and complaints procedures in the current draft of the Bill? Does my hon. Friend intend to add those to the Bill at a later date, or will she bring forward a code of good practice that will be published after the Bill becomes law?

Mrs. Bottomley: I urge my hon. Friend to look at the White Paper again, because explicit mention is made of the needs of carers, and the important part that they play. We are working closely with voluntary organisations and local authority associations so that when we bring forward a code of practice they will give the recognition to carers that he and I want them to be given.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Will the Minister take a second opportunity to reply to my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), who asked a specific question about the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986? How many people have made representations supporting the full implementation of the Act, and how many of them supported sections 1, 2 and 3 which give rights to consumers and carers? Or do the Government take the view that community care is everybody else's responsibility —the independent sector, voluntary organisations and carers—but not theirs?

Mrs. Bottomley: The Bill offers a major step forward for carers and consumers of services. We have made it very clear that an assessment will be required before care can be provided. We are turning our backs on the old system, in which the provision of resources was often irrelevant to the needs of the individual. Frequently, under the system it was more likely that residential care was provided, rather than the domiciliary care that is often more appropriate, and more in line with the dignity of the individual. Our measures move on from the disabled persons Act, but we shall continue to review it. The Bill will be a major step forward, and will provide an opportunity to hear the views of consumers and carers.

Mr. Thurnham: Does my hon. Friend agree that we do not need ring fences in community care, but we need the local authorities to concentrate on their responsibilities, and to bring down the ring fences that stop voluntary bodies, such as Crossroads, playing a full role?

Mrs. Bottomley: One of the difficulties with ring fences is that they tend to lock services in a historical framework. We want collaboration and innovation, with various agencies working together to ensure that a better service is provided for the frail and the disabled.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Will the Minister kindly tell us what plans exist to increase the number of occupational therapists in the community? There is already a shortage in hospitals, and if more people are to go into community care, will more also be required in the community?

Mrs. Bottomley: I can say that there has been a substantial increase in the number of professionals involved in the provision of care in the community in recent years. I anticipate that we shall also need an increase in the number of occupational therapists.

Yorkshire and Humberside Health Authority

8. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his Department's cash allocation for Yorkshire and Humberside health authority for 1989-90.

Mr. Freeman: The Yorkshire regional health authority received an initial revenue cash allocation of £951·2 million in 1989-90. There has been a real terms increase in expenditure of about 31 per cent. for Yorkshire over the past 10 years.

Mr. Cran: Does my hon. Friend agree that that is record expenditure, and that it represents spending of £280 per man, woman and child in Yorkshire and Humberside? Does he also agree that, based on last year's experience, that will probably provide treatment for more than 4,500,000 patients in that region alone? Does my hon. Friend agree that patients are a more accurate guide to the success of the NHS than the politically motivated comments of Opposition Members?

Mr. Freeman: Expenditure for the NHS as a whole is about twice the figure that my hon. Friend quoted. He has cited only the hospital service. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health expects to make a statement shortly on regional health authority allocations, which will show continued advance in real terms for the NHS in the regions.

Mr. Lofthouse: Is the Minister aware that seven district health authorities in the Yorkshire region confront a deficit which will have a serious effect on patient care?

Mr. Freeman: I am aware of the financial problems of certain districts in Yorkshire. It is the responsibility of health authorities to manage their affairs within the resources allocated to them. Under both Labour and Conservative Governments health authorities have been cash limited. It is their responsibility to manage. Our reforms, which bring the allocation of funds on a weighted capitation basis to districts, will provide a fairer and more automatic system of fund allocation.

BMA

9. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for health when he last met the representatives of the British Medical Association; and what was discussed.

12. **Sir Fergus Montgomery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last met representatives of the British Medical Association; and what was discussed.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I last met representatives of the British Medical Association on 18 October, when we had a friendly and constructive discussion about the implementation of our proposals in the White Paper "Working for Patients".

Mr. Griffiths: Is it not a shame that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will not face up to the truth—that his proposals, which are causing the BMA and virtually every other medical organisation anxiety, are just a smokescreen for underfunding the service? He says that he is spending much more, but that means nothing to patients who are sent home with life-threatening diseases. In my constituency, a patient with cancer of the oesophagus was sent home three times because an intensive care bed was not available for him. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman provide more money for medical staff rather than for more administrators, which is what his scheme envisages?

Mr. Clarke: We are providing money for the NHS on an unprecedented scale. Neither the British Medical Association nor anyone else has put it to me recently that underfunding is the sole problem. We have just announced an increase for next year which is 5 per cent. ahead of inflation. That represents an increase in funding during the past two years of more than £5 billion.

My discussions with the BMA concentrate on ways in which we might spend that money more sensibly and carefully to get the best for patients, to cut waiting lists and to improve on facilities the lack of which, of course, are still encountered because of the way in which the NHS is run at the moment.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: Does my right hon. and learned Friend recall that, at a previous meeting with the BMA, he managed to get it to admit that it had misled the public about indicative drug budgets? In view of his great success at that meeting, will he arrange others in the hope that the BMA will withdraw other scare stories that it has put about?

Mr. Clarke: The claim that some people might not get the drugs they needed caused more alarm among patients than any other allegation made last summer. I share my hon. Friend's feelings about the fact that that allegation has been disposed of.

Meetings with the BMA are now much more friendly and constructive. Now that the House has given the National Health Service and Community Care Bill a Second Reading, I trust that everyone who shares our enthusiasm for the NHS will get down to sensible talks about how best to implement the reforms to get the best out of them.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: Does the Secretary of State agree that not one general practitioner practice in Wales which would qualify under his proposals has indicated any desire to have its own budget? Does he agree, therefore, that the central plank of his proposals are utterly irrelevant to Wales?

Mr. Clarke: It is not the central plank of the proposals, although it is an important one. I intend to give details of the programme for GP practice budgets tomorrow. That will be the first time we invite general practitioners seriously to decide whether they are interested in proceeding with it. I cannot believe that general practitioners in Wales will be more backward than their English colleagues in considering the advantages of the scheme. The more go-ahead practices which are anxious to develop services for their patients that the GP wishes to provide will be interested in the proposals I shall be putting forward.

Dame Jill Knight: Did not the BMA spend some £3 million of its own money on peddling what it has now admitted to be misinformation? In his talks with the BMA was my right hon. and learned Friend able to suggest that it should now spend a further sum on setting the record straight?

Mr. Clarke: Certainly the BMA spent a great deal of money—at least £3 million. It is now organising a fundraising campaign to replenish its war chest, but I do not think that it intends to go in for the same advertising again. That advertising campaign has virtually ceased. I think that that is because the BMA has decided to improve the climate and get down to sensible and constructive discussions that we have been trying to encourage throughout

Mr. Robin Cook: In this new friendly atmosphere with the BMA, will the Secretary of State listen to the concern that it has expressed today about the 45 patients who have been transferred from the Freeman hospital in Newcastle to the Wythenshawe hospital in Manchester simply because it is cheaper? Is he aware that there is spare capacity at Wythenshawe only because it has run out of money to treat its own patients? How can he possibly justify shipping patients halfway across England to a hospital with an even longer waiting list? Does that not reveal the dangers of a Bill that puts the price of contracts before the patients' choice?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman refers to the unreformed National Health Service. The hon. Gentleman has discovered that quite a lot of patients move around the country, and sometimes have to travel considerable distances. They do so because patients and doctors are prepared to allow patients to travel to a better or quicker service. The Bill seeks to extend that opportunity to patients who are willing to travel for a better and cheaper service. I assume that the hon. Gentleman is talking about a nationally arranged service where the location of services is decided by the supra-national committee. If he is not, I shall look at the 45 cases, but I am quite sure that the consultants or doctors in charge of those patients decided to move them to somewhere where good quality service was quickly available. But it is quite wrong to seek to intervene in that politically.

Infertility

10. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many district health authorities provide infertility investigations and treatment.

17. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many district health authorities provide infertility investigations and treatment.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The investigation and treatment of infertility is part of the normal practice of gynaecology and is therefore available throughout the country.

Mrs. Mahon: Will not indicative drugs budgets and GP practice budgets deter GPs from sending women for infertility treatment and from taking on women who are already receiving expensive infertility treatment? Will that not add to a very human tragedy for many couples?

Mrs. Bottomley: The introduction of prescribing budgets is a sensible way of containing the costs of prescribing and ensuring that prescribing practices continue to develop. Dramatic advances have been made in infertility treatment. Many of the treatments are very costly and are available in increasing numbers of centres throughout the country. We see no reason to believe that it will not be possible for women to continue to benefit from those remarkable new initiatives.

Mr. John Marshall: When dealing with matters of fertility and infertility, will my hon. Friend remind consultants of the fertility of the imagination of the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook)?

Mrs. Bottomley: Yes, Sir.

Ms. Harman: Does not the Minister's earlier answer show that she is unaware that Lady Warnock described provision of fertility services within the National Health Service as "haphazard and unsatisfactory"? Is it not unacceptable that whether a childless couple can have the child that they long for depends on where they live and how much money they have? When will the Government act on the Warnock proposal, which does not need legislation, to improve fertility services throughout the National Health Service?

Mrs. Bottomley: Since the Labour party was in Government, there has been an increase from 661 to 746 in obstetrics and gynaecology consultants, who provide better and higher quality services. The local district health authority must decide the priorities of various services. The district health authority in the constituency of the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) has chosen to have a new hospital costing £21 million and has increased day cases by 25 per cent. and in-patients by 10 per cent. It is clear that choices must be made in the Health Service, but there is much greater provision for infertility treatment of all kinds throughout the country.

PRIME MINISTER

Shrewsbury

Q1. **Mr. Conway:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make an official visit to Shrewsbury.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): At present, I have no plans to do so.

Mr. Conway: Although I am disappointed that my right hon. Friend cannot visit Shrewsbury, is she aware of the long connection between that town and the armed forces, particularly the light infantry depot that is based there and the military headquarters of the west midlands? Is she aware that the personal determination and compassion that she had to demonstrate in order that a statement on the uprating of war widows' pensions could be made was warmly welcomed in Shrewsbury? She is to be congratulated on that move in policy.

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Hon. Members recognise the very special debt that we owe war widows. Their case is unique and distinctive, and I am glad that we have been able to offer them extra help, which hon. Members learned of yesterday.

Mr. Grocott: Will the Prime Minister think again about visiting Shrewsbury when she has had the opportunity of going to shire hall and hearing from county councillors across the political spectrum—from Church leaders, teachers, pupils and parents—about the overwhelming opposition to the establishment of a city technology college? If £8 million of public money is available for education, will she spend it not on the few but ensure that it is spent on buildings, equipment and books for the benefit of all the children in the town?

The Prime Minister: City technology colleges are a great new opportunity for young people from all backgrounds and ethnic groupings. Whenever they are opened, they prove very popular with teachers, pupils and parents alike.

Mr. Adley: Has my right hon. Friend visited the signal box outside Shrewsbury station? Is she aware that it is one of an enormous number of listed buildings that British Rail is expected to maintain as part of its normal operations? Does she agree that looking after listed buildings and running its own police force imposes an unfair burden on an industry that must compete on unfair terms with the road transport industry?

The Prime Minister: I confess that a visit to the signal box at Shrewsbury has not been at the top of the list of my heritage visits, but I look forward to that experience.

Engagements

Q2. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 12 December 1989.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others, including one this morning at which I joined the task force of Westminster residents, which is designed to improve and protect the environment in Westminster. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. McFall: What does the Prime Minister have to offer the 48,000 people who are two months or more behind with their mortgage repayments and face a bleak Christmas as a result of the Government's incompetent economic management? Does she tell them to put their faith in her enterprise culture, or does she agree that an equally realistic approach is to post a letter to Santa?

The Prime Minister: The latest figures that we have about people behind with mortgage payments and in difficulties show that in the first half of this year—the latest full half-year—only one tenth of 1 per cent. of mortgage holders are in serious difficulty. That means that the overwhelming majority are enjoying the benefits of home ownership.

Mr. Rowe: My right hon. Friend will be aware that a great deal of help is given by the Government to overseas countries through the Overseas Development Administration joint funding arrangement. One of the countries that is not eligible for the assistance is Vietnam. In view of the tremendous need to help that country rebuild its economy to make a home for the boat people, is my right hon. Friend prepared to change that rule?

The Prime Minister: We are giving some help to Vietnam in connection with the return of some of the Vietnamese boat people. If we were to consider giving any more help, it should be done, in the first instance, through that scheme to help those returning to that country.

Mr. Kinnock: What excuse has the Prime Minister for giving instructions that in the middle of the night armed riot police should raid children, women and men, shove them in caged lorries and forcibly deport them to the country from which they have fled?

The Prime Minister: I understand from my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary that they were not armed police. May I also point out that at the international conference on Indo-Chinese refugees in Geneva in June, the international community agreed that refugees would be resettled in other countries and that those who did not qualify as refugees would not be resettled and should return to Vietnam. Therefore, we returned some of those —as the right hon. Gentleman knows—to Vietnam. The people in Hong Kong could not go on taking any more. Many other countries nearby have pushed away the Vietnamese boat people but we have not. Those who are refugees—and there are 13,000 of them—will not be returned. However, it is perfectly in order to return illegal immigrants to their country of origin.

Mr. Kinnock: The Prime Minister is trying to defend the indefensible. Does she realise that she is the only person in the whole shameful episode who cannot make the excuse, "I was only obeying orders"? She was the person giving the orders and the orders are tyrannical.

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman's remarks are feeble and nonsense. Illegal immigrants have to be returned to their country of origin. It is the custom of international law that such illegal immigrants are received back. The people of Hong Kong were suffering greatly from having some 57,000 Vietnamese boat people there, and more and more would come when the season came for them to leave Vietnam. It is perfectly in order to return them and those countries that are protesting at their return would do better if they offered to take some of them.

Mr. Kinnock: Is the Prime Minister telling us that she is prepared to see day after day and night after night the scenes that people have witnessed in those Hong Kong camps so that she can avoid her responsibility for looking after the welfare of people who are now being returned to poverty and oppression?

The Prime Minister: It is to help clear the camps where conditions are not good, where fighting sometimes breaks out and where there is disease. Those who are refugees will not be returned home. I must remind the hon. Gentleman that we have to put back about 30,000 Chinese immigrants over the border each year. He cannot go on inflicting his anger on the people of Hong Kong and expect them to —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: It is perfectly in order to return illegal immigrants to their country of origin. There would be international chaos if they could travel anywhere and never be made to return.

Mr. Wells: Is it not true that the alternative to repatriation to Vietnam is the continuation for many years —something nine, 12 or 13 years—of families living in temporary and appalling prisoner of war camps in which the children of the Vietnamese families would have to grow up? Is it not more humane to let them return to their country and resume their lives?

The Prime Minister: Yes. It is much better and, as I said in reply to an earlier question, we are giving some money to the Vietnamese Government so that those people can be resettled in the villages from which they came. Our ambassador is monitoring what happens and sooner or later, we hope to be able to involve the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, although the refugees, as such, are not being returned to Vietnam.

Mr. Ashdown: Will the Prime Minister, in her busy day, take some time to reconsider the shameful example set by her Government's actions last night in Hong Kong? Apart from the use of riot police at the dead of night and the blanket of secrecy, we must consider the appeal tribunals which condemned people to return to the hands of a Communist Government. Those people have no rights to attend the tribunals, no rights to legal representation, no rights to judicial review and no rights even to know why decisions have been taken against them. Does the Prime Minister think that that is a good example to set to the Chinese Government, to whom we shall hand over the safety of our citizens after 1997?

The Prime Minister: Each person who comes in is interviewed to see whether he is a genuine refugee. He has a right of appeal and the British Council report shows how excellent is the system that we operate. There are some 13,000 refugees. The countries that have shown anger about this matter have not yet even agreed to take any of the 13,000 for whom we still seek to find a home. It is impossible for the people of Hong Kong to take more and more of the Vietnamese boat people, many of whom are pushed away from other countries and it is impossible for them to continue to live in camps in what is already an overcrowded island. It is perfectly in order, as I said, through the Geneva conference to return those people to Vietnam and to give the Vietnamese Government some money to resettle them.

Tourism

Q3. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to appoint a Minister for United Kingdom tourism.

The Prime Minister: I am satisfied with the present arrangements. I know that my hon. Friend has long been a strong champion of tourism, which is one of Britain's fastest growing industries. Last year alone it brought in over £6 billion from overseas tourists to this country. I congratulate my hon. Friend on being fortunate in representing a constituency that is, deservedly, one of Britain's leading tourist attractions.

Mr. Gregory: In view of the importance of tourism to the United Kingdom economy, as it is the fastest growth industry in Britain and brings in some £19 billion—although it is always derided by the Labour party as a candyfloss industry in a Mickey Mouse world—will my right hon. Friend confirm that responsibility for tourism is at present split between Ministries in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland? As tourists from abroad look on us as Great Britain, will my right hon. Friend re-examine the possibility of appointing a Minister with overall responsibility for that important industry?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend knows, those who live in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland prefer the responsibilities to be with the territorial Ministers, but I must point out that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment is the Minister who is responsible for tourism for Great Britain as a whole, as well as for England in particular. That arrangement best suits most people in these islands.

Dr. Godman: Will the Prime Minister give an assurance that the Scottish tourist industry and the Scottish tourist bodies will retain their autonomy, given the importance of the industry to many areas and islands of Scotland?

The Prime Minister: I believe that the responsibilities are set out in the Development of Tourism Act 1969 and we have no plans to change it.

Mrs. Roe: Does my right hon. Friend accept that the agreement in principle by Transport Ministers to liberalise European air transport will bring tremendous benefit to tourists and all consumers? Is not that the sort of measure with which the Community should be involving itself, rather than trying to impose on its members such contentious proposals as the social charter?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Sir. My hon. Friend is quite right. It was very good news when last week the European Community agreed to deregulate air fares, which means that we shall get very much cheaper air fares to Europe. Hitherto, it has cost much more per mile to travel by air to Europe than to the United States. We have been working for several years to try to secure deregulation. In the past we had to do it by bilateral arrangement—it was Britain and the Netherlands that were keen on deregulation—but now the principle has been extended and will apply much more widely. That will help tourism and bring pleasure to many people who will now be able to fly more cheaply to European countries.

Q4. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 12 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Ms. Short: Is the Prime Minister aware that most people in Britain think that our country is now too unequal and too divided? Does she know that the combined effect of all her tax and benefit changes is that the bottom 50 per cent. of families have lost £8·50 per week whereas the top 10 per cent. have gained nearly £40 per week? Will she now, as many families look forward to a bleak Christmas, promise to increase pensions and child benefit and introduce a national minimum wage so that everyone who lives in this country can share in its wealth?

The Prime Minister: No, I do not agree with the hon. Lady's figures. She is well aware that people of all income groups—whether on social security benefits or earnings and those receiving treatment from the Health Service or in education—have benefited under this Government. All the benefits have gone up. In the last part of the hon. Lady's question she referred to increases for pensioners at Christmas. A Labour Government cancelled the Christmas bonus for two years in succession. Under Conservative Governments pensioners continue to receive their Christmas bonus.

European Council (Strasbourg)

3.31 pm

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the European Council in Strasbourg on 8 and 9 December which I attended together with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. The text of the Council's conclusions has been placed in the Library of the House.

The Council considered four main issues: the steps still needed to complete the common market in 1992; progress with economic and monetary union; the social charter; and how the European Community can support democracy and economic reform in eastern Europe.

First, on the steps needed to achieve a real common market by 1992, our meeting in Strasbourg confirmed the importance that we all attach to keeping to the timetable for 1992, and I believe that we are on course for that. The Council confirmed and welcomed the progress made during the past six months—in particular to open up markets for banking and financial services and for telecommunications in every member state, and to make possible cheaper air fares. We shall aim to agree another package of important measures before the end of the year, including rules for company mergers and the further opening up of public sector procurement.

We also set priorities for the next stage of our work, covering such matters as freedom to provide investment services and life insurance throughout the Community, and removal of restrictions on road and air transport and shipping.

Completion of the common market is important in three respects. First, it represents the single most important contribution that the European Community can make to the prosperity of all its members. Secondly, it is an example and an opportunity for the countries of eastern Europe. Thirdly, it is the main respect in which the European Community is in practice moving towards closer integration. Britain has been at the forefront throughout, and our record of implementing the Community's decisions is matched only by that of Denmark, as was explicitly confirmed by Mr. Delors in Strasbourg.

The second main item was progress with economic and monetary union. The Council welcomed the fact that the necessary decisions have now been taken to enable the first stage of closer economic and monetary co-operation in Europe to start on 1 July next year. That is something which Britain very strongly supports.

President Mitterrand also noted that the necessary majority existed to convene an intergovernmental conference before the end of next year to discuss further steps towards economic and monetary union. The conference will set its own agenda and the timetable for its proceedings. No time limit is set for its work. It will have before it not just the Delors report, but the British paper setting out an evolutionary approach to economic and monetary union, and perhaps other contributions. Meanwhile, discussion of all these matters will continue among Finance Ministers to ensure that there is full and adequate preparation of the intergovernmental conference.

The council's conclusions specifically recognise—this is a very important point for Britain and for the House—that the procedures for democratic control over economic and financial matters in each member state must be respected.

We are in the early stage of what will be a long debate in Europe on these matters. A number of different viewpoints are already beginning to emerge. Britain will play a full and constructive part in the debate, while reflecting the view expressed in all parts of this House that stages 2 and 3 of the Delors proposals are not acceptable.

Our third main item was the social charter. At our last meeting in Madrid, we all agreed that creating jobs should be the Community's top priority. It was all the more disappointing that the social charter which emerged would regulate the labour market in a way which, far from creating jobs, would actually put them at risk, by raising costs and making our countries less competitive.

Moreover, the charter foreshadows an action programme which the Commission is bringing forward containing no fewer than 43 separate proposals, including 17 legally binding directives. Action at Community level is appropriate in matters such as health and safety at work and freedom of movement. But the programme includes many other matters such as part-time work, working conditions, and compulsory schemes of worker participation in management.

Britain does not accept that the Community should direct policy in these matters, many of which we believe are for national authorities to decide. Nor do we see any need to seek uniformity among social policies which have been developed to suit the varied needs and traditions of the different Community countries.

I therefore made it clear that we would not endorse the text of the charter, and, judging from their comments, I believe that many of my colleagues in Europe will have considerable difficulties with the Commission's specific proposals when they come forward.

The fourth main item of our work was help to eastern Europe. We want to support in practical ways the countries in eastern Europe which are introducing democracy and economic reform. The Council therefore committed us to further specific measures of help, including more food supplies; support for the $1 billion stabilisation plan for Poland; setting up an agency to help co-ordinate offers of training; and agreement in principle to set up a development bank to help eastern European countries to make the transition to market-based economies, and we hope that others, including the United States, Japan, Canada and the European Free Trade Association countries, will join in the European development bank.

Britain's ideas for closer association between the European Community and the countries of eastern Europe will also be followed up.

Heads of Government and Foreign Ministers also discussed a wide range of international political issues. We underlined the importance of maintaining security and stability in Europe, in the face of the momentous changes taking place. This means confirming existing alliances, treaties and agreements, including the Helsinki Final Act.

I would also draw attention to our declaration on southern Africa. In this the Twelve look forward to the time when sanctions and other measures against South Africa can be reconsidered in response to profound and irreversible change there.

May I say how grateful the Government are for President Mitterrand's skilful, courteous and effective chairmanship of the Council? It was an important meeting. What emerged most strongly is the degree to which the Community and the 12 member states—not least because of 1992—can act as the driving force in the development of the whole of Europe, at a turning point in the continent's history. The Community should be an example of how free and democratic nations can work ever more closely together, while remaining open to the outside world.

That is the way in which Britain wants the Community to develop, and, despite disagreements on some points, the Strasbourg Council encourages us to believe that that is how the Community will develop, with Britain playing a very full part.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): I thank the Prime Minister for her statement. Opposition Members welcome a number of the decisions that were made in Strasbourg, especially on the social charter and the development bank, to assist the achievement of prosperity and the advance of democracy in eastern Europe. We consider that the summit was wise to adopt the communiqué that accepts the right of the German people

"to regain its unity through free self-determination"

in a peaceful and democratic process that fully respects existing agreements, treaties and the principles of the Helsinki Final Act. We further believe that the communiqué is a rational and constructive response to the widespread acknowledgement in both parts of Germany that the German question is a matter not only for the German people, but for their neighbours in the West and East also.

Is the Prime Minister aware that those positive decisions in Strasbourg were mainly taken in spite of her, not because of her?

On the social charter, will the Prime Minister take this opportunity to specify precisely why she will try to deny the British people safeguards and support on matters such as part-time work, working conditions and opportunities for workers to participate in the management decisions that greatly affect their lives? What success has she had in convincing her fellow Conservatives such as Chancellor Kohl and Prime Ministers Martens, Da Silva, Andreotti and Schlüter of her belief that the social charter, which they accept in its entirety, is somehow "Marxist"?

On economic and monetary union, will the Prime Minister tell us precisely what her policy now is towards participation in the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system? Does Britain's participation depend upon that ever lengthening list of conditions that the right hon. Lady has enumerated over recent months: the completion of the single market, the removal of all exchange controls, the removal of all industrial subsidies and the reduction of British inflation to the European average, or, following her *Financial Times* interview this morning, do those conditions now have to be only "broadly met" in her new "open mind", or is she simply waiting until her next interview to decide what she really thinks? Instead of waiting upon events, why does she not improve on the present conditions and embark upon negotiations on conditions to try to secure participation in the exchange rate mechanism with maximum advantage and minimum difficulty for our country?

As the Prime Minister reflects on the Strasbourg summit and looks forward to summits in Ireland and Italy over the next 12 months, will she be changing her failed policies? Does she not understand that, whatever scepticism or hostility hon. Members of all parties may share towards stage 2 and 3 of the Delors process, the least effective way of influencing vital discussions and negotiations is through her habit of declaring strident opposition and following that up with resentful acquiescence? Does she not realise that that unconvincing and unsuccessful posturing has brought her to a position in the Community where she is merely tolerated and then bypassed, smiled at by other leaders but then sidelined by the processes?

Is it not clear that Strasbourg was a place of repeated defeat for the British Prime Minister? She was defeated on the intergovernmental conference, on the social charter and on the establishment of a European development bank. When will the Prime Minister ever learn that if this country is to have its proper influence in the Community, it must have its proper involvement in the Community?

The Prime Minister: I hope that everyone who is listening will remember that the right hon. Gentleman was not there and does not really know much about it.

As for the most important issue on which advances were made—the single market, something which makes everyone else in the world realise that Europe really is integrating into one market—Britain is in the lead—*[Interruption.]* Yes indeed, Britain has implemented more of the directives, has led on many of the directives and of course was the first to make the single market a high priority.

The right hon. Gentleman says that there are times when one stands up very much for things that are good for Britain. We did that, and because of it we have now had returned to Britain about £10 billion from the reform of the budget, a sum which the right hon. Gentleman would have had neither the skill nor the resolve to secure for this country.

Next, we took a prominent part in securing the reform of the common agricultural policy, and for that most people are now profoundly thankful.

The social charter was adopted only as a general statement by the 11 countries. When the Commission put forward a proposal that we all agree to give effect to the directives, that proposal was thrown out by almost every country because many who agreed with the charter agreed with it only as a general declaration. They will now have to look in detail at each of the directives as they come forward.

Many who were prepared to put their names to a general declaration about a minimum wage will not agree to it when it comes forward because it would mean knocking many of their economies into a state of much higher unemployment. So it is far better to insist that these issues come forward as separate directives, when each and every one of them can be considered separately, rather than agree them in a broad general charter.

At the intergovernmental conference, our paper on the future of economic and monetary union will be among those which will be properly considered. It is an excellent paper. The governor of the Swiss National bank pointed out:

> "The British authorities have understood the essential point: monetary integration should proceed along the path from stability to unity, and not that from unity to stability."

Karl Otto Pöhl, governor of the Bundesbank, pointed out that our evolutionary approach paper was

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"a realistic and sensible description of what monetary policy should concentrate on in future years."

So the people who know are most complimentary about the British stance.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): Turning from the dreary liturgy of the Leader of the Opposition to the coming debate about the future integration of the European Community, which my right hon. Friend mentioned and in which we shall be playing a full part, is it not a fact that, even if today the European Community was one federated super state, it would be necessary to reinvent nation states in order for Europe to meet its needs in the 1990s?

Is not the vision which we need to seek that of a confederation of free and open kingdoms and republics throughout Europe? Does my right hon. Friend agree that that is the need for the future? Bearing that in mind, does that not utterly refute the criticism which people make of my right hon. Friend's proper concern for the role of nation states in the Europe of the future?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I agree entirely with my right hon. Friend that we shall get maximum co-operation and maximum effect when we have the 12 nation states co-operating with one another ever more closely together, each with their pride in their own history and their own culture and each being prepared to do together the things that we do better together and which makes us stronger to do them together, leaving the others of us to do other things separately in our own way.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): May I take the Prime Minister back to the Milan conference of 1985? Is it not the case that there, too, she voted against an intergovernmental conference, on that occasion on the Single European Act, which she has subsequently been forced to accept and of which, I sometimes think, she has even claimed authorship?

Is it not a fact that at this conference she went opposed to the social contract and was outvoted 11 to one? She went opposed to an intergovernmental conference and was outvoted 11 to one. She was opposed to a European development bank but had to accept it. If that is batting for Britain, she is doing a remarkably bad job. The remarkable thing about the conference was that our European allies did not find her irritating only because they found her completely irrelevant. The Government and the Labour party must realise that the nation's best long-term interests cannot be fulfilled without an increasingly integrated Europe which comes together politically, economically and socially.

The Prime Minister: The country's best long-term interests consist of keeping those who are in opposition there in perpetuity.

At the intergovernmental conference which preceded the Single European Act, it was not necessary to have a treaty amendment to achieve the single market; it could have been achieved without that. As the right hon. Gentleman may know, the Single European Act ensured that certain matters could be decided by majority vote for a limited purpose, whereas previously they were taken by unanimous vote. That change is not necessary to complete the single European market.

Many of my collegues were prepared to agree to the social charter as a general declaration without any effect whatever. I was not prepared to put my name to a general declaration without being prepared to consider what flowed from it, much of which I wish to and shall oppose. The charter should not have been brought forward. It was outside some of the articles in the treaty of Rome and could have been used to gain extra competence for the European Commission. The position now is far better. Separate directives will have to be brought forward, each of which we shall consider in the usual way.

On the European development bank, both the right hon. Gentleman and the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) have got it wrong. The European development bank was agreed in principle in Paris, and it was announced then.

Mr. Michael Marshall (Arundel): Will my right hon. Friend reflect on the opportunities arising in eastern Europe, through know-how funds, for both political and industrial exchanges? What further steps may be taken by our partners in Europe along those lines? Will she keep an open mind on extending the list beyond Poland and Hungary, to take in, for example, East Germany? Many of us believe that the position in Germany is not only a problem for West Germany.

The Prime Minister: Many EEC countries now have know-how funds to train people in Poland and Hungary who do not know what a market economy is like. We are giving training on how to achieve it. We have co-ordinated with one another through the mechanisms that I mentioned so that we do not overlap too far.

The general view on East Germany and Czechoslovakia is that when they have set up arrangements for true democracy and implemented an IMF agreement, if required, further aid will flow. We use much the same system and techniques as we used in Poland, although Poland was a special case. She needed a good deal of food right away and some management training. We saw to it that she received both. Other countries whose needs are not so urgent will need to set up a democratic structure, and we shall consider their financial position before we agree further aid.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): When discussing aspects of stability and security in the Community, did the Prime Minister refer to reports in the American publication, *Defence Daily*, which stated that President Bush had given his presidential approval to an Anglo-French co-production of a 400 km tactical air-to-surface missile, to be developed by British Aerospace and Thomson-CSF? Did she explain to her fellow heads of state why presidential approval was necessary for such an Anglo-French initiative? Why is it necessary now that the INF agreement has been made?

The Prime Minister: This was not a NATO meeting, but a European Community meeting. The EEC, or European Community, is not a defence organisation, as the hon. Gentleman knows. NATO is a defence organisation.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on her part in the positive tone of the Strasbourg conference. Will she build on that by ensuring that all our Community partners understand that we have a commitment to economic and monetary union, as they do, but that we prefer the evolutionary approach which will better safeguard the interests of national Parliaments and ensure that the eventual economic and monetary union is more stable? Will she also welcome today's announcement that the French will abolish the remnants of their exchange controls from 1 January? Is that not significant progress in achieving the conditions for the entry of sterling into the exchange rate mechanism which were laid down at Madrid?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that the evolutionary approach is much better and more effective when considering how to move towards economic and monetary union. That approach has been praised by several central bank governors and it will eventually find more favour. It is steadier and more sure than the other approach. The whole time it maintains national democratic accountability, and we are not the only nation that wants that accountability to remain.

France has undertaken to abolish her exchange controls by 1 July, but I believe that she will bring the date forward. Italy will wait until July to abolish hers. That will give her more problems, but I hope that she will be able to abolish them successfully. Spain and other nations will abolish exchange controls in 1992. One expects them to take longer because they joined later. We have agreed that we shall join the exchange rate mechanism when the conditions are fulfilled. Those conditions were set out at Madrid and have not changed since. No one is suggesting that we should dot every "i" and cross every "t" before we consider when the time is right to join.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): The House will welcome what the Strasbourg communiqué had to say about the various measures of aid for eastern Europe—clearly greatly needed. The House will also welcome what the Prime Minister said about stages 2 and 3 of the Delors report remaining unacceptable to the Government and all parts of this House. Unfortunately, however, the intergovernmental conference is to meet before the end of 1990 with the purpose of drawing up amendments to the treaty to introduce stages 2 and 3 of Delors. The implications of those decisions for Britain's economic independence and for the powers of this Parliament are enormous.

Would it not be right for the Prime Minister now to consider setting up a Select Committee of this House to examine the full political, constitutional and economic implications of stages 2 and 3 so that when the decision comes to be taken it can be taken in the full knowledge of the implications for this country and its Parliament and not in ignorance?

The Prime Minister: I shall be only too delighted to receive as much technical advice as possible on stages 2 and 3 of Delors. The intergovernmental conference has been delayed until the end of next year, so that there can be full and adequate preparation before we go into the conference. I would have preferred it not to have been set up so quickly because we shall have started stage 1 of Delors only in July 1990 and it will not be completed until well into 1993. It will be the biggest change that the Community has had and we shall not know the magnitude of that change. It would have been much better to have been aware of that before an intergovernmental conference to consider treaty changes was set up. Others wanted to consider that earlier, so we have tried to give time for preparation to see what the options will be.

Stages 2 and 3 will not be considered alone; our paper will also be considered. It is obvious from the discussions that we had in Strasbourg that more and more people are becoming worried about democratic accountability. They would not find accountability to the European Parliament sufficient. There must be democratic accountability to national Parliaments. Select Committees are not a matter for me, but we shall make as many studies as we can of the full consequences of stages 2 and 3 of the Delors report.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): While welcoming my right hon. Friend's new style of Talleyrand softness and subtlety in her approach to the EEC, may I ask her to use it to explain an apparent inconsistency between two apparently incompatible parts of the Strasbourg communiqué? The whole House will welcome paragraph 3(3) which she read out and which appears to suggest that the national Parliaments of member states will have a key slice of democratic control of decisions over economic and monetary union. However, the next paragraph of the communiqué, although written in confusing Eurospeak, appears to suggest that the European Parliament will also get democratic control and more powers over the EMU process. If there is a clash between these Parliaments, will my right hon. Friend say clearly whose side she is on?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend hardly needs to inquire. As he knows, under the present system decisions are taken by the Council of Ministers, with Ministers from each of the 12 countries in the relevant council. Each Minister is fully and democratically accountable to his own Parliament, as I am accountable now. Perhaps the other Ministers do not have such a positive or detailed reporting system as we have. Therefore, they do not fully realise now central economic, monetary and budgetary control is to the life of our Parliament. We stand very much for national democratic accountability. That is much more detailed and much more effective than any accountability through the European Parliament.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Following the European summit, will the Prime Minister tell us whether the change in emphasis in her position on the exchange rate mechanism, which was detected by the *Financial Times* and other newspapers, is correct? Will she tell the House the exact nature of this U-turn and whether it might pave the way for the return of her former Chancellor to high office in her Administration?

The Prime Minister: Our position about joining the exchange rate mechanism has not changed in spite of what the hon. Gentleman says. It was laid down at Madrid in more detail than hitherto and there has been no change since then. I am sorry to disappoint the hon. Gentleman.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the free movement of people, goods and services and investment from East to West and from West to East will do more good for the people of Europe and their prosperity than any talk of political union in western Europe?

The Prime Minister: Yes. The aim of a single market by 1992 is the outward and visible sign of closer integration of the European Community. That has made many other countries realise that the nations of Europe are drawing closer together for economic purposes. That will be a considerable force in the world and should give much

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greater opportunities for employment in this country and for prosperity in general. It will be very good for all our peoples.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): During the meeting, did the Prime Minister notify colleagues that there was likely to be meeting of the four powers to discuss developments in East and West Berlin? If so, could she tell us why she thinks that an occupying organisation set up in 1945 is the appropriate vehicle for dealing with the issues of East and West Germany and East and West Berlin? Is it not anachronistic and insulting to pretend that we can promote and foster certain notions while excluding East and West Germans themselves?

The Prime Minister: No. Berlin is under four-power administration and it seems appropriate that the ambassadors of the four powers should meet at this time. We have forces there, and there were obviously many things to consider.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, despite a fickle and volatile British press, she was able to contribute fully to the harmony, cohesion and unity of the Strasbourg summit, thereby underlining once again that the Conservative party and Conservative Government constitute the only true European force of progress in this country?

Does my right hon. Friend agree that Jacques Delors has always affirmed that, although he was asked to produce a detailed blueprint with his committee, all stages are negotiable, and that that depends on the continuing unity and harmony of the member states?

Finally, may I ask whether the Community trade mark office was discussed? I gather that there is still a chance that Britain will receive that institution, and also that the location may be reconsidered and will not necessarily be in central London.

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend knows, a number of matters involving European headquarters must be considered. We did not discuss where those headquarters should be; that might have been a rather difficult discussion, as each of us knows precisely what we want.

The Delors report was not worked out very well in stages 2 and 3. It was very sketchy. I believe that when it has been worked out more carefully many more people will recoil from it.

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): The Prime Minister's opposition to the social charter is apparently based on the claim that it would undermine industry's competitiveness. How, then, does she explain the fact that in West Germany, where its provisions are largely in force and where wages are higher than they are in Britain, industry—particularly manufacturing industry—is able to compete so successfully?

The Prime Minister: A good deal of the social charter was intended to impose some of Germany's very high costs on other countries that could not possibly afford them. Germany says that for inward investment to go to other lower-cost countries is a form of social dumping, but we do not accept that at all, and we consider it a pretty non-communautaire phrase.

Accepting the social charter would mean accepting the imposition of many higher costs on countries that could not afford them. We do not have minimum wages in this country; we have the different and more effective concept of minimum incomes, which we find suits industry, our costs and our competitiveness better.

Mr. William Powell (Corby): Does my right hon. Friend realise how welcome was Mr. Delors' statement that Great Britain and Denmark are making the most progress towards enacting the 1992 legislation into their domestic law? Is she aware that many people in this country are worried that equally fast progress is not being made in the other Community countries, and will she ensure that the British Government make every possible representation to all those countries to ensure that they keep up with the pace set by this country and Denmark?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. We have always tried to implement the directives as fast as possible, and so has Denmark; and the Netherlands are not far behind. I take my hon. Friend's point: we shall point out that the directives are there to be implemented, and that until they are implemented there will, in effect, be no single market.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must have regard to the subsequent business. We have an important statement after this, and then an important debate. I will allow three more questions from each side, and then we must move on.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the Prime Minister help the House by trying to clarify the position on stability and security, which, apparently, she, Mr. Gorbachev and the Community all want? How does she react to what is happening in the countries of eastern Europe—Hungary, Czechoslovakia and East Germany, to say nothing of Lithuania and Estonia—which are producing all the instability?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman has pointed out, considerable change is taking place in eastern Europe, and it is better to accommodate change—when it is change from Communism to a democratic system—by maintaining NATO and the Warsaw pact in position. That is the way in which we negotiate the reduction of conventional weapons—and we are at present negotiating with START, the strategic arms reduction talks, and with talks on reducing chemical weapons—and the way in which we adhere to the Helsinki Final Act.

That agreement, signed by 34 countries, contains two provisions concerning borders. The first is that no party must violate another's borders; the second is that any change in borders must be made by peaceful agreement. Those are the two frameworks in which we shall keep stability and security.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): Is my right hon. Friend aware that her cautionary words, both today in the House and at the Strasbourg summit, about the delicacy of the evolving German problem will be warmly welcomed and that it is very likely that, in the fullness of time, her view that we should adopt an evolutionary approach within the existing framework of security arrangements will prove to be far more correct and far more safe for the Community and the world than the view of those who seek to go headlong into it on a wave of popular euphoria?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The German question raises many emotions. It is far better to deal with it in the way that we suggest at Strasbourg and in NATO;— against the background of existing alliances and agreements that we have all signed.

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): As for the European development bank and the moneys that will flow into eastern Europe, can the Prime Minister guarantee that no money will be taken away from black and Third world countries and given to eastern Europe?

The Prime Minister: We have just signed a new Lomé agreement.

Mr. Grant: That was not the question.

The Prime Minister: A number of people made the point that the hon. Gentleman has just made. It is not our purpose to take away from countries the help that they receive through bilateral aid programmes, the World Bank and Lomé. The majority holding in the European development bank will be by European Community countries, with other countries providing facilities so that there are sufficient funds to help eastern Europe—but not at the expense of others.

Mr. Ian Stewart (Hertfordshire, North): Does my right hon. Friend accept that her robust but judicious contribution at Strasbourg is very welcome on this side of the House, particularly the fact that she has demonstrated once again that the British Government are more interested in Euro-do than Euro-speak?

As for the contentious matter of the European monetary system, did my right hon. Friend have an opportunity to point out to other Council members that, whatever decisions might be taken in future about sterling, it would not be practicable for the pound to enter the exchange rate mechanism until inflation and interest rates are substantially lower than they are now?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend makes his points very well indeed. I agree with him that we have to get inflation down before we can enter the exchange rate mechanism. That was one of the conditions that we laid down. I agree very much with my right hon. Friend that when it comes to getting things done we tend to lead. We have done less of the talking and more of the acting than others.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): The Prime Minister properly emphasised the importance of information when she replied to my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore). Is she able to say which extant Government document best sets out the implications of economic and monetary union for the United Kingdom? As for democratic accountability, can she tell us when the House approved a resolution, the words of which specifically approved the principle that this country should adhere to economic and monetary union?

The Prime Minister: Progressive realisation of economic and monetary union was agreed by the Community in 1972 and therefore was accepted by us when we acceded to the Community in 1973.

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): If the Prime Minister accepts Grotius's classic definition of sovereignty as being that area of the national world that cannot be obstructed by others, are there not an increasing number of areas—telecommunications, the environment, medical matters and many others—in which the national will cannot be fully exercised? Does that not lie at the heart of the many important papers that have been published by the European Parliament, dealing with what is described as a democratic deficit? Does the Prime Minister believe that that deficit can best be addressed by bringing back sovereignty to national Parliaments that cannot exercise it, or taking it forward to the European Parliament which, if it is not in a position to exercise it, must surely within a reasonable time be brought precisely to such a position?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend knows that when one enters into international treaties one voluntarily gives up a certain part of one's sovereignty because one is perhaps pooling it with others. That is the way that it has to be done in a multinational world. There has to be some pooling of sovereignty and standards over the environment and telecommunications. It is a far cry from doing that to pooling many other things that are best dealt with locally and in national Parliaments. We need to get the balance right.

We have excellent democratic accountability in this House. I sometimes think that other Prime Ministers would profit from having a similar system. I do not think that it will be possible to achieve the intimacy and detailed debate that we get in this House in the European Parliament because of the many languages involved, and because of its layout. Therefore, we shall not get sufficient democratic accountability there.

Vietnamese Boat People

4.15 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement on the repatriation of Vietnamese boat people from Hong Kong.

This morning, Hong Kong time, a group of 51 boat people were returned to Vietnam by aircraft from Hong Kong. All 51 had been screened under a thorough process agreed with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and they did not qualify for refugee status under the terms of the 1951 United Nations convention on refugees and the 1967 protocol. The repatriation was conducted in line with procedures used worldwide to remove people refused permission to remain in a territory. No firearms were carried. No force was used.

At the international conference on Indo-Chinese refugees in Geneva in June, the international community agreed that refugees would be resettled in other countries, and that those who did not qualify as refugees would not be resettled and should return to Vietnam. I stress that the criteria for establishing who qualifies as a refugee are not decided by Britain, or by the Hong Kong authorities alone, but by agreement with the UNHCR.

We, and the UNHCR, have tried, as the House knows, to encourage the boat people to return to Vietnam voluntarily. In the past year more than 600 have done so, but, during the same period, more than 30,000 have arrived in Hong Kong. In all there are nearly 57,000 boat people in Hong Kong, most of whom are not likely to qualify as refugees. The Vietnamese have recently agreed to accept volunteers back at a faster rate, but it is clear that voluntary returns alone will not match the scale of the problem. The majority of volunteers so far have come from the people not yet screened; of those already screened and found not to qualify as refugees, fewer than 1 per cent. are volunteering to return.

We have therefore had to begin repatriating those who are not refugees and who do not volunteer. The international community have said that they will not resettle those people. If they were not returned to Vietnam, they would therefore face the prospect of indefinite detention in camps in Hong Kong. There is another matter of great importance—unless it is made clear to people in Vietnam that those who do not qualify as refugees will be returned to Vietnam, Hong Kong faces the prospect of tens of thousands more arrivals in 1990. That is simply not an acceptable prospect.

The arrangements for repatriation have, like those for voluntary returns, been agreed in negotiation with the Vietnamese Government. Vietnam has told us that those who are repatriated will not be punished for leaving. We have given aid to be used to help those being repatriated to settle back into Vietnam.

As the House would expect I have paid attention to monitoring to ensure that those who return are in no way ill treated. Our embassy in Hanoi will be monitoring their conditions both in the transit camp in Hanoi to which they immediately return, and in the villages to which they are returned, as it has been doing for volunteers.

We hope that the UNHCR will agree to help, as he now helps people returning to Laos from Thailand. We would welcome the co-operation of non-governmental organisations.

In the meantime, I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison) and the noble Lord, Lord Ennals, who have agreed to go to Vietnam next month as independent observers to report to me on the conditions of those who were repatriated earlier today.

There are still about 40,000 Vietnamese in the camps in Hong Kong who are not qualified as refugees. As I have already mentioned, there is a serious risk of as many thousands arriving next year. That is a serious situation. We shall now be discussing with the Vietnamese Government how to ensure in future the swift and safe return of those who are not refugees. We will talk about ways in which we can help Vietnam to take people back at a faster rate—both volunteers and those who are repatriated. We will discuss how we can help those who return to be reintegrated into Vietnam. We shall talk, as we have to, about ways to screen new arrivals quickly as they reach Hong Kong so that those who are not refugees can be returned quickly and safely to Vietnam. Those who are refugees will, as at present, be allowed to await resettlement in the West. We shall work hard to find way to check the inflow of Vietnamese into Hong Kong next year, and seek international co-operation on this at the next meeting of the Geneva conference steering committee in January.

I know that there is intense interest in the House in this issue. I believe that my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord President intends to announce that there will be a day for debates on the Estimates on Tuesday 19 December. This will include a half-day debate on class II, vote 2, so far as it relates to the accommodation and repatriation of Vietnamese boat people. No further repatriations will take place before that debate.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): The Foreign Secretary said that the action took place this morning. He did not say that it was at 3 am.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): So what!

Mr. Kaufman: It is clear that the hon. Member likes the idea of the 3 o'clock knock by the police. The Government have adopted the policy of the 3 o'clock knock by the police.

Why was the operation carried out under cover of darkness and under the veil of a news blackout? If, as the Foreign Secretary says, force was ruled out, why were 150 riot police, equipped with riot helmets, shields and batons, needed to remove 51 people of whom 43 were children and women? Are those really the procedures that are used worldwide to which the right hon. Gentleman has just referred?

Who was responsible for organising and executing this operation? How many among those persons are now claiming that they need the right of abode in the United Kingdom to protect their human rights? If the Government are so satisfied with what they are doing, why did they not invite Amnesty International, the United Nations Commission for Human Rights or some other internationally recognised organisation to be present when the asylum seekers were removed?

The right hon. Gentleman referred to screening procedures. Why is there no independent process of appeal for screening procedures? Why are appellants not allowed to put their case personally? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that such shortcomings do not accord with the concept of the rule of law? If the Government object to free movement from Communist countries by what they call economic migrants, why were they a signatory to the Helsinki Final Act which embodied such principles in Europe? Why did the Government applaud the movement of such migrants from East to West Germany before the opening of the Berlin wall? What is the basis of the Government's discrimination between migrants from different Communist countries in different continents?

The right hon. Gentleman says that the Vietnamese Government have given assurances about the treatment of returning asylum seekers, but he is unconvincing about how he will reliably monitor such assurances. He says that the embassy in Hanoi will do the job, but he knows that the embassy in Hanoi is not equipped for that as it has only one Vietnamese speaker. How will it be carried out? In any case, if the right hon. Gentleman regards assurances by the Vietnamese Government as being so reliable, why does he deny such an admirable and trustworthy Government economic aid? Vietnam is one of only two countries to which the United Kingdom Government deny all bilateral economic development aid.

The right hon. Gentleman just said that he has had to adopt this solution, but the Government have always been determined on it. The Leader of the House, the former Foreign Secretary, said last night:

> "what is now happening was first foreshadowed in a statesment that I made in Hong Kong some 15 months ago. The policy has been repeatedly explained to the House".—[*Official Report*, 11 December 1989; Vol. 163 c. 782.]

The Government planned, decided upon and wanted that policy, and no rational person could accept the pretence that it has been forced upon them. Far from having no choice the Government have deliberately made the choice of bundling women and children into closed cars under the supervision of riot police, and taking them to an airport in the dead of night and under a news blackout.

The Prime Minister said a little while ago that she would impose conditions on whether to attend the forthcoming conference on human rights in Moscow. Bellowing Conservative Members do not care about human rights except when they are attacking certain Communist countries in Europe. The Prime Minister has shown herself to be completely unfit not only to attend any conference on human rights anywhere but even to utter those words.

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) began with the operation itself. The policy which it embodies, as he said later in his intervention, has been announced and argued through repeatedly in the House. There can be no possible surprise among any right hon. and hon. Gentlemen that it is being implemented, but we thought it right to carry it through in a way which reduced the risk of violence and force, and that was done.

The right hon. Gentleman talked about screening. Each applicant for asylum who claims to be a refugee is screened at a two-hour interview and has the right of appeal. That process is monitored by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. I recommend the right hon. Gentleman to read the report of the British Refugee Council, particularly what it says about screening. In case he doubts the validity of that report, it is signed by two of his most distinguished former colleagues who are respected in the House—Lord Ennals and Mr. Alf Dubs.

The right hon. Gentleman pretended that there was some discrimination. There is no discrimination. The crucial test tests who is a refugee. We apply the same test in the United Kingdom, as I know from my last job. The same test is being applied in Hong Kong. It is a test laid down not by us but by the United Nations in the 1951 convention. The test is whether an individual has a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. That is the United Nations test. We apply it in Britain and it is being applied in Hong Kong.

The right hon. Gentleman referred to assurances. So far as we and the United Nations can tell, the assurances given by the Vietnamese Government in respect of those who volunteered to go back, have been fully respected. But of course monitoring is important. I agree that it has to start with the embassy, and I am very keen to reinforce it as soon as possible. I am grateful to my right hon. Friend and to Lord Ennals for conducting that reinforcement. I hope that the new UNHCR and our own non-governmental organisations will join in that monitoring. It does not require them to approve the policy; it simply asks them to monitor whether the undertakings given are being fully respected.

The right hon. Gentleman asked about aid. We are giving some aid to Vietnam to help the people whom we are repatriating or who are volunteering to resettle in their communities. We are prepared to consider further aid, including perhaps through NGOs, but that will have to be negotiated as part of wider arrangements to repatriate boat people.

I listened when the right hon. Gentleman was asked this morning what his policy was. He announced a three-point plan. The first thing that a Labour Government would do is conduct proper screening, but there is proper screening, which I have just described and which is monitored by the UN and endorsed by his right hon. Friends. The second point in his great plan was that refugees would be settled in the West. They are being settled in the West, which is one of the main purposes of the international agreement that was reached last year and in which we are playing our part. Having announced the third part of his three point plan, he forgot what it was, and when he was pressed on what would be done for people who had been screened-out as refugees, he found no answer. He has shown, by his diffidence in putting forward alternatives, some understanding of the realities, but when pressed he has always dodged them—we cannot do so.

Sir Peter Blaker (Blackpool, South): Will my right hon. Friend accept my congratulations on having taken a courageous and correct decision on this very difficult problem? He will be aware that the population of Hong Kong is roughly one tenth of the population of the United Kingdom. If 400,000 boat people had landed illegally on the shores of this country as economic migrants from, say Romania, does he think that the Opposition might be singing a different tune?

Mr. Hurd: My right hon. Friend described the decision as courageous and correct, which is for the House to judge, but, as he will agree, it is an unwelcome one. I considered this, as did my right hon. Friend the Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major) and my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord President before him, in the hope of finding an easier way, but we were forced back—the right hon. Member for Gorton failed to realise this—on the

[Mr. Hurd]

realities to which my right hon. Friend referred. We come back to the essential distinction, which will become more and more important in the world as we proceed, between people who, quite understandably, want to move somewhere else to achieve a more agreeable life and those who are forced to do so by the well-founded fear of persecution. Those who blur that distinction do not understand its crucial importance to the successful handling of a series of intractable problems, of which at the moment this is the worst.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Does the Secretary of State accept that the feelings of the people in this country about what happened last night vary from unease to repugnance that a British Government should stoop to use a device that, under successive Governments, we have consistently condemned in others —the knock on the door in the middle of the night? His statement was evasive on that issue; he has not responded to questions on the point, but will he do so now? Will he explain why the Government rejected the proposal to use the empty Hong Kong island of Tai Au Chau as a more adequate resettlement facility pending international agreement or improvement of conditions in Vietnam? Will he be more forthcoming about exactly what aid he is offering to help to resettle these people?

Mr. Hurd: We are talking about the repatriation—many countries, including Britain and certainly the United States, do it—of people who are not refugees and who have no right of entry or settlement. In the circumstances of Hong Kong, it was clearly right to do that in a way that did not involve, or which reduced to the minimum, the risk of violence and force, which is what occurred. Is the right hon. Gentleman seriously suggesting that we should ask the people of Hong Kong to accept refugees on one of their islands, which has no facilities or services and is wholly unsuitable for the purposes that he described? If he, or the leader of his party, who has just returned from Hong Kong, are seriously suggesting that we should put that proposition to the people of Hong Kong who have endured a great deal precisely because they have been more open and responsive to the real problem than neighbouring countries, it shows how completely out of touch they are with reality.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): Does my right hon. Friend agree that there are many cases in the world where illegal immigrants who are not refugees and seek a better economic prospect are returned whence they came? For instance, large numbers of Mexicans are returned by the United States. Is it not true that Hong Kong last year returned over 50 illegal immigrants a day to China? Has my right hon. Friend heard any fuss from the Opposition about those situations? As I cannot remember any fuss, will he take little notice of what they say now, especially as they have no practicable alternative policy to offer us?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. He mentions a valid point which perhaps I should have included. For many years, Hong Kong under different Governments—including Labour Governments—has been pushing across the border between the New Territories and the People's Republic people who have entered illegally from China. The people of Hong Kong cannot understand why a distinction is drawn between that, which has been constantly happening, and the repatriation of the Vietnamese.

I failed to reply to the right hon. Member for Tweedale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) on the question of aid, although I gave an answer to the general point. The reintegration aid being made available for volunteers and for those repatriated last night is $620 per person which goes towards their transport inside Vietnam as well as food, medicines, domestic equipment, training, administration costs and tools. We are perfectly ready to consider expanding and developing that aid. The right hon. Gentleman knows the reasons why Vietnam has not qualified for international aid. It has been connected with the invasion of Cambodia by Vietnamese troops. However, they have to a large extent withdrawn. I regard this as an open question but it is a mistake to suppose that whatever is done about aid will persuade a villager living in the Red river delta to abandon his plans to go to Hong Kong unless and until it becomes clear that such a voyage is not, after a short stopover, a voyage to Vancouver or Australia. That is the illusion that has been fostered among those people. That illusion is damaging to them and we have to end it.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Is not one of the background factors the fact that Vietnam was so devastated in the war? It was drenched in napalm from end to end and poisoned with agent orange and then blockaded, and has been ever since, by the United States as a punishment for defeating the United States in the war. Should not the proper policy now be a massive aid programme from the West as repatriation for the injustices that that country has suffered? That would be a more honest policy for the Government.

Mr. Hurd: There is an argument for discussing in the international community the question of aid for Vietnam and how Vietnam is to be treated now that the bulk of its combat troops have withdrawn from Cambodia. The arguments which the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) advances are not likely to gain a great deal of ground with the United States.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): How many Vietnamese arriving at the shores or borders of Hong Kong have been refused entry and who has been responsible for meeting the cost of accommodating them? Further to the response that my right hon. Friend gave to my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling), can he tell us what representations he has received from the American Government, Her Majesty's Opposition and the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) about the return, over a number of years, of illegal immigrants from China into Hong Kong?

Mr. Hurd: On the first point, Hong Kong has not turned away people coming from Vietnam and in that respect, it has differed from some of the other neighbouring ports of call. It is precisely because Hong Kong has followed that policy that it has 57,000 boat people in camps. Her Majesty's Government have made a contribution, but a substantial burden has fallen on the people of Hong Kong.

On the second point, I am not aware of any representations having been made on the return of illegal immigrants across the border into the People's Republic. It is a practice which has been settled for many years. It occurred even when I served in Peking a very long time ago and it has not attracted particular comment or protest.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Will the Secretary of State tell us what consideration he has given to the position of unaccompanied minors and orphans who are currently in the camps in Hong Kong? Does he agree that if the same amount of effort were put into finding an international solution as into the defeatist approach of forcible repatriation, our country might avoid the stain that will be marked indelibly on its international reputation for generations to come, as people are repatriated to a country that has one of the most appalling human rights records in the world?

Mr. Hurd: There are unaccompanied children in the camps and it is hard to divine how they reached Hong Kong. The decision on their future must depend on where their families are. If their parents are back in Vietnam, I suggest that they should go back there, but if their families are resettled in the West, it is sensible that they should join their families in the West. That seems to be a common-sense approach. The hon. Gentleman's rhetoric is damaging because it falls short of the facts. There is a careful screening process to distinguish between those who are refugees and those who are not. Refugees should be accepted and resettled. If the hon. Gentleman and the Opposition parties are beginning to put forward the doctrine that anyone who wants to move from one country to another in search of a better life must, as of right, be accepted there in the cause of humanitarian principle, I can say only that it is a recipe for chaos and great unhappiness throughout the world.

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): Does my right hon. Friend accept that this is a sad day for some Conservative Members? Some of us have been very much involved in the matter for a considerable time and well understand the complications. However, there is nothing in my right hon. Friend's statement that deals with the basic problem. These migrants are not escaping from tyranny, but from abject poverty. Those of us who have seen them in Vietnam recognise that the fault lay partly with the Vietnamese Government and their policies, but the Vietnamese Government have now changed their policies and that is part of the reason for people leaving. The new system does not subsidise people in factories that produce goods that are not sold, so people have to leave the factories without a safety net. When the people have no hope, they take to the boats and unless we give the Vietnamese people hope by normalising relations and by pressing the United States to normalise relations with that country, by restoring bilateral and multilateral aid and by giving it access to the International Monetary Fund and the banks, we shall not stop the boat people. There will still be people leaving because when there is no hope, they will continue to leave and to seek somewhere else.

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is right. He has studied the problem with great care for a long time and he has visited Vietnam. He makes the accurate distinction, which has escaped the Opposition, between people fleeing from tyranny and migrants who wish to escape from poverty to what they believe is likely to be prosperity. As I have said already, there is a case for looking again at relationships. We have political and diplomatic relations with Hanoi and that is not in question, but there is a case for looking again at economic relations. As I have outlined, we are already building them up for those who are repatriated and who volunteer to return. I repeat to my hon. Friend, as I have in answer to earlier questions, that whatever is done about aid, the World bank or the relationship of Vietnam with the international community that will not in itself—and certainly not next year—deter people who are now planning to sail or to go along the south China coast to Hong Kong in the belief that the journey to Hong Kong is halfway to Australia or to Vancouver. We can argue through the remedies that my hon. Friend suggests, but they are not remedies for the immediate critical situation that we and the people of Hong Kong face.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): As some hon. Members have already said, is not the main problem that the United States still considers itself to be at war with Vietnam and that those who burned down Vietnam, or who acquiesced in that as we did, are unwilling to participate in its reconstruction? Does the Secretary of State recall an American Under-Secretary describing American policy towards Vietnam 10 years ago as being "to bleed Vietnam white"? Does he agree that until American policy changes, the flow of refugees will continue unabated? Will he tell the House what efforts we have made to persuade the United States Government or our allies in Europe to change their policy towards Vietnam and to participate in its reconstruction?

Mr. Hurd: I have answered that question two or three times already. I simply say to the hon. Gentleman, as I said to his hon. Friend the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton), that we shall not solve or improve the problem by resurrecting all the arguments about the war in Vietnam. It is over and Vietnamese troops are now out of Cambodia. There is a case for examining these points, as my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) suggests. However, I do not kid myself that by doing so, we shall solve the immediate grave problem.

Mr. Michael Heseltine (Henley): Will my right hon. Friend recognise that it is impossible to separate this issue from our responsibility to govern Hong Kong firmly and fairly until 1997 and that it is quite impossible to explain to the Chinese population in Hong Kong that we are putting their relatives back across the frontier with the mainland day after day yet allowing boat people from Vietnam to remain in Hong Kong?

I support my right hon. Friend in his very lonely and courageous decision. Does he recognise that the Government of mainland China have a substantial interest in the matter and that in trying to prevent increasing numbers of people coming from Vietnam there are interests working in conjunction with the Government of mainland China who wish to persuade the people of Hong Kong that they are as concerned about that colony's future as we are?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend and my position is not quite as lonely now that he is alongside. He is perfectly correct on his second point especially now that more of the recent inflow came along the south China

[Mr. Hurd]

coast rather than across the sea, so there is an interest and involvement for the Government of the People's Republic which we need to discuss with them.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The House knows that we have an important debate on war crimes to follow. Again, I shall have to limit questions to three more from each side and we shall then have to move on. The House knows that we shall have a debate about this matter next Tuesday.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): Is this situation not similar to the forcible repatriations that followed world war two in which people were simply left to their fate? What kind of people are we who are willing to sell individuals and families to the Vietnamese for $30 Hong Kong a head? The price of this betrayal is not 30 pieces of silver but $30 Hong Kong. Will the Secretary of State think again and act differently, in the name of humanity?

Mr. Hurd: In 1945, there was no screening or monitoring and no United Nations definition of a refugee. The hon. Gentleman's comparison falls flat.

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): As the unfortunate boat people are being sent back to a closed and totalitarian society, will my right hon. Friend say exactly how many independent British observers and British relief workers will now be able to move freely throughout Vietnam and to see exactly what happens to those whom we are, so unfortunately, sending back?

Mr. Hurd: I hope that it will be a considerable number. When I met the leaders of some of our non-governmental aid organisations a few weeks ago to discuss Cambodia, I asked and encouraged them to take part in the process of monitoring. As my hon. Friend knows, some of them are already deeply involved in Vietnam. I mentioned the part played by our embassy and the role played by a Member of this House and a Member of the other place. I should like to build up those activities. As soon as the new United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is properly in place, we shall encourage him to extend monitoring over and above what the UNHCR already does to include boat people repatriated last night and in future. I should like to build up the widest possible pattern of monitoring and that seems at present—so far as we can tell—to be acceptable to the Vietnamese Government.

Mr. Pat Wall (Bradford, North): Does the Foreign Secretary realise that the mass of the British population will consider the repatriation of men, women and children in the early hours of the morning to be an even greater obscenity than the condition of the camps, which some of us have seen? Are not the Government placing a false perspective on history by calling the Vietnamese boat people economic migrants? Does that not deny the whole lesson of history? This whole people is to be discriminated against once more, even under the terms of the United Nations charter. They had more bombs dropped on them in the American war in Vietnam than were dropped throughout the second world war. Their country has been left devastated, their lands poisoned and their children deformed. Does not that mean that we should take a realistic attitude to raising the necessary finance and ensuring that the rest of the world takes in the boat people and looks after them and that we give proper aid to the peoples of Vietnam?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman underestimates the commonsense of people in this country. Are the Opposition really intending to set out, as a matter of policy, that people who come to live in an unfortunate country—whatever its history—have the right to be received in another country that they think is somewhat more prosperous? If so, I hope that they will say so.

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest): Does my right hon. Friend accept that, far from being lonely in this matter, he enjoys the overwhelming support of those in the House and in the country who are prepared to look beyond an emotional knee-jerk reaction and accept that, however unpleasant the present process may be, it is an inevitable consequence of events that would otherwise result in absolute chaos? My right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) drew a comparison between the repatriation of the boat people and the repatriation to China that has been taking place daily for many years, and that is the comparison which should be drawn in the best interests of everyone in Britain.

Mr. Hurd: I can quite understand people in Britain who come new to the problem, and who have not had it drawn to their attention before, feeling dismayed. I have very much less sympathy for those who have studied the problem and lived with it for months—in some cases, years—but who still turn their back on the reality of it. I have very little sympathy for them.

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): The Foreign Secretary said that the effect of restoring aid would be small and delayed. Will he consider whether the further repatriation of refugees could be delayed until aid has had time to have a significant effect, with only new Vietnamese arrivals in Hong Kong being repatriated in the mean time?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman has made a constructive, although not wholly realistic, suggestion. Our key objective—and our urgent objective—is to prevent new arrivals. Because of the doctrine of first asylum, we do not have a system for turning people round quickly. We cannot act as the United States acts in the case of people coming from the Caribbean. That is one reason why I felt it essential to repatriate to show the people who might even now be planning to come in the spring, when the winds change and the season begins that it is not a happy voyage and will not lead them to resettlement in the West.

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): My right hon. Friend rightly emphasised again and again that we are not dealing only with the problem of the 40,000 who are there already. We are dealing with those who will follow. Does he accept that, as a result of our exchanges in the House today, he will have to explain that repeatedly to the Opposition parties, which take the simplistic view that if we solved the problem of the 40,000 there would be no more problems? But that figure could be 400,000 or 1 million if we do not take the proper action now.

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is on to the central point. Any scheme that simply resettled the 40,000 people in the camps who are likely to be screened out and classified as non-refugees would ensure that the camps refilled very quickly.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry that it has not been possible to call all the hon. Members who wished to participate, but I shall bear their claims in mind when we debate the matter next Tuesday.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I shall put together the Questions on the nine motions relating to draft statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft Electricity Supply Industry (Rateable Values) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft British Waterways Board (Rateable Values) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Railways (Rateable Values) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Water Undertakers (Rateable Values) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Docks and Harbours (Rateable Values) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Electricity Generators (Rateable Values) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Telecommunications Industry (Rateable Values) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft British Gas plc (Rateable Values) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Non-Domestic Rating (Transitional Period) (Appropriate Fraction) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

War Crimes

4.56 pm

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of the report of the War Crimes Inquiry; and endorses the need for legislation to permit the prosecution in this country, for acts of murder and manslaughter or culpable homicide committed as war crimes in Germany, or German-occupied territory, during the Second World War, of people who are now British citizens or resident here.

Mr. Speaker: I must tell the House that I have selected neither of the amendments on the Order Paper. Moreover, a very large number of right hon. and hon. Members have written in seeking to participate in the debate. I urge them all, if they are called, to be brief.

Sir Bernard Braine: In October 1986 the Simon Wiesenthal Centre wrote to the Prime Minister with a list of 17 alleged Nazi war criminals said to be living in this country. Scottish Television made a programme on the subject at about the same time and obtained from the Soviet Union a further list of 34 suspects believed to be living here. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, who was then Home Secretary, examined the allegations and concluded that 10 of the 17 names on the Wiesenthal Centre list and seven of the 34 names on the Scottish Television list might be alive in this country.

In February 1988 my right hon. Friend announced that Sir Thomas Hetherington, the former Director of Public Prosecutions, and Mr. William Chalmers, the former Crown Agent for Scotland, would prepare a detailed report. My right hon. Friend presented their report to Parliament on 24 July. It recommended that British criminal law should be changed to make possible the prosecution of a number of individuals for Nazi war crimes.

Details of those investigated were quite rightly placed in an unpublished annex to the main report, which stated that they revealed

"horrific instances of mass murder."

The investigations related specifically to three individuals against whom there is sufficient evidence to warrant immediate prosecution; three cases in which detailed investigation has taken place but more is required; 75 cases in which detailed investigation is still needed; and 46 further cases in which suspects are so far untraced—a possible total of 124 cases.

At present, under our law, murder and manslaughter committed during the second world war anywhere in the world can be prosecuted in British courts only if the person who committed the alleged offence was a British citizen or resident here when the crime was committed. The inquiry recommends that the law be changed so that persons who now live in Britain may be prosecuted for murder or manslaughter committed as a violation of the laws and customs of war in Germany or German-occupied territory during the second world war. The effect of that change is that a criminal law as already applied to those who were British citizens at the time of the alleged murders would apply equally to persons who later acquired British citizenship or residence. This is simply to recognise an obvious truth: that the acquisition of British citizenship confers both privileges and responsibilities.

In common with all other western countries, the British legal system has a proud tradition of resistance to the

[Sir Bernard Braine]

retrospective introduction of offences into our criminal law. The Hetherington-Chalmers report fully endorses that tradition. Under its proposals, no new offences will be created. The changes will be retrospective only in so far as those who were not British citizens or residents at the time will now be liable to face charges that could always have been made against British citizens.

Not only were such crimes against our domestic law but they were against international law at the time. They were crimes against the accepted and recognised law of all civilised nations. What is more, current international conventions to which Britain is party explicitly permit such legislation. It might be thought unusual that, if the proposed legislation is enacted, British courts will be required to try individuals for crimes committed overseas. Not so. When an offence is considered sufficiently serious, British courts already have criminal jurisdiction over persons who did not have British citizenship or residence at the time of the offence. Our courts have been granted extraterritorial jurisdiction relating to hijacking, terrorism and the practice of torture. The inquiry's recommendations in respect of the rules of evidence are all in line with our current practices.

The Criminal Justice Act 1988 provided for the use of live video links in England and Wales. The recommended change would bring Scots law into line with the 1988 Act. The inquiry recommends that the recorded statements of persons now dead should be admissible as evidence. That requires no new legislation. As a guarantee of fairness, the courts have wide powers to determine whether such statements should be admitted as evidence.

It is important to recognise that, if we approve legislation on the lines recommended, Britain will not be standing alone. Indeed, we are the last of the allied powers engaged in the second world war to bring war criminals to justice. Legislation to allow for the retroactive punishment of Nazi criminals has recently been sponsored by the Governments of two countries whose legal and constitutional systems are based upon our own—Canada and Australia. Both have enacted war crimes legislation. Both have acted on recommendations from commissions of inquiry which held that such measures were in accordance with their own constitutions and with international law. In Canada, legislation was passed in September 1987, and proceedings against alleged war criminals are now under way. In Australia, the Government-commissioned Menzies review reported to the Attorney-General in November 1986 with detailed allegations against 70 persons whose former activities warranted further investigation.

Mr. John Gorst (Hendon, North): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Sir Bernard Braine: I would rather not give way. I listened carefully to what Mr. Speaker said about the large number of hon. Members who wish to contribute to our debate. If I give way once, I shall have to give way on another occasion. I hope that my hon. Friend will understand.

Appropriate legislation was introduced in Australia in December 1988, and trials are expected to start quite soon. The United States changed its immigration law 10 years ago so that Nazi criminals could be stripped of their citizenship and deported. In 1980, the United States Justice Department set up the Office of Special Investigations which, so far, has successfully proceeded against about 30 persons. In western Europe, France, Holland and West Germany continue to mount investigations and prosecutions.

Of course, I recognise that this grave issue has given rise to moral doubts and reservations, and that is only right —it is only human. First, there are those who say, "It happened a long time ago." To them I reply that there is no period of limitation in English or Scots law for the prosecution of murder or manslaughter. Indeed, various United Nations and European conventions require states not to impose statutes of limitation on the prosecution of war crimes. Police and prosecutors investigate and prosecute murder committed in Britain, however long ago such crimes were committed. Indeed, the report refers to an alleged domestic murder committed 27 years ago. Certainly public opinion in this country would be outraged if the real perpetrators of the Guildford bombing were traced but were then released because the offence was committed some 15 years ago.

Secondly, there are those who, I am sorry to say, have not read the report but who tell me, "Surely after such a lapse of time there is insufficient evidence." To them I reply that Sir Thomas and Mr. Chalmers were appointed to their task by the Home Secretary precisely because of their experience as experienced and much-respected prosecutors. They are used to applying a strict test of the evidence in a case before recommending it for prosecution—that there must be a greater than 50 per cent. chance of conviction. It was on that basis that they found sufficient evidence of murder and manslaughter against a number of persons. However, as is the norm with criminal legislation, my supporters and I ask hon. Members to consider only enabling legislation. Whether or not prosecutions go ahead is not a matter for us. It will be for the current Director of Public Prosecutions or the Crown Agent.

Thirdly, there are those who say, "Such trials run counter to the Christian concept of mercy." Not so. The concepts of justice and mercy run alongside, not against, each other in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. A former Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Coggan, went right to the heart of the matter in his letter to *The Times* in March 1987, when he wrote:

> "Justice demands that society takes note of wrongs committed, and does so in such a way as to ensure, in so far as possible, that such atrocities do not occur again . . . It is hardly for one who has not suffered at the hands of the Nazis to hint at which way the scales should be tilted."

Fourthly, it may be argued that it would be wrong to prosecute old men. There is no question of putting frail old men in the dock. In any criminal case in this country, if a defendant is unfit to mount a proper defence, it is the normal practice not to proceed.

Fifthly, some argue, "Terrible things happen in war. Why single out these particular acts?" The answer is that these were not crimes committed in the heat of battle. They are cases of mass murder of non-combatants—the slaughter of whole communities and of women and children. Such murders were premeditated—planned. I hope that the House will forgive me for mentioning one case which has been in my heart and mind ever since I saw people coming out of concentration camps at the end of the war. In 1942, the Nazi leadership met at the infamous Wannsee conference. It was resolved there that mass murder by carbon monoxide gas was too costly and laborious and that instead gas chambers would be built —it would be cheaper and quicker. Such calculating cold-blooded criminality had nothing to do with savagery in the heat of battle. Let me be clear about the sort of crime that I and my supporters are talking about.

On 15 April 1946, during the Nuremberg tribunal, the chief witness for the defendant, Ernst Kaltenbrunner, was called to the stand. His name was Rudolph Hoess. From 1940 to 1943 Hoess was the commandant of Auschwitz, where he presided over 2·5 million planned deaths. While in the witness box, his signed affidavit was read out in open court. It stated:

> "The Final Solution of the Jewish Question meant the complete extermination of all Jews in Europe. I was ordered to establish extermination facilities at Auschwitz in June 1941.
>
> I visited Treblinka to find out how they carried out their exterminations. The camp commandant told me that he had liquidated 80,000 in the course of one half-year. He was principally concerned with liquidating all the Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto. He used monoxide gas, and I did not think that his methods were very efficient.
>
> So when I set up the extermination building at Auschwitz, I used Zyklon B, which was crystallised prussic acid that we dropped into the death chamber from a small opening.
>
> It took from 3 to 15 minutes to kill the people in the death chamber, depending upon climatic conditions. We knew when the people were dead because their screaming stopped.
>
> We usually waited about half-an-hour before we opened the doors and removed the bodies. After the bodies were removed, our special commandos took off the rings and extracted the gold from the teeth of their corpses."

In 1943, along with the United States of America, Canada and the USSR, Britain signed the Moscow declaration, committing itself to the pursuit of Nazi war criminals. Britain gave this solemn undertaking:

> "Most assuredly, the Allied Powers will pursue them to the uttermost ends of the earth and deliver them to their accusers in order that justice may be done."

As the Hetherington-Chalmers report reminds us, Britain has never taken a decision not to prosecute war criminals. The question that we must now resolve is, "Why should we act now?" There are two reasons. First, mass murders of the kind that I have described are as abhorrent to the British people now as they were on the day and at the place they were committed. Secondly, we must make it clear before the entire world that the proud privilege of British citizenship cannot and must never be extended to vile criminals.

5.12 pm

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): It was a privilege to listen to the Father of the House, the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), who heads the list of the sponsors of early-day motion 18. He is a fellow member of the all-party group on war crimes, of which I am chairman. It would put the group into context if I said that for three years we have run an office, raised money and run a conference. We have hosted visits from the United States of America, Canada and Australia to find out what is going on in those countries and what changes have been made in their laws. We have also commissioned a report on the legal aspects of these cases in advance of the report that we are, effectively, debating today. In addition, we gave evidence to the inquiry. I hope that it has proved to be a model of an all-party group of hon. Members, and not a pressure group, although wishing to pressure the Government. I do not commit all of us in the group to having the same views about what should happen.

In a sense, the inquiry took over from us because we had reached the limit of what an all-party group could do. It was right that under a previous Home Secretary the Government set up the Hetherington-Chalmers inquiry, which issued a report, which is the core of our debate. It was right that two 'Law Officers', one of Scotland and one of England and Wales, should carry out the inquiry because one of the aims that we could not achieve, with all the evidence put to us, was to consider the extent of the problem in this country, the numbers of people involved in this country and the number of those against whom allegations had been made who could be brought before the courts. It is the job of the Director of Public Prosecutions to make such decisions on a daily basis, working with the Attorney-General.

People coming from America, Australia and Canada found it strange that there was no question of setting up a special inquiry to investigate people against whom allegations had been made because only the police in this country can carry out investigations in the face of allegations and only then if the law has been broken. As things are at the moment, if I had carried out those crimes in middle and eastern Europe, I could be brought before the courts because I was born and bred in this country. However, if the person living next door to me had carried out those crimes, come here as a displaced person, settled here and taken out British citizenship, that person could not be brought before the courts because despite having become a British citizen—and some have—that person is not in the same position as somebody who was born here. One thing that has motivated me is that if one becomes a British citizen, one must accept that there are responsibilities and rights as well as advantages in coming to this country——

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding) *rose*——

Mr. Rees: No, I should rather not give way.

I turn now to the motion and remind the House of what we are debating. We are asking the House to take note of the war crimes inquiry and to endorse

> "the need for legislation . . . for acts of murder and manslaughter or culpable homicide committed as war crimes in Germany, or German-occupied territory, during the Second World War, of people who are now British citizens or resident here."

That is what we are debating today in this authorising debate.

As I go around the country, I am often asked, "What is a war crime?" I must point out that the term "war crime" does not refer to acts committed in the course of war because most of the crimes that we are talking about had nothing to do with the German war effort. Indeed, some occurred before the second world war began and they did not necessarily arise in the period 1939-45. Most of the crimes were perpetrated on the ground of the victims' race, religion or belief. Knowing that I served in the Royal Air Force, younger people have asked me when I have argued this case, "What about the bombing of Dresden when 130,000 people were killed in one night?" It might have been 120,000—it does not matter very much to the argument. When I visit Dortmund, which is paired with my city of Leeds, and where we killed 2,000 people per night over a period as part of the war, I sometimes find it

[Mr. Rees]

difficult to define where a war crime begins and ends. However, when I read about the sort of thing that we are discussing, when in the cool of the night 2,000 people were killed in the way that they were, I know that that is a war crime——

Mr. Quentin Davies *rose*——

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): What about the Cossacks?

Mr. Rees: There are those who say, "What good will it do to bring it all back again now?" To those who have doubts and to the younger people who knew not, I say simply that if the Director of Public Prosecutions says so, those who committed such crimes should be brought before the courts. I do not particularly want to lock them up or to see them in show trials, but I believe that the world should know that such things will never be forgotten and they should be brought before——

Mr. Quentin Davies *rose*——

Mr. Rees: I would rather not give way.

The report said, in relation to the evidence, that there were unpublished findings of horrific instances of massacres; that there were three individuals against whom there was sufficient evidence to warrant immediate prosecution; that in three cases detailed investigation had taken place but more was required; that in 75 cases detailed investigation was needed; and that in 46 further cases suspects were still untraced. The words that moved me most were:

> "The crimes committed are so monstrous that they cannot be condoned."

Mr. Quentin Davies: What crimes?

Mr. Rees: The hon. Gentleman should have done us the courtesy of reading the report, which said that their prosecution could act as a deterrent in future wars. To take no action would taint the United Kingdom with the slur of being a haven for war criminals. The question of evidence has been raised on a number of occasions and I agree that it will need to be examined carefully when the Bill following the debate is brought before the House. In a speech at a conference which we organised, Sir Thomas Hetherington said:

> "If Parliament does legislate, if these cases do come to the DPP or Crown Agent, in each case there will be two main tests to be applied before a decision about prosecution will be taken. First of all, the adequacy of the evidence will be tested to make sure there is, as we believe, a realistic prospect of conviction in the light of the witnesses who are then available. The second main test, which is now always applied before the decision to prosecute is affirmed is whether it would be in the public interest. So not only could you prosecute, but should you prosecute. And in the public interest element, amongst those matters to be considered will be: fairness to the defendant; age of the defendant; infirmity of the defendant; and all the other matters that are taken into account."

In other words, the matters that are of concern to hon. Members will be dealt with.

It is asked whether Soviet-source evidence is reliable. It has been brought to our notice that documents and witnesses from the Soviet Union and other Eastern bloc countries are likely to be relevant, in the experience of other western countries. That was put to us by Americans, and of all nations, the citizens of that country would be likely to question evidence from the Soviet Union.

In the experience of other western countries that have proceeded against alleged Nazi war criminals, evidence produced by Soviet citizens or Soviet authorities has proved consistently reliable. Access to Soviet-source evidence is given to all parties in proceedings.

The Hetherington-Chalmers report found Soviet-source documents authentic and witnesses credible, and said:

> "Expert testimony in court is recommended as the best means of testing the authenticity of documents as material evidence."

I suggest that the main points of the report appear in the concluding summary where it says:

> "In our opinion, there is sufficient evidence to support criminal proceedings for murder against some persons living in the United Kingdom . . . and further investigations may disclose the necessary evidence against other such persons . . . The cases we have investigated disclose horrific instances of mass murders, and we do not consider that the lapse of time since the offences were committed, or the age of the offenders, provide sufficient reason for taking no action in such cases. We therefore recommend that some action should be taken in each case in which the evidence is adequate."

That evidence came not from politicians but from the Hetherington-Chalmers report.

Mr. Edward Heath (Old Bexley and Sidcup): Will the right hon. Gentleman read on?

Mr. Rees: Willingly:

> "In paragraph 9.18 we describe possible courses of action. We do not recommend deprivation of citizenship and deportation".

That is the point that I assume the right hon. Gentleman has in mind. It continues:

> "The remaining possibilities are prosecution and extradition."

I had not intended to follow the line of extradition. I remember from my days as Home Secretary that extradition did not necessarily avoid going to court. If the Home Secretary of the day orders extradition and if an extradition treaty is available—and in this case there is not—the person concerned can elect to go before the Court of Appeal, so that the question of trial is not avoided.

I can say, from my experience of a small part of Europe about which we have been reading following a recent court case, that one cannot but recall the chaos of the ghastly effects of the break up of society in the Balkans area which led to a lack of screening and large numbers of displaced people coming to this country. Many of them came to the mining village in which I was born. They have played a major part in the social life of the village, and they are good people. Nothing in my argument is concerned with the people from the Baltic or the Balkans or from that area, where the feelings and, in many instances, the hatred of nationalism arise to a great degree. We are not talking of a large number of people.

At this time, when the icecap of Stalinist Europe is cracking, it seems curious that we should be talking about a part of the world where there is little tradition of democracy but which is full of feelings of nationalism that have caused problems over the years, and we now know what happened during the war years.

We cannot forget other matters because of that. We must deal with those who inveigled their way into this country and who did not tell the truth about their past activities. I hope that the House will authorise the

Government to provide the necessary legislation. I wonder what sort of majority will be required today so that the Government will act, and I believe that they have acted honourably all the way through.

I hope that we can have the necessary special procedure for dealing with the Bill that would come forward. It would be appropriate to take evidence in Committee upstairs rather than deal with it as a party political measure. There are ways of carrying on the tradition that we in the all-party group have built up over the last three years. Let matters continue in that way. This is a special problem and I hope that we will use special measures to deal with it in the House. Accordingly, I hope that hon. Members will vote for the motion.

5.27 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Waddington): When the report of the war crimes inquiry was published, my right hon. Friend the former Home Secretary promised a debate, and that is why we are here today.

The events which led to the setting up of the inquiry are well known. My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) referred to the letter addressed to the Prime Minister by Rabbi Marvin Hier of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre and the grave allegations contained therein. The whole House will agree that those allegations had to be investigated.

My right hon. Friend the former Home Secretary therefore appointed Sir Thomas Hetherington, the former Director of Public Prosecutions, and his Scottish counterpart, Mr. William Chalmers, to carry out the task. The whole House would like me to thank them both for the dedicated and thorough way in which they approached the work and the clarity of the report they produced.

Sir Thomas and Mr. Chalmers set about following up no fewer than 301 allegations that had been made to them. Some of those were detailed and specific. Others were extremely vague. But it proved possible to investigate seven cases in detail. In four of them, they considered that the evidence available was sufficient to mount a prosecution. One of the four people concerned has since died. They recommended additional work on the three other cases and they identified 75 others in which further investigation would be warranted. They also recommended that attempts should be made to trace a further 46.

In the light of the apparently strong evidence of guilt which the authors had uncovered in at least some of the cases, the inquiry considered possible courses of action that might be taken to bring the alleged offenders to justice. The inquiry ruled out the possibility of depriving the individuals concerned of their citizenship and deporting them. Any attempts at deportation were certain to be resisted strenuously through the immigration appeals system and the courts, and would probably be frustrated. Extradition to the place where the offence was committed —in each of the cases examined in detail, now part of the territory of the Soviet Union—was also rejected. The inquiry noted the apparent progress towards greater democracy and openness that had recently been made in the Soviet Union, but concluded that despite these changes there must still be doubts whether the legal safeguards that would be the right of anyone put on trial in this country would be available in the Soviet Union. The inquiry therefore recommended that our law should be changed to give British courts jurisdiction over acts of murder and manslaughter committed as war crimes—that is to say, as violations of the laws and customs of war—during the second world war in Germany or German-occupied territory by people now resident here.

In last week's debate in another place, one of the main points of concern was whether the implementation of these recommendations would amount to retrospective legislation. There are clearly two views about this, but the inquiry suggests that retrospectivity does not arise and points out that had these crimes been committed by British citizens our courts would have had jurisdiction over them. Their proposal was simply to extend that jurisdiction to those who were not British citizens or residents at the time but are now.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): How is German-occupied territory defined? Germany and her allies—Italy, Romania and Hungary, for instance—occupied a great deal of territory, for example Russian territory, sometimes with German officers attached and sometimes without. There were German bases in Italy when Italy was not German-occupied. How is that to be defined in law?

Mr. Waddington: It is certain that the Baltic states, Byelorussia and the Ukraine were German-occupied at the time of the alleged offences.

Mr. Quentin Davies: On that specific point, does my right hon. and learned Friend see any rhyme or reason in the jurisdiction which it is proposed to take under the proposal being confined to acts committed in German-occupied countries but not to crimes committed on territory occupied by other powers, for example, the Soviet Union? Does not the logic of that lead us into the absurdity that if the Katyn massacre had been committed by Germans, as the Soviet Union used to maintain but which we now know is nonsense——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. The hon. Member should not make a speech during an intervention.

Mr. Waddington: There is not the slightest evidence that any foreigner resident in Britain could have been responsible for the Katyn massacre. The report calls for jurisdiction to be given to the British courts to try people whom it says have been identified as responsible for war crimes in particular parts of the world. One must address one's mind to the circumstances identified in the report.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Unquestionably, many people in this country were responsible after 1945 for sending people back at bayonet point to the other side of the divide to be butchered. Will legislation be introduced for those who, no doubt, will claim that they were acting under orders—one recently did—when they sent back thousands of men, women and children to be massacred in their own sight? Is that to be a war crime?

Mr. Waddington: I do not concede for one moment that those people were guilty of war crimes but, if they were guilty, they would be triable here because they are British citizens. My hon. and learned Friend's point does not arise.

It is certain that the acts alleged were crimes under the law of this country and under international law at the time

[Mr. Waddington]

when they were committed. It is equally certain that no one who committed the acts described could have imagined for one moment that what he was doing was not a crime.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): My right hon. and learned Friend will be aware that Mr. Winston Churchill, as he then was, was the main moving force behind the Nuremberg war crimes trials. He will also be aware that in September 1946, 43 years ago, Churchill said:

> "There must be an end to retribution. We must turn our backs on the horrors of the past and look to the future."

If that was true 43 years ago, surely it is true now.

Mr. Waddington: After that, the decision was made not to proceed with war crimes trials in the British-occupied zone. We are not talking about that. No decision was ever made by a British Government that there should be an end to all war crimes trials, least of all that there should be an exemption from prosecution for all time for people resident in this country who had been proved guilty of war crimes.

I repeat that it is absolutely certain that no one who committed the acts described could have imagined for one moment that what he was doing was not a crime. This is not a proposal to criminalise actions that were not criminal at the time. It is a proposal to give our courts power to try here actions which were undeniably criminal and which the perpetrators must have known were wicked and criminal.

Mr. Gorst: Before my right hon. and learned Friend leaves that point, may I draw his attention to page 55 of the report in which the authors set out clearly that there is a precedent for us in this country to try war criminals who have never been tried within the United Kingdom, because we extended our jurisdiction by the royal warrant of June 1945. That enabled us to try war criminals. We did so and were not fettered by the question of which territory they should be tried in.

Mr. Waddington: I take the point made in the report. I was merely meeting the argument that to do what is proposed would be offensive as retrospective legislation.

The inquiry also made a number of related proposals about the practical and procedural steps that might have to be taken before any trials could take place. They were concerned in particular with the problems posed by the need to take evidence from elderly people living abroad. Their principal recommendation was that such witnesses should be able to give evidence through a live television link, legislative provision for which exists already for trials in England and Wales under the powers in the Criminal Justice Act 1988. They also advocated the extension to war crimes trials of the procedure for bypassing committal proceedings, already available in serious fraud cases. That in itself would require legislation.

In last week's debate many noble Lords made clear their view that no action should be taken on the Hetherington report. Those who hold to that view have no wish to blot out the memory of the terrible atrocities that occurred. That would be quite impossible. Rather, their doubts about proceeding centre on the length of time that has elapsed since the end of the war. There is an understandable feeling that time may have gone some way towards healing some of the wounds and pain.

More importantly, it is argued that those who witnessed these terrible events are, in many cases, dead or very elderly. No one doubts that some who suffered from these dreadful events yet survived will go to their graves with the full horror of them still printed vividly and indelibly on their minds. One has to face the fact that others might have great difficulty identifying accurately those involved. There are also, no doubt, some colleagues who feel that it would be impossible to ensure that the evidence of witnesses abroad was open to fair challenge by the defence, even if that evidence was given via a television link. Other hon. Members may judge that, in all the circumstances and after the passage of such a long time, it would be impossible for anyone accused to gather evidence and witnesses in his defence.

I respect the views of those who see insurmountable difficulties in the way of fair trial. I understand the view, expressed in another place, that the substantial sums that would be incurred in implementing the report would be better spent on other things. I also appreciate why some feel that putting on trial elderly men who have lived in this country peacefully for nearly 45 years is distasteful and would serve little purpose. Nothing we do now, they say, can ever make amends for what happened in the last war, and holding war crimes trials might even risk rekindling old prejudices. That is one side of the case, but there are powerful arguments the other way.

First, there is the dreadful magnitude of the events that we are discussing. We are not talking of excesses or cruelty by soldiers on soldiers carried out in the heat of battle. We are talking about premeditated acts of cold-blooded mass murder perpetrated upon defenceless civilians. Some, therefore, will argue that justice demands action. Some will say that time may have passed, but with crimes as terrible as these it should never be too late to prosecute, and that we have a duty to the memory of those who suffered and those who continue to suffer from the physical and mental wounds inflicted upon them to bring the guilty to justice.

Each one of us is entitled to his view, and each Member of the House and each member of the Government will make up his mind without advice from anybody. The House, however, would expect me to state my personal view, having studied the issue carefully. It is this. Nobody would have chosen to address these issues so long after the event. It is so long since the war, and the instinctive wish of most of us is to get on with our lives in peace and not to rake over the past, let alone the pasts of men who have lived peacefully in this country since before some hon. Members were even born. But sometimes one is brought face to face with facts that cannot be buried and I do not believe that the Hetherington report can just be interred. The terrible stories revealed in its pages and the evidence of foul deeds that is presented cannot just be put aside or ignored.

I see all the difficulties. Difficulties might be involved in presenting to a jury compelling evidence of the guilt of any individual so long after the event. There are problems involved in securing proper safeguards for an accused person. But evidence has now been put before us that people in our midst committed war crimes. It has been pointed out to us that such people would now be subject to the jurisdiction of this land, had they been British citizens at the time, and that they now escape from such jurisdiction only because they were not then subjects of the Crown. In the light of that, and despite all the difficulties, I cannot believe that we should now fail to give jurisdiction to our courts so that, if the independent prosecution authorities so decide, the issues of guilt or innocence can be properly determined.

Although I have offered my view on the issue before us, I must stress again that the Government have not yet formed an opinion on whether we should legislate to implement the inquiry's recommendations. I have listened with care to what has already been said, and will pay equal care to the views that will be expressed in the rest of the debate. In the light of those views and of the views expressed in another place, the Government will decide whether a Bill on the lines proposed by the inquiry would be likely to command the general support of Parliament.

5.46 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): No topic on which I have spoken during my 25 years in this House has raised so many doubts in my mind as the subject which we discuss today. Tonight my hon. Friends will vote according to their conscience and I shall do the same. I do not propose to offer the House any advice. I simply set out my instincts and judgments, and describe the conclusion to which they have led me.

The motion before us refers to "War Crimes"—the title of the Hetherington-Chalmers report, on which most of what we say depends. I wish that we were discussing war crimes in general. That would resolve at least part of my dilemma. In truth we are discussing war criminals or, to put it more properly, alleged war criminals. Indeed, the Home Secretary was explicit. He said that we were considering legislation to try people resident in the United Kingdom.

We are debating the Hetherington-Chalmers recommendations. That is the purpose of the debate promised by the Home Secretary on 24 July. The opening paragraph of that report makes it clear that it is primarily concerned with 10 alleged war criminals, whose names appear on the list supplied by the Wiesenthal Centre and seven from a list drawn up by the Soviet Union and broadcast on Scottish television. The final paragraph of the report is even more explicit:

> "Given the ages of the suspects and the witnesses, we consider that any proposed legislation should be introduced and brought into force as quickly as possible."

I am deeply uneasy about hurrying legislation through the House in the hope of convicting known individuals.

New legislation aimed at the prosecution of known suspects is a much more dubious proposition than law designed to prohibit a specific form of conduct. Since some of the suspects have been named in newspapers and on television, it may even be impossible for them to obtain a fair trial. The courts may not allow such prosecutions to proceed.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: No, it is much better if, in common with others who have spoken, I make my speech and give others the maximum opportunity to do the same.

In any event, as a matter of principle it would be much better to introduce general legislation, ideally in the terms of the Geneva convention of 1949, which made possible the prosecution of criminals from any war who take refuge in the United Kingdom and are protected by some anomaly of jurisdiction. I hope that even now the Government have not ruled out that possibility.

I shall discuss my dilemma and tell the House the conclusion to which it leads me by considering the nature of the suspects, the people that we are debating. Those suspects share three characteristics. First, it is alleged that they committed terrible crimes almost 50 years ago. Secondly, if the allegations are true, they committed those crimes at a time and in a place which excludes them from the jurisdiction of British courts. Thirdly, even if the jurisdiction of our courts is extended to cover the alleged crimes, some changes in the rules of evidence may be necessary in order to secure conviction.

I want to discuss the implications of each of those aspects of my dilemma, and the first is the propriety of initiating prosecutions for crimes that were committed almost half a century ago. The question has two aspects, the first of which is what effect delayed prosecutions will have on society in general and, more important, whether it is right in itself not only to prosecute men who are suspected of committing crimes so long ago but to change the law in order to do so.

Prosecution and punishment have many purposes such as the deterrence of other potential criminals, the reformation of those guilty of crime, protection against repetition of the offence, retribution and the demonstration of revulsion which society feels towards both the crime and the criminal. Plainly, not all those objectives will be achieved by the prosecutions that we are considering. Despite what was said so movingly in the House of Lords by the Chief Rabbi, I do not think that the idea of deterrence is remotely appropriate in this case. In any event, if that were our primary objective we would be promoting general legislation against all war crimes. Plainly, the people reported to the Government as fugitive criminals are wholly inappropriate to any process of rehabilitation. It is inconceivable that such people need to be locked away to prevent them from repeating their offences.

Two possible justifications for taking action remain. The first is retribution, which to me is the least acceptable reason for judicial punishment. Therefore, I am left with only one possible reason for us to proceed—the demonstration of society's continued abhorrence of what these men are alleged to have done.

In what I shall describe as normal cases—even murder —it is inappropriate after 50 years to change the law to allow suspects to be charged, even to demonstrate abhorrence. However, we are discussing what the Hetherington—Chalmers report describes as

> "Crimes so monstrous that they cannot be condoned."

I know of no one who seeks to condone them, but the House and Parliament have to go a step further. We have to demonstrate our abiding revulsion of what amounted to carefully planned and clinically executed genocide, no matter how long a period has elapsed between the commission of that offence and the trial of those whom, it is claimed, were responsible for it.

For that reason I regard it right, at least in principle, to proceed towards prosecutions, although I look with foreboding upon the by-products of that decision. A section of the British press will deal with any resulting trials in the prurient fashion that characterised their coverage of the capital punishment debate five years ago. As is so often the case, the excesses of some of our newspapers are the price we have to pay for a free society. Despite that foreboding, I am in favour of proceeding

[Mr. Hattersley]

towards prosecutions as long as that is possible within the accepted rules of law and the conventions of a democratic society.

That leads me to the conclusion that the prosecutions must take place within the United Kingdom. I could not support legislation that resulted in the deportation of the alleged offenders to countries where, in the words of the report,

> "the system of justice is not comparable with that in this country".

In any case I would never vote for the deportation or extradition of those accused of murder—even mass murder—to a country that retains the death penalty. If we are to prosecute, we must prosecute here. We cannot discreetly turn away and ship these old men somewhere abroad.

I know that the principle that I support requires retrospective changes to the jurisdiction of British courts. However, as we have been told, the individuals concerned would have been triable in Britain had they been citizens when the alleged offences were committed rather than foreign nationals who subsequently acquired British citizenship. I might be prepared to argue that acquisition of a new nationality should provide immunity from some prosecutions, but mass murder would not be one of them.

The 1957 Geneva convention implies that war crimes are offences over which it is suitable for British courts to exercise jurisdiction regardless of the nationalities of the perpetrators or the victims or the country in which the alleged offence took place. I am prepared to support the retrospective extension of jurisdiction in order to demonstrate the abiding national sense of revulsion.

That leaves me with one final question: is it possible to prosecute these alleged criminals with any prospect of success within the present rules of evidence? There is much in the Hetherington report which implies or suggests that there is not. I am certainly opposed to show trials, so that if there is no hope of conviction, I am against the matter proceeding. However, I am even more strongly opposed to the matter proceeding if its progress depends on changing for this category of offence the way in which our courts behave.

It is that final question that leads me to fear that many of the allegations against these men, admittedly carefully documented, are increasingly taken as proof of their guilt and that only the formalities of proof are now thought to be necessary. Of course, I do not accuse the Hetherington-Chalmers inquiry of holding such opinions, but the report contains statements about evidence which raise the fundamental question about whether it is possible to proceed in an acceptable fashion. Paragraph 9.39 deals with witnesses who are now dead. It says:

> "It would undoubtedly be helpful if . . . statements, taken from witnesses who have subsequently died, could be admissible in the British courts."

The question that arises is "helpful to whom?" The only answer consistent with the context is that it would be helpful to those who wish to obtain a conviction. That is a bad basis on which to make new laws.

Mr. Peter Archer (Warley, West): Does my right hon. Friend recognise that this would not require any change in the law? The Criminal Justice Act 1988 has the required provision.

Mr. Hattersley: In moving the motion the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) made exactly that point. I am loth to argue with a lawyer as distinguished and experienced as my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer), but as I go through the section of the Hetherington report from which I have already quoted, and from which I shall quote again as lucidly as I can, I find time after time the suggestion that changes in the law are necessary. If that is not the case, nobody will be happier than I. I repeat that I think that the prosecution should go ahead.

I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West will speak in the debate. Perhaps if he does so he will examine the sections of the report that deal with changes in the rules of evidence that the report recommends in order to deal with these specific cases.

Paragraph 9.34 recommends that the provision in the 1988 Act to allow witnesses to give evidence by television link be extended—for this particular—to Scotland. Paragraph 9.37, which deals with video and audio recordings, concludes:

> "if it is thought necessary to introduce new legislation to ensure the admissibility of such recordings, we so recommend."

The next paragraph concerns evidence on commission, and expresses doubts about whether such evidence—as it would probably be taken in the absence of the accused—would be acceptable in court. It goes on to say, however, that the process has something to commend it, and proposes that it be applied in Scotland and considered for use in the English courts, with the necessary adjustments. I must confess that, as a layman, I am not clear about whether those adjustments would be changes in the law or alterations in judicial practice.

Paragraph 9.42 deals with the wide subject of "other documentary evidence". It proposes that papers from wartime archives should be admitted in evidence if authenticated by archivists, and specifically recommends amending legislation to make that possible.

According to the internal evidence—the evidence in the report, on which our debate is based—changes in the law are either necessary or, in the terms set out, desirable; and it is that that concerns me most. I could not possibly vote for proposals to change the rules of evidence with the specific intention of obtaining the convictions of a particular class of person—persons who are known and named. Fortunately, the motion does not require us to do that. I very much regret that the Home Secretary has complicated my position further by saying at the end of his speech that, if we voted for the motion, we would be voting to implement the Hetherington report, for that is not what the motion says; it proposes that we take note of the report and then proceed to consider what legislation is possible.

I am perfectly prepared to take note of the report, and to instruct the Home Secretary to consider implementing whatever legislation is decently possible to prosecute alleged war criminals. I hope, however, that the Home Secretary will not believe that many of the hon. Members who join him in the Aye Lobby tonight will be voting for what he said. We are voting for what the motion says: there is a substantial difference.

The motion does not refer to the problems of evidence or to the details of the Hetherington report, nor does it require us to endorse that report's most contentious passages. I am entirely ready to support the principle of proceeding to legislation, and, as I have said, I will vote in the Aye Lobby tonight. Let me, however, make it clear to the Home Secretary—and I suspect that I speak for some hon. Members on both sides of the House—that, although I support the motion in principle, I could not possibly support any subsequent Bill requiring or recommending changes in the rules of evidence.

I do not wish to overstate my objections to such a course, for this is not an occasion for the usual excesses and rough and tumble of our debates. I must say, however, that it seems to me that changes in the rules of evidence in such circumstances constitute a negation of our basic freedoms, and it is the mark of a civilised society to preserve those freedoms, even for—perhaps, indeed, especially for—the people whom society despises most.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. It has become apparent that legal difficulties are inherent in the change in the law that might be required, particularly with regard to the rules of evidence. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General is in the Chamber, would it be possible for him to catch your eye later so that we might hear his opinion of what the difficulties may be and how they can be approached?

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is entirely a matter for the Attorney-General.

6.3 pm

Mr. Edward Heath (Old Bexley and Sidcup): In his concluding remarks, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary said that we could not push these matters to one side. Nothing can ever push them to one side, and no one is suggesting for a moment that we should even attempt it.

I remember, as a boy in the 1930s, seeing the refugees arriving at Pegwell bay and Sandwich and going into encampments there in search of refuge from Nazidom and all that it meant. I was at Nuremberg in 1937, and I saw exactly what it meant. I met them all: I saw who they were and what they were like. I experienced the six years of the war, and was at the Nuremberg trials after it. Nothing can ever put to one side what all of that has meant. On the other hand, I have not heard a single convincing argument tonight, or found one in the report, that will ever lead me to support legislation that would change our entire system to bring those alleged war criminals to trial.

My right hon. and learned Friend said that all that was necessary was that legislation that affected British citizens at the time should now be extended to those who became British citizens later. If that were the case, I would still say that it was wrong—absolutely wrong—but, if we read the reports of the House of Lords debates, we see that it is not the case. The most distinguished lawyers in the Lords have said that it is not the case.

The right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees), once a very distinguished Home Secretary, is reported as having told the press that it was wrong for the House of Lords to debate this matter before it was debated in the Commons, but I do not understand that point of view. I think that it was a very good thing that the Lords debated it first. At least two Lords Chancellor took part, and they and Lord Campbell made powerful speeches on the legal side. It is difficult for Members of this House to emulate such speeches.

The legal question comes to this: are we to have retrospective, retroactive legislation to deal with this alleged crime? My answer is, "No, in no circumstances." The Conservative party above all has always opposed retrospective legislation. Even when a simple-minded Chancellor of the Exchequer wanted to backdate a tax for three months, he was torn to pieces by his hon. Friends. There is no reason whatever for such legislation.

On other questions, such as the means of giving evidence, I agree entirely with the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). I am not prepared to tolerate such changes to deal with these particular circumstances. If we wanted to deal with them at the time—if we were determined to do so—we should have taken the necessary action then. If we want to deal with similar circumstances in the future, let the Government introduce general legislation now, and we can debate whether it is necessary.

I must warn the Home Secretary, and particularly the Foreign Secretary, that if they take such action they will put themselves in a terrible mess in every quarter of the world. What do they intend to do at this moment about south-east Asia? What will they do about visitors to this country who may then be accused of having committed war crimes or genocide? Such factors must be considered.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): But does not the Geneva Conventions Act 1957 allow exactly those prosecutions to take place?

Mr. Heath: Yes, but that does not affect people at the time of their actions. [HON. MEMBERS: "It does."] That is what the motion deals with, and why I am so strongly opposed to it. *[Interruption.]* The right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) shakes his head; he may have an opportunity to speak later. The right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South, who is chairman of the all-party committee, says that no pressure has been exerted, but there has been enormous pressure, and it has all come from California. We know all about that; there is no point in trying to avoid it. The question is, do we accept the arguments or not? As far as I am concerned, we do not.

It has been said that Britain's name will be stained unless it takes this action. I can think of nothing further from the truth. We took the lead in the Nuremberg trials: Lord Shawcross made the opening and concluding speeches, but it was Sir David Maxwell Fyfe who fought the case the whole way through. Both, however, performed a noble function. We have no reason to think that our name is stained. The Nuremberg trials were controversial at the time, but they dealt with the major people involved in the atrocities of which we know so well.

As for the practicalities, the argument can be raised to a very high level: that this is a question of morality. Of course it is a question of morality, but there is also a practical aspect which would have to be considered by the Director of Public Prosecutions or the Attorney-General. Not for one moment, however, am I prepared to give that power to them. They would have to consider whether the defence would have a proper opportunity to defend the people who may be left to face these charges. How would the defence produce witnesses and counter letters or documents that the report recommends should be brought before the court? The defence would have no opportunity to deal with such matters.

[Mr. Heath]

Another practical point that was referred to by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary is that, if it came to a prosecution, why should people who have been living here peaceably for 45 years have to go through all that? It is not a simple question. I am greatly worried about British justice. Look at the time it is taking in the Guinness case. It will be years before that case comes to court. That is not British justice. People who may be proved to be innocent are unable to earn a living; they have no social life; they cannot do anything, because British so-called justice is dragging on year after year before their case even comes to court.

The report concludes that in the case of only three people is there a reasonable chance of conviction. I am told that only one of the three would now be able to come before the courts. According to the report, there would have to be much more investigation of the cases against the other 46 people, which would take many more years. The report concludes that there is no point in doing anything about the rest. From a practical point of view, therefore, I do not believe that anything can be done.

If the Government introduced a Bill, Parliament would be asked to consider legislation whose effect would be retrospective and retroactive for nearly half a century. Certain means, such as television, are not used in our courts and ought not to be employed in cases of this kind. The defence would be unable to establish what it would want to establish in defending its clients. As the years went by, the public would say, "Why are we doing this to these people?" Those of us who survived six years of war feel that as strongly as anybody. We fought it out. Then we had the Nuremberg trials and disposed of them. We are now moving into a better and, we hope, a more peaceful and much wider Europe. That has always been our ambition. This is not the time to pass legislation of this kind.

6.14 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): The difficulty of holding trials under legislation such as that proposed by Sir Thomas Hetherington and Mr. Chalmers is undoubted. The difficulty of bringing cases to the point at which prosecutions could be proved by the prosecuting authorities is also undoubted. We need consider only the evidence of the Hetherington-Chalmers inquiries, carried out over a period of 15 months, to have some idea of the time involved. There were 301 allegations to be investigated. After sifting, as the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) has just pointed out, there was only one case left in which the evidence is such as to be likely to lead to a conviction.

The difficulty of proceeding with investigations might not be the clinching consideration if all the moral arguments for holding the trials pointed in the same direction. However, no hon. Member would make that claim. I agree with the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) that ths is one of the most difficult matters that we have had to consider during our time as Members of Parliament. I have reached a broadly similar conclusion, though with one important difference.

The Home Secretary was somewhat disingenous when he suggested that the matter was being addressed by Parliament without there being any history of decision making. No formal decision not to legislate along these lines has been taken, but in 1948 and 1949 the question of what to do with those whom it was apprehended were in our midst was squarely addressed by Parliament. It was not suggested then that the law should be amended, although it would have been more understandable if such a suggestion had been made at that time. It was much closer in time to the offences that were in everyone's mind. However, Parliament considered whether the screening of the 130,000 immigrants from occupied Europe should continue and whether there should be a positive response to any applications for extradition. The firm decision was taken by Ernest Bevin and Clement Attlee that that process would cease. The decision was taken against the background of what had happened to the Yugoslavs and the Ukrainians about whom there were still serious doubts. The only criticism in Parliament at that time was that the Government's decision had been taken too late and that the time for continuing the scrutiny process and pursuing war criminals had gone.

The matter was again considered in 1957 when the Geneva Conventions Bill was before the House and in 1969 when the Genocide Bill was before the House. On neither occasion was Parliament minded to change the law in the manner that is recommended in the report. I find it hard to understand how, after the passage of two decades, the case for changing the law in the manner recommended by the report has been strengthened.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Does my hon. Friend recall the suggestion in the Hetherington report that throughout that period it was not believed that war criminals had gained access to, or were resident in, this country?

Mr. Maclennan: I cannot accept that that is the position. Lord Mayhew made it plain in another place that it was clearly in the Government's mind in 1948 and 1949, when the decision was taken to which I have referred, that among the 130,000 immigrants living in this country there were people who were guilty of very grave crimes. However, the decision was taken not to pursue them for the reasons that I have given.

The sensitivity of those hon. Members who have spoken against the retrospective changes in the jurisdiction of the criminal courts, for example, distinguished Law Lords such as Lord Wilberforce, is not misplaced. We should be seeking to strengthen the forces of justice, and we must ask whether that will be achieved by a retrospective change. In many countries the constitution would rule out that sort of change. It is ruled out under the United States constitution, and that is why the United States has chosen an alternative route—stripping people of their citizenship and extraditing them.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North) *rose*——

Mr. Maclennan: That is also ruled out under the constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Mr. Winnick *rose*——

Mr. Maclennan: I shall follow the example of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup and will not give way because this is a short debate.

The second area of retrospective change that is proposed is also extremely difficult to accept. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook spoke at some length about the proposed changes in the rules of evidence, which would make it more likely that prosecution would be secured and conviction obtained. I agree with everything that he said on that subject, and it is unnecessary for me to repeat his arguments. It is not tolerable for us to amend the law to bring about the conviction of named individuals. The advantages of the defence should weigh as heavily in the balance as the advantages of the prosecution.

I detected too great a preoccupation in the Hetherington—Chalmers report with the possibility that the prosecution would be successful, as did the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook. Sufficient attention was not paid to the rights of defendants to face witnesses who are giving evidence against them, and that is a fundamental principle of our criminal law. The report was too casual in its support of some of the changes in the laws of evidence, although, no doubt, changes would be necessary in those laws in cases which depend heavily upon the recollections of people some 45 to 50 years after the event, living thousands of miles away, in completely different circumstances.

I base my opposition to the proposals made in the report not solely on considerations of legal propriety, but on considerations of the public reaction to such trials. As the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook said, it is right that the main justification, if any exists, for bringing about such trials would be as an expression of our unabated revulsion to the horrors of the events with which those people named were associated. The justification would be to show that there has been no falling-off in the determination of the British people to end such horrors, and to prevent their recurrence.

There is a serious risk that the cases considered by Sir Thomas Hetherington and Mr. Chalmers might create a backlash against the whole process. Public opinion in countries that have conducted such trials recently has been divided. The reaction has not always been one of strengthened revulsion to the offences, and I am thinking, in particular, of the Barbie and Demjanjuk cases in Israel. Public opinion may question whether it was right to have conducted such trials. Many people's sympathies might end up in the wrong place, and we should avoid that at all costs.

The report by Sir Thomas Hetherington and Mr. Chalmers was serious, and it was right that it should have been commissioned. However, the Home Secretary should listen to the views of some of his right hon. colleagues, including the former Lord Chancellor, Lord Hailsham, who expressed serious reservations about the attack on our system of justice if the recommendations are carried out. I shall vote against the report, and against the motion.

6.25 pm

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): I intend to be brief as there is no need for repetition. I welcome and support the words used by the Father of the House, my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), to introduce the motion. I also welcome and support the remarks of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

The motion invites the House to vote, not to create a retrospective offence, but to recognise that the offences of mass murder and manslaughter are contrary to the criminal law in all civilised nations, contrary to international law, and were unlawful at the time that the offences were committed.

The House is merely being invited to agree the principle that jurisdiction should apply to persons who may be resident in the United Kingdom today. That is the cardinal issue that the House must dwell upon.

In the House this afternoon, and in another place, we have considered whether it is right to prosecute people who committed crimes 50 or more years ago. That is what may happen if the law is amended. We have contemplated that in the light of the decision made in the late 1940s not to continue to seek out persons who may have committed those serious crimes.

Circumstances have changed. Information of such a compelling kind was presented to the public domain in Britain, in October 1986, that the decision of 1948, or whenever, on whether to proceed to look for those people who have committed awful crimes cannot possibly be glossed over. That is not a luxury that we can afford to entertain now.

Allegations of such a grave nature have been made that the judicial system, and our concept of justice, would be impaired if we did not give the normal process of the criminal justice system the opportunity to contemplate the allegations in a court of law by changing the rules.

Those are the two issues that the House must decide upon when we vote on the motion. We do not have to contemplate what procedural consequences might arise if the House were to approve the principle of changing the laws to permit that jurisdiction. That is for another time, and it may also be decided through the normal process of examining a case when those people are under investigation.

I said that I would be brief, and I do not intend to be repetitious. Other hon. Members will express their points of view, but I am in favour of voting for the motion.

6.29 pm

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): I take the opposite view from that expressed by the hon. Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) but nevertheless respect greatly and deeply the views of him and his colleagues.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) said that he would vote in favour of the motion to express his horror at the terrible events that the House is discussing. I shall vote against the motion to express my horror at the terrible events that the House is discussing.

I recently had the pleasure of visiting Berlin. Anyone who has travelled there and seen, standing by the side of the avenue up to the Reichstag, the wagons that were used to collect people to take them to the gas chambers left out to rust as a constant reminder of the horror of those events, and anyone who has visited the building between the Reichstag and the airport, where thousands were put to death walking through dark curtains, not knowing which step would be their last, cannot fail to have feeling for those who suffered in the holocaust.

I have no answers for some of the questions that people will ask me. When I made my views known after the previous Home Secretary made a statement, I received letters—not many, perhaps five or six—all of them courteous and complaining about what I said. They asked

[Mr. Harry Ewing]

how I would feel if the victim had been my mother or father, grandmother or grandfather, sister or brother. I cannot answer that question, and would not attempt to. Such considerations do not bring me to this debate. What brings me is the Hetherington—Chalmers report and how I can pay my respects and best honour the memory of those who were put to death in those terrible times. I can only speak personally.

Much has been said about the retrospective nature of what is suggested in the Hetherington report. I do not intend to dwell on that subject for the simple reason that I am not a lawyer, but I have always had serious reservations and the strongest doubts about the introduction of retrospective legislation. I well remember the time when the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) was in office, and the House was forced to introduce retrospective legislation to protect and cover the actions of our soldiers policing Northern Ireland. The debate went on and on. The House argued about whether it should introduce such restrospective legislation. I have always had serious reservations about it.

The Hetherington—Chalmers report has compromised any Director of Public Prosecutions for England and Wales and any Lord Advocate for Scotland, who would have to consider submissions put before them. Thomas Hetherington is on record as saying that he is absolutely convinced that there is sufficient evidence on which to mount a prosecution in respect of three people. He may be convinced. He is entitled to be as he has expert knowledge. But, with great respect to him, he will not decide whether a prosecution should be mounted. If that day ever comes, and the documents are presented, he will not be the Director of Public Prosecutions.

I ask the House to consider what will happen if the DPP of the day says, "In my opinion, there is insufficient evidence on which to proceed." If anybody has any doubt about what might happen, I shall try to explain what I envisage. There would be an unholy public row, with both sides of the argument lined up against each other. One side will say, "How is it that an experienced former DPP can say that there is sufficient evidence and the present holder of the office can say there is not?" Secondly, what would happen if that hurdle were crossed and the DPP said that there was sufficient evidence on which to mount a prosecution but the court returned a verdict of "Not guilty"?

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): So be it.

Mr. Ewing: I am not being unkind to my hon. and learned Friend or anyone else, but I simply do not believe, bearing in mind the hype that has been generated on the issue, that a "Not guilty" verdict would be accepted with the words "So be it."

Mr. Janner: It happens all the time.

Mr. Ewing: It would not happen in this case. That is my view, and I am expressing it.

We are building up the hopes of relatives of people who were slaughtered in the holocaust, only to let them down. I am not certain that that is the best way in which to honour the memory of people who were slaughtered during those terrible events. I believe in all sincerity that that would do tremendous damage to the legal system and to the immediate families of those who were killed. I accept, however, that those families might not agree.

When I think how best I can honour the memory of those who were slaughtered, I come firmly to the conclusion that no useful purpose would be served by staging show trials, for without a shadow of a doubt that is what they would be. I come firmly to the conclusion that nothing should be said or done that would disturb the sleep of those who were slaughtered.

6.37 pm

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) is well known for his championship of many good causes, but on this occasion I believe that he has lent his name and his prestige to the pursuit of a cruel vendetta which he will come to regret.

The proposition before us, when properly understood, offends against all the basic instincts of decent British people. It asks us to set aside the normal rules of British justice and so to change the law that three old men whose identities have already been revealed in the popular press may be branded as vile murderers without having the faintest chance of defending themselves. Nothing comparable to this motion has come before a British Parliament since the Acts of Attainder which deeply disfigured our criminal justice system in the 16th and 17th centuries.

It is good to know that last week at least the other place decisively rejected the principle behind this motion. It is ill conceived. If it were passed, the practical steps needed to implement it would make a fair trial quite impossible.

The principle at stake is that we should change our law to permit the prosecution of three individuals for acts performed long ago and far away. That is abhorrent at a time when peace and reconciliation are needed rather than revenge.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Will my hon. Friend give way on the point of law raised in their Lordships' House? They were not against it; they passed the motion.

Mr. Stanbrook: No good can come from reviving the stories of the wicked atrocities of the past. Why should we change the law retrospectively—every good lawyer believes that it is restrospective legislation—for such a narrow purpose? Why not pursue the perpetrators of the other heinous crimes committed during and since the war? Are not the British ashamed of sending back the Cossacks and the Chetniks to their certain deaths? What about the Americans who are alleged to have starved their German prisoners of war to death? What about the hideous crimes committed in Palestine and elsewhere in the middle east and in Cambodia?

If it is said that the malefactors in those cases have not been identified or that they do not come within our jurisdiction, what about the leaders of modern Israel, some of whom were responsible for the cold-blooded massacre of British subjects and are now received with warmth and hospitality when they come to Britain? We do not need to change the law to prosecute them. Why should they escape retribution? My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point apparently does not understand that it is not because we are soft or because we do not hate criminals, but because the British instinct is and always has been to let the dead bury their dead and after the passage of time to forgive and even to try to forget such things, knowing with the wisdom that we have acquired in our long history that it is better for everyone that we should do so.

Rabbi Blue said recently in a BBC radio programme that there is something of the Nazi in all of us—*[Interruption.]* We are all guilty of man's inhumanity to man.

Like everyone else, I am revolted by the knowledge of what the Nazis did to the Jewish and other communities during the war, and I do not seek to condone, excuse or deny it. Those horrors arouse deep emotions, some of which were shown by my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point, but emotions are a bad foundation for justice. In the other place last week, as reported in the House of Lords *Hansard* at column 615, the Chief Rabbi said that the Jewish faith "abhors vengeance" and I withdraw anything that I may have said to the contrary in the context of this debate.

According to St. Paul, the Lord said:

> "Vengeance is mine; I will repay."

It is not for us endlessly to pursue those who may have avoided earthly retribution for their misdeeds, and certainly not in a retrospective and selective way.

Even if I were not already convinced that it is wrong in principle for us to change the law, as a lawyer I would condemn the idea because in practice it means committing a far greater injustice than allowing suspected criminals to go unprosecuted. Despite the hard knocks that it has suffered recently, British justice has always been respected and admired. The motion asks us to set aside its most important feature—the right to a fair trial. It is not simply a matter of extending the territorial jurisdiction of the court and making British citizens liable for their misdeeds before they gain citizenship. There is something to be said for such extension, and I agree with the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) about that. However, it is objectionable that such steps should be taken specifically for three individuals and their crimes.

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Stanbrook: I am sorry but we do not have time.

Although British law does not forbid trials for offences committed long ago, such trials are seldom held because the evidence is sparse, the witnesses unreliable and their memories faded. When identification is an issue, as it probably would be in these cases, all lawyers know that a witness's recollection dims after only a few weeks and is totally unreliable after a few years.

Of course, one can always put the suspect in the dock and ask a witness to identify him then and there as is done in show trials. I hope that it will never come to that in Britain. That is why my right hon. Friend is wrong to gloss over the substantial changes in the law of evidence and procedure which Hetherington says will be needed if those men come to trial.

His assessment of the sufficiency of the evidence is based upon the assumption that those changes will be made. There would be no committal proceedings. That is possible but most unusual. It would mean that the prosecution would not need to prove even a prima facie case before the matter went before a court. Evidence would be admitted in writing by statements made in Russia, and would include statements made by dead people. There would be no chance to cross-examine witnesses at the trial, no check on the circumstances in which a statement was made, and no indication as to any inducement or intimidation before the statement was made. Documentary evidence would be admitted without the need for the maker or the authenticator to attend the court. All those changes would be retrospective and directed towards those particular cases.

The Hetherington report says that legal aid will be available, but does anyone imagine that a defendant or his representative would be able to travel freely and unmolested in Soviet Russia to gather evidence and to find witnesses to support his case?

Mr. Allason: They have already.

Mr. Stanbrook: That is not so. Russia replied to a request made by one of them that it is a matter for the British Government, and of course the British Government are in no position to assist.

The Hetherington inquiry took 16 months and cost £500,000. It interviewed hundreds of witnesses by courtesy of the KGB. Will the defendants be allowed equivalent time and facilities? Of course they will not. The motion asks us to perpetrate a travesty of justice. I call upon the House to reject it.

6.48 pm

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): The hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) will not be surprised to hear that I found little to agree with in his speech and that I will not follow him down the paths of hyperbole.

I should like to tell the House a little of my own experience. After the war, I was a soldier with the British Army of the Rhine and served as a war crimes investigator. Indeed, I think that I am the only Member of either House who did so. Our search section was looking for 10,000 people, and we hoped to find them and the evidence to bring them to justice. At the time, we saw no reason why such people should not be brought to justice. That was our job.

There was evidence against those people of mass murder in concentration camps, of the mass killing of civilians and of the shooting of British prisoners of war who had escaped from Stalag Luft 3. They were murderers. I am not surprised to see the hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) laughing; I can see nothing laughable in this. It is one of the most serious and important matters that has come before the House, and I see nothing to laugh about in it. We can disagree courteously, as I do with my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing), but neither of us regards this as a laughing matter.

In August 1948, I was called in by my commanding officer and told that the war crimes group was being packed up. I asked why, and he said, "I do not know. I can only suspect that they do not care any more, provided that these people are anti-Soviet." It is only now that we have the evidence and only now that the secret document has been revealed, showing that a Government—alas, a Labour Government—sent a note to its allies stating:

> "In view of future political developments in Germany . . . we are convinced that it is now necessary to dispose of the past as soon as possible."

We do not take that view in respect of any other murder; we do not take the view that old age is an excuse

[Mr. Greville Janner]

for being evil; and we do not take the view that, because time has passed, murders do not count. There is no limit in our law for prosecuting a murder charge.

I could not understand why the war crimes group was being packed in when it had such evidence of murder committed by 10,000 people. It was murder, yes, of Jews, but also of Poles, Russians, trade unionists, gipsies, gays, people with whom they did not agree and mentally and physically handicapped people. We are talking not about something to laugh at but about murder.

Mr. Gorst *rose*——

Mr. Janner: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman, and I pay tribute to him for the work that he has done in this cause.

Mr. Gorst: The case is much worse than the hon. and learned Gentleman is suggesting. In 1948 at least 20,000 cases merited prosecution. If one needs evidence for that, it comes from Lord Mayhew in another place.

Mr. Janner: Lord Mayhew unfortunately was a member of that Labour Government, and the speech that he made did not surprise me. I was talking about a list of 10,000 people for whom we were searching but had not found. Others were found, but the prosecution of all of them was aborted.

Some of the people for whom we were looking were my age and some were elderly, but the fact that they were elderly did not stop us prosecuting them if they were killers. Some of the people for whom we were looking were younger than some of us here, but their age was never regarded as an excuse for not bringing them to justice.

Whenever the public are upset about an issue, there is a possibility of show trials. But we still have trials for multiple rapes and for murder. We still risk the excesses of the press; we do not say, "People will be emotionally upset and interested, so we will not try suspects." That has always struck me as the worst argument. It was used at the Nuremberg trials. We did not believe it then, and I do not accept it now.

What about evidence? As a Queen's Counsel, I was bothered by an interesting evidential point. I talked to Kitty Hart, who is a survivor of Auschwitz and whose letter is published in *The Independent* today. She told me that last year she gave evidence at a war crimes trial in Germany. It has been said that we should not take action because of the interests of the new Europe, but West Germany, East Germany, France, Belgium and the Netherlands have all taken action against war criminals; Britain is the only European country that has not done so. Kitty Hart told me that she could not forget the face or actions of somebody who had tortured her for a year. I spoke to another survivor. She said, "I forget the people whom I met yesterday, but I will not forget the face of the man who snatched my baby from me and threw her into a pit."

I listened to the debate in the other place and was appalled to hear Lord after Lord say that old men forget. They may forget selectively, but the people who suffered do not forget.

My hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, East, who is a very good friend, said that he cannot talk for those who lost families. I cannot talk for the people who died—nobody can do that—but if they had survived I wonder what they would have thought of some of the speeches that we have heard. Half my family were rounded up by the sort of people we have been speaking about today—local people. My relatives were locked in a synagogue that was set on fire and they died. I do not want revenge, only justice. I do not see why people should not be prosecuted because some of my family were killed, and I would believe the same if it was anyone else's family.

I do not understand why, if there is sufficient evidence, people should not stand trial. It is not for the House to decide whether there is sufficient evidence—that is a matter for the Director of Public Prosecutions. It is not for the House to decide whether a person is fit to stand trial—that is a matter for the court. I ask that these people be given decent justice, which they certainly did not accord anyone else. The law should make that possible, and whether anyone is prosecuted is secondary. What matters is that the House should not say, "We do not care", which is how it would be taken. I am sure that many good and honourable Members who have spoken against the motion care, but that is not the way that other people will feel about them.

If we are to have justice, it must manifestly be seen to be done. I could not disagree more with the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), who spoke of a shattering constitutional change. As a lawyer, I can recognise a shattering constitutional change, and this certainly is not one. A British citizen who kills someone abroad is liable to prosecution, and has been for many years. He may be prosecuted in our courts for committing an offence against a foreigner. It is only people who were not British citizens at the time who cannot be prosecuted. I have never understood why people who came to Britain and assumed the vast privilege of British citizenship should escape the duties, responsibilities and liability to criminal offences that go with it.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) talked about complex changes in evidence, which will have to be discussed in Committee, but we can make them. Earlier, the case of the Cossacks was mentioned. In that case, statements of evidence were read out, for the defence, from people who were dead. There is nothing new about statements from people who have since died. What matters is to get on and to recognise that this is a deeply important issue.

Some of my good friends have said to me, "Do not do this because"—as the Bishop of St. Albans put it in plain terms—"it will create anti-Semitism." Earlier, I think that the Home Secretary said that it might "rekindle old feelings". I do not believe that prosecuting people for killing Jews or anyone else creates anti-Semitism—anti-Semites create anti-Semitism—and I assure the House that that argument is not accepted by people in the Jewish community, whether or not they lost relatives in the holocaust.

I ask that where there is powerful evidence of personal involvement in mass murders—the independent commissioners have said that there is against three people and perhaps another 48—we should, as a House, say: "Let us have the option to prosecute them as we would a British citizen."

6.59 pm

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): The real question is surely whether the United Kingdom should continue to be a safe haven for any monsters who have perpetrated unspeakable atrocities resulting in death. It comes as a shock to learn that at present we are such a haven because there is a defect in our machinery of justice which, had we known about it years ago, we would surely have corrected. The motion calls upon the House to correct that gap in our machinery —that is all it calls upon the House to do. It does not call upon the House to authorise any prosecution against any named suspect. That will be for the Director of Public Prosecutions, not for us.

It follows that it is not an issue, for the purpose of the motion, whether the suspects are too old or too young, whether the evidence is strong or weak, or whether identification is credible. In some cases, there will be no issue of identification or even whether video recordings or interviews or the statements of dead witnesses or other evidential matters should be adopted.

Some of the suggested changes in the Hetherington report have already been introduced by the House for the very purpose of securing convictions of the guilty. The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) said that he did not agree that a particular category of offender should be pursued. But that is exactly what we did when we introduced the videoing of witnesses for child abuse and rape cases. Those matters are not for us to decide today but will be matters of detail for the Bill. The question of there being sufficient evidence under any rules of evidence, whether we decide to change anything or not, will be purely a matter for the Director of Public Prosecutions. His will be the difficult task, but ours is relatively easy.

We have had paraded before us a number of arguments against this motion. Some say that time has passed and that it would be cruel to adopt such a procedure. But it is not a principle of British law not to prosecute because time has passed. If the Guildford Four should ever be found, will we say, "What a shame—we must not prosecute them because that offence was committed 15, 20 or 25 years ago"? Retribution is an issue that may arise after conviction. It cannot arise before or even during the trial.

Mr. Heath: The case of the Guildford Four is now frequently quoted. The legislation governing what happened in Guildford was in existence then. The difference in this issue is that the legislation was not in existence. People have been living here for 50 years without that legislation. If there were legislation, today's debate would not be necessary and nor would the proposal. It is an entirely false argument to cite the Guildford Four.

Mr. Lawrence: My right hon. Friend selects only part of the argument. But we have all heard it. We have heard hon. Members saying that it would be too cruel because it happened too long ago. That is the point which is being made and I am dealing with that.

It can hardly be a change of policy if British citizens can be tried for those atrocities, or if prosecutions can still be brought under royal warrant—but that is not a desirable way of proceeding. It can hardly be a change of policy since we have already changed the law to ensure that genocide offences in similar circumstances can be prosecuted after 1967. As for changing procedure, we do that all the time with nearly every criminal justice Act that we pass.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook says that he is against hurrying through the House legislation to convict known individuals. It would be no more "hurrying" to take a Bill through the House as a result of this motion than it is hurrying any Bill when we take it through the House in the course of a new Session of Parliament. This would be a short Bill.

There may be some known individuals, but there are many who are as yet unknown because they have not been investigated. Those who read the report will see that one matter which is taken into consideration is that we should put into position a structure which might be available for those who are not yet known.

More general legislation may be preferable to this, but is that any reason why we should not legislate now? This legislation would at least follow an independent report which has been thoroughly prepared and thoroughly thought out.

There is the alternative of extradition and deportation, but that would hardly be as fair in many circumstances. We cannot try people now before we deport them because we have changed the law so that there is no need to prove a prima facie case before they are taken back to a country that might not give them a fair trial. Many hon. Members would not extradite people back to a country where there was capital punishment.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) said that there is only one case left. There are a large number yet to be investigated, but even if there were only one case left we would still have done the right thing by closing the doors to Nazi war criminals and given a signal to the rest of the world that we are not out on a limb in not caring.

I heard the moving speech by the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing). He said that there would be no convictions anyway and that we would be building up false hopes. That would be for a jury to decide, as it is with all serious criminal justice in this country. As for hope, surely the strongest hope must be that the crimes perpetrated in Nazi times shall never be forgotten. Is it not necessary from time to time to remind the new generation who simply cannot believe that such horrors took place? Is it a terrible thing if a jury says, "Not guilty", but in the course of doing so the world is reminded just how despicable man can be to man?

Finally, and perhaps most strongly, the argument has been put repeatedly that we should remain a safe haven because of a technical argument: that the change would be retrospective legislation. I have heard that argument in the House and in the other place. What is so objectionable about retrospective legislation? It is that someone should not be punished for an act which he did not think was wrong or illegal at the time. But that is not the case here. Mass murder cannot possibly have been right or legal whenever it was perpetrated. It was an offence to humanity and it is a cruel insult to the memory of the innocent who were slaughtered not to proceed against their slaughterers because of some gap in the machinery of the law which we recognise, and which we would fill were it not for some magic about the phrase "retrospective legislation". There is no magic about it. If an injustice is not done by changing our laws so that those who knew that they were

[Mr. Lawrence]

committing acts of inhumanity can be prosecuted and brought to justice, there is nothing wrong with retrospective legislation.

The central question is whether Britain should remain a safe haven for monsters. The immediate question today is: do we just wring our hands at the horrors of those deeds and the sickening nature of their perpetrators, or do we take action? The motion is about asking the House to authorise the taking of action by bringing forward a Bill. I ask all hon. Members to support the motion.

7.9 pm

Mr. Ted Leadbitter (Hartlepool): The passage of time causes many men and women who have experienced what happens in war to turn that experience in our minds in such a manner that in that timescale the pursuit of truth sometimes becomes elusive. What is right when one is a young man or woman and what is right when one is much older are matters that are always in contest. Sometimes in our society we have a natural dependence on case law, criminal law, international law and the views of those who are trained in the professions to interpret those laws for us.

In this House today and in the other place last week, we have had a fulsomeness of legal opinion. The fascinating point about that is that it has been divided. Those of us who are lay people have to interpret what we have heard from those legal personages in such a manner as to act as a jury. Before we do that, we must rid our minds of what we felt when we were young men or women and behave with the caution and care of cultivated minds at the ages that we have achieved. Although the ages of hon. Members vary, there is an abundance of experience to help us.

In this testing of a jury concept, there cannot be any sense of vengeance or of bitterness. I recall as a young officer on my first visit to Belsen the stench of the place, which does not leave one's nostrils even with the passage of time. The tears never seem to stop flowing whether at moments such as this or when we visit other places such as our war graves on the continent and elsewhere. It is important, therefore, that the emotions and feelings be put on one side—although not too far away from us—so that we can apply our mental abilities and experiences to make sound judgments.

One point is certain. Hon. Members talk about the difficulties of retrospective legislation and, although both sides of the argument are respected, there must be an overriding consideration, which is international practice and custom in the rules of law and the customs of war. Canada, America and Australia can see that where those rules and customs of war have been breached in the form of established war crimes, they can put into their national legislation what has already been established in international jurisprudence.

According to Hetherington and Chalmers, it is quite clear that we are not proposing retrospective legislation, for we are not seeking to create an offence that did not take place at the time. It is clear that the report is saying that no one shall be held to be guilty of any criminal offence on account of any act or omission that did not constitute a criminal offence under national or international law at the time it was committed. The report states:

> "Article 7(1) of the European Convention on Human Rights 1950 states"—

that is, the provision that I have described—

> "'The Article shall not prejudice the trial and punishment of any person or any act or omission which, at the time it was committed, was criminal according to the general principles of law recognised by civilised nations.'"

On page 63 of the report, the authors write:

> "Legal opinion at the time"—

that refers to a debate in the House of Lords in 1942—

> "seems to have been that jurisdiction over violations of the laws and customs of war existed, and that there was a need to legislate only to empower the domestic courts to utilise the jurisdiction which was already available under international law."

It seems abundantly clear that we are seeking here to do what should have been done many years ago and merely to establish in our minds, as members of an international community, the provisions of international jurisprudence. That cannot be difficult for lawyers to understand.

That brings us back to the next question: should we proceed in view of the passage of time? The answer to that is simple. There is no case in the development of our law where a timescale has been placed on any offence or any state of criminality. Not so very long ago, someone was brought to court having committed murder 27 years before. If that was done for one man, what on earth are we arguing about when we are dealing with people about whom there is an abundance of evidence that they mutilated thousands of people? The conscience of the House must not be affected by the interpretation of legalities in this small Chamber, but it must show a responsiveness to what the whole nation cries out for.

If such a crime is an offence in West Germany, East Germany and other Common Market countries, as hon. Members have described today, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) is wholly wrong in suggesting that if we pursue this course we are creating some difficulty for the good relationships in the developing Common Market. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman is somewhat obsessed by Europe and cannot think clearly about the matter. He can be excused on that ground.

Having dealt with the interpretation of retrospectivity and the point that the timescale has nothing to do with whether an action qualifies as an offence, we must consider the condition—in this case the age—of those whom we seek to bring to court. I tabled a question in the House in 1979 which eventually exposed Sir Anthony Blunt. I was the only hon. Member who, in the debate on 15 November 1979, remembered to express a personal regret that we caught him when he was so old, when he would have to suffer conditions such as the removal of his knighthood and removal from Buckingham palace—and, incidentally, there was the removal of a Bill on the protection of information from the House for reasons that I shall not describe now—and when he would be exposed to the world. I said that I was sorry that there had been a rejection of the law and that certain people in high places had decided to protect him for years. Hon. Members in this House who talk about the law say that the law is often an ass, but if anything has harmed justice, it has been the courts themselves because they so lack a determination to be consistent that the public is now becoming alarmed at their inconsistencies.

The age of those involved is not the business of the House. Our business is to make available legislation so that if in the judgment of others, such as the Director of Public Prosecutions, a case should be brought, it can be brought. The DPP is not in a position to decide freely whether he should bring a case or not. He must make a prosecution possible if he is satisfied that all the evidence and all the circumstances justify it.

Do not let us talk about retribution because, again, that is not the business of the House. The House is here to provide the legislative possibility for others to pursue the just course of action and to bring people to court. The court can then take age into account. If the court retires them, having listened to the case, I could not care less, as long as they have been exposed.

The House should provide the vehicle and leave those in the legal profession who are charged with dealing with prosecutions and defence free to get on with their work. The House should not say that it will provide a law for some but not provide it for others, especially men whose record is such that they should for ever live with the stench of their wickedness, knowing full well that mankind—especially people in this country—feel them to be unclean and believe that they should not have been given citizenship in the first place.

7.21 pm

Sir John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): This is an important debate, and although I have always been opposed to the televising of our proceedings, I might make an exception in this case because this is one of the non-party occasions when the House is always at its best and when one feels what a privilege it is to be here.

The subject that we are discussing is one that comes down to human judgment. We are all called upon to exercise our general judgment, without necessarily being lawyers. It is, of course, a subject charged with emotion, particularly for those of Jewish background, whose memories must be most painful.

Someone of my age is bound to look back on those terrible times—I still remember them extremely clearly. I served throughout the war and was wounded, although the amount of time that I actually spent fighting the enemy was quite short. I felt then no animosity towards the German people; indeed, I admired the German army, as I still admire it. I had no contact with the Japanese, although if I had, my feelings would have been quite different.

When I first heard of the appalling massacres by the Germans, I was incredulous. Much later, we heard of the Russian massacres of Poles. At the time, I was inclined to welcome the prospect of the war crimes trials, although even then I wondered whether soldiers were the right people to sit in the seat of judgment. When the trials were held, I was quite glad, but I did not rejoice. Looking back on it, I do not entirely like the idea of the victors—sometimes the victorious generals—trying the conquered generals, even though in some cases their crimes were utterly horrific.

The report is well written and presented but sometimes, I think, clever men can make mistakes and I believe that, in this case, two able, distinguished and experienced lawyers have made a mistake in their final judgment. At a great moment in English history, the barons said—in Latin, although I shall spare the House the Latin:

> "We do not wish to change the laws of England."

That remains the basis of my case.

It is an important matter. To put many great wrongs right, should we commit another wrong? In my view, to change the laws of England would be wrong.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Or Scotland.

Sir John Stokes: Or Scotland.

Of course, I should hate this country to be considered a haven for war criminals. I should hate to feel that those guilty of such appalling crimes had escaped, but when we come down to practicalities, we find that three old men and possibly more may be involved and one of those three old men is ill. Is it really desirable or practicable to change the laws of England and possibly Scotland to try these old men who have lived here peaceably for so many years? Above all, is it right to change fundamentally the laws of evidence of which we are so proud and on which British justice is based?

Is there any public demand for such a change? I have not had a single letter about the matter since the war, and I represent 80,000 good British people. The practical difficulties of the trials would be enormous. Witnesses would be hard to find and remembrance of things that happened more than 40 years ago would be difficult.

What would be the point of the trials? Would it be revenge? I hope not, and we are assured not. Should we now bring back, in all its stark horror, what happened so long ago? What good will it do? A few people may feel better but most people will not, I think.

In 1948, we decided to discontinue war crimes trials. Can justice now be done, and, above all, be seen to be done? With all the publicity, would not juries be inclined to be biased? We know that the trials would not deter future awful crimes because we have watched so many being committed since the war, including the recent appalling examples from Cambodia.

I read carefully the account of the debate on the subject in the other place, and I was most impressed. I noted that the weight of opinion was strongly against the trials being held. Whatever people may say, there is an element of retrospection involved. Why are only these men involved and not other war criminals? As has been said elsewhere, the trials will be more of a lottery than a fair trial.

Of course, I realise only too well that the judgment that we have to make is a difficult one. I should not dream of criticising those who take a different view. I believe that we should not institute this long, complicated and involved procedure, which may lead to our overturning the whole basis of English law, to bring to trial a few old men and possibly a few more people. In spite of the frightful crimes that were committed—and we do not know whether the men were guilty of them—I think that in this case mercy should overcome justice, especially given that so many years have elapsed.

7.28 pm

Mrs. Llin Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): Two weeks ago, one of my constituents rang me up and told me, slowly and painfully, "I have never telephoned or spoken to an MP before but I must ring you about the war crimes debate. My family—85 of them—were killed in concentration camps. I am the only member of the family left." Can the House imagine how the fingers of pain have reached out over the years to hold that lady so tightly that she cannot escape living with the horrors of what happened to her family?

In 1945, a parliamentary delegation was sent from this House to Buchenwald. It was less than three weeks after the allies had liberated that camp. The delegation prepared a report to the House. The final paragraph of it states:

[Mrs. Llin Golding]

> "In preparing this report, we have endeavoured to write with restraint and objectivity, and to avoid obtruding personal reactions or emotional comments. We would conclude, however, by stating that it is our considered and unanimous opinion, on the evidence available to us, that a policy of steady starvation and inhuman brutality was carried out at Buchenwald for a very long period of time; and that such camps as this mark the lowest point of degradation to which humanity has yet descended. The memory of what we saw and heard at Buchenwald will ineffaceably haunt us for many years."

The report was signed by Earl Stanhope, Lord Addison, Colonel Tom Wickham, Sir Archibald Southby, Mrs. Mavis Tate, Mr. Ness Edwards, Mr. Sydney Silverman, Mr. Graham White, Sir Henry Morris-Jones, and Mr. Tom Driberg. My father was a member of that delegation. His name was Ness Edwards. He was the hon. Member for Caerphilly for 29 years. I remember him telling me about the horrors of what went on in that camp. They are engraved for ever on my mind and heart.

There has been much talk tonight about the passage of time. I was but a child on the day when I opened the door to my father on his return. He stood there, grey and drawn, and said, "Do not touch me. I am covered with lice. Everyone in the camps is covered with lice. We have been deloused many times, but I am still covered with lice." He could not sleep for many weeks, and he had nightmares for many years. It is said that Mrs. Mavis Tate never got over what she saw in the camp, for she died a number of years later.

My father spoke to me and to my brothers and sisters about what he had seen in the camp. He told us of the hanging gibbets. Human beings were put on hooks and hung from under their chins until they died. He told us that the people in charge of the camp rather liked tattoos, and they skinned people and used their skins to make lampshades. They discovered that, when people die, their skin is given to shrinking too quickly, so they tried skinning them alive. My father showed me photographs of piles of bodies on carts. Three weeks later, the allies had not had time to remove them all. He showed me photographs of men in thin clothes, photographs of skeletons, and photographs of men with haunted eyes. I will always remember the look in those men's eyes—the look of utter bewilderment and incomprehension. They had been starved and beaten, yet their spirit was still there.

There comes a point when something must be done. For too long the House has ignored that delegation's report. Tonight, I hope that every hon. Member will pay tribute to our former colleagues for going to that camp on our behalf, for bringing back that report to the House, and for showing the suffering of so many people. I hope that all hon. Members will show their respect for and commitment to doing what every member on that delegation would wish them to do, and that is to support the motion.

7.34 pm

Mr. Churchill (Davyhulme): The hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) spoke with deep emotion about the victims of war crimes. All hon. Members share that emotion. The crimes that we are discussing are among the darkest in the annals of man's inhumanity to man. No unbiased person can doubt either the horror or the scale of the crimes in which 6 million innocent civilians—men, women and children, including Jews, gipsies, Communists and homosexuals—were herded into the gas chambers of the Third Reich. Hon. Members unanimously acknowledge and condemn those crimes.

I am a founder member of the all-party war crimes group. Together with other members, I joined because I felt a sense of deep outrage at the idea that mass murderers might be living unpunished in our midst. However, I am bound to say that the report of the war crimes inquiry led me to different conclusions from those to which it led its authors.

We must ask whether it is right to reopen this matter now. What would it achieve? If Parliament had wished to address these matters, surely the time to do it was in the late 1940s or early 1950s—not today, half a century later. Most of the witnesses are senile, infirm or dead. What hope would a defendant have of a fair trial according to the tenets of British justice as we know them?

If Parliament were to grant authority to proceed on the course recommended by this masterly but flawed report, the British Government would be required to expend millions of pounds of taxpayers' money to scour the Soviet Union for witnesses and for evidence that was favourable to the prosecution. There can be no doubt that the British Government would have the full support of the Soviet Government, but what resources would be available to a defendant?

For instance, what would be the position of a Latvian living in impoverished circumstances in one of our inner-city areas, and who has been in this country for 45 years? At least if he is falsely accused of murder or misidentified by a witness in respect of a murder committed in recent years in this country, he has a chance of finding one or more witnesses who may be able to support an alibi or may be a material witness for the defence. Should that witness prove to be unwilling, he or she may be compelled by subpoena to appear before the court and can be sworn to tell the truth under pain of prosecution for perjury. However, in these war crimes cases a defendant would be deprived of their basic rights accorded by British law.

What of the evidence? The inquiry makes it clear that such prosecutions are likely to enjoy the full co-operation of the Soviet Government. Does anyone doubt that? However, were not the Soviet Government guilty of the mass murder of about 20 million of their own people in the Stalin purges and by deliberately starving to death the kulaks of the Ukraine?

Sir Thomas Hetherington records the inquiry's gratitude to the staff of the state procurator-general's office in Moscow, but hon. Members would do well to recall that the same procurator-general's office brought us the show trials of the Stalin era which condemned tens of thousands of Soviet citizens to the gulag for crimes unknown to Western democracies. In recent years it has consigned many sane men and women to psychiatric establishments, and it has formed part of the apparatus of state terror in the Soviet Union. Is that the same office that is to be Britain's partner in what I can only term an ugly charade?

What of the Soviet archives to which the inquiry refers at paragraph 9.42 and in respect of which the law is to be changed to admit documents without the defence having the opportunity to cross-examine the archivist? The inquiry is understandably coy about this matter, but could it be that it is referring to that organisation, so renowned for its love of justice and truth, the Committee for State

Security, commonly known as the KGB, or its predecessor, the NKVD, which holds the responsibility, among other things, for the massacre in cold blood of 16,000 Allied Polish officers in the forest at Katyn? While on the subject of war crimes, what steps are being taken to bring to justice the perpetrators of that outrage, or do such laws apply only to the losers of world wars?

What guarantees would the Soviet authorities be able to give that the evidence had not been tampered with or even manufactured with a view to striking back or settling old scores against anti-Communist emigré communities in this country who came from the Baltic states, eastern Europe or the Soviet republics? What pressure may have been put on witnesses, including dead witnesses, whose evidence is now to be admitted if the report has its way? I see no prospect under these circumstances of a defendant obtaining a fair trial and therefore I see little likelihood of a British jury feeling able to convict.

To embark on such a mammoth task of restructuring the law retrospectively in more than half a dozen different respects to make answerable to a British court those who are not so answerable today would be to run a serious risk of achieving precisely the opposite result to that desired by those who will vote in the Lobby for such legislation.

The document is a recipe for the establishment in this country of show trials that should have no place in British justice. I shall vote against the proposals, not because I believe that the guilty should not be punished, but because I doubt the possibility of a fair trial and believe that the likelihood of acquittal would be high.

At paragraph 9.18 the report declares that

> "to take no action would taint the United Kingdom with the slur of being a haven for war criminals".

That is a preposterous statement that I utterly refute. No country has a prouder record than Britain in standing up to Nazism or in making possible its ultimate defeat. This is a case where I am prepared to leave justice in the hands of the Almighty—

> "'Vengeance is mine' saith the Lord."

7.42 pm

Mr. Peter Archer (Warley, West): This has been a debate in the best traditions of the House. There is no question over the sincerity of any hon. Member who has taken part. There have been some moving contributions and there is no complaint about any of the anxieties that have been expressed.

One thing that has clearly emerged is that this has not been a debate about how best to secure convictions. If the proposed legislation is placed on the statute book, it will fall to the appropriate authorities in each individual case to see whether there is sufficient evidence on which a court can properly be asked to convict, whether the individual concerned is too old or too ill properly to conduct a defence, whether any other factors in the case mitigate against a fair trial and whether it would be in the public interest to prosecute. All those matters would fall to the appropriate authorities. The issue here is whether anyone should have power to direct their minds to those questions or whether the evidence should be swept aside and no one have the power even to consider it.

I add my tribute to those which have already been expressed to Sir Thomas Hetherington and Mr. Chalmers. I have heard distinguished lawyers concerned with these matters in other countries say how fortunate we are in the United Kingdom to have members of an inquiry who can carry out so extensive an investigation, who can so clearly grasp the problems and the arguments, who are so mindful of the requirements of justice and who can put together a report of this quality in the time available. Clearly they were not unmindful of the necessity for a fair trial.

The time available to me is extremely short and I shall have to leave aside a number of points that have been raised in the debate about which I wished to speak. However, I should like to address the question raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). It is true that the inquiry has proposed some amendments to the rules of evidence, not to secure a conviction as my right hon. Friend suggested because that was not the purpose of the recommendations, but to assist the court in arriving at a better assessment of the case. They may well operate in favour of the defence and many of us would like to see some of them taken into our general rules of evidence. There is no time to discuss them all in detail except to say that they are limited and there is not one of them that I would not be prepared to defend. But my right hon. Friend is right that none of them is integral to the central proposal of the inquiry. At the appropriate time, all of them could be voted on separately in Committee or on Report, and the principal proposal would still remain inviolate whatever the fate of specific recommendations.

I turn now to the question of witnesses' memories. Of course, a witness may be mistaken and many of us have had occasion to remind juries of that danger. I have no doubt that it would be eloquently impressed on any jury. However, we must also have in mind the experiences about which the witnesses will be speaking. Are they experiences that the witnesses would be likely to forget? In another place, a number of their Lordships quoted Shakespeare. I believe that Lord Home was the first to say, "Old men forget." That was not a happy quotation for the proposition which he was advancing because the House will remember that Shakespeare put that quotation into the mouth of Henry V as a prelude to his saying that there are some things which one never forgets. I, too, had the opportunity of speaking to Kitty Hart, who was mentioned by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner), and who said when she gave evidence in Germany:

> "If a person has absolute power of life or death over you even for an instant, that face will be etched on your mind for ever."

She was tested and shown photographs of various people taken during the second world war, and she was not wrong on any of them.

Finally, there have been doubts about whether the necessary facilities for a fair trial can be extended to the defence by the Soviet Union. I hope that hon. Members who have doubts about that will read the reports of the deportation hearings under the Holzman Act in the United States. In the case of the United States *v.* Artishenko, the Soviet authorities made six witnesses available to the defence, although they were asked to do so only on the very day counsel arrived in the Soviet Union. In the case of the United States *v.* Kowalchuk, the Soviet authorities made witnesses available to the defence whose evidence proved decisive.

It has been suggested that the evidence might be tampered with. I ask the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) to read the reports of Mr. Allan Ryan, the director of the office of special investigations, and of all the

[Mr. Peter Archer]

lawyers who have had anything to do with these matters in the United States. The documentary evidence was tested by experts from all the American universities. They expressed themselves satisfied that there was no problem about collecting evidence in the Soviet Union and that the Moscow agreement did not operate otherwise than perfectly properly and fairly.

I do not believe that there is an obstacle, technical or otherwise, to according those accused a fair and proper trial. The only obstacle would be if we did not wish to see justice take its course. It is we who are on trial.

7.50 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): The debate ends in six minutes and I have little time in which to do justice to the many points that have been raised by right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House. I join with the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) in agreeing that this has been an excellent debate.

The House has been the scene of many impassioned debates in recent years—on subjects such as abortion, capital punishment and war crimes—and this debate joins them as one of the highest quality which will be long remembered, as my hon. Friend the Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Sir J. Stokes) said.

The quality of speeches for and against—on some occasions it was difficult to make out whether they were for or against until the last moment, properly so, in view of the fact that hon. Members were making difficult judgments —has been a tribute to the recognition by hon. Members generally and across party lines of the responsibility that is placed on the shoulders of Government by the need to decide on the right course of action in this most difficult of areas for any Government of any party.

Some points have been raised with which I must deal in the brief time available to me. A number of hon. Members raised the issue of what exactly were the crimes with which we are concerned today. Volume 2, which will never be published, gives the full horror, but an indication of the scale and nature of the crimes is given in paragraphs 2.23 and 2.43 of the report. They give some graphic hint of what the unpublished material contains.

The debate was opened powerfully by the Father of the House, my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), and I confirm, if they need confirmation, the points he raised about recent changes in the administration of the law concerning extra-territoriality, the taking of evidence by extra-terrestrial means, such as via satellite, and other circumstances, even producing the papers of the deceased, a change made by the Criminal Justice Act 1988——

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Only in England.

Mr. Patten: Yes, as my hon. and learned Friend says, in England. I confirm that all those changes have been made.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn *rose*——

Mr. Patten: I hope that my hon. and learned Friend will forgive me if I do not give way.

I also confirm that we have no statute of limitation in this country from the point of view of the law on murder and homicide.

The right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) recommended that we use the special Bill procedure, should the Government choose to take the route of legislation and should such a measure pass through the House, and I guess that any such legislation would have a rocky and turbulent passage if it were introduced. I assure the right hon. Gentleman that his suggestion has been noted and is a matter for the usual channels in the normal way.

The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), to whose speech I listened carefully, suggested that there should be other options for legislation. The Government have not adopted any one option for future legislation, should they decide to legislate; no option has been ruled out and I think the right hon. Gentleman misunderstood the Home Secretary, who did not commit the Government to legislating along any particular lines, should the Government decide to legislate at some future time. The Government's mind is not made up, and I have the Home Secretary's authority to say that.

The hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) made the important point that the Director of Public Prosecutions of the day, should legislation be introduced to change the law, might decide not to prosecute on considering the totality of admissible evidence at the time as well as all the other factors that the DPP and the Attorney-General must take into account when considering the public interest.

It would be his duty, or that of the Attorney-General, to make up his own mind, and the argument of the hon. Member for Falkirk, East about raising expectations unnecessarily that something would happen, when people might only be disappointed, should be weighed on both sides of the argument by those deciding whether it would be right to go ahead with legislation. That point, like those opposed to the prospect of legislation, all deserve to be weighed carefully by hon. Members.

Some are clear in their views. My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) and my hon. Friend the Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge know exactly what their point of view is on one side of the argument, just as my hon. Friends the Members for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) and for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) come down as firmly on the other side of the argument.

There were many others who were less clear about which side of the argument they wished to be, for example, the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) and the hon. Member for Falkirk, East.

My hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) said that he had changed his mind and that we should extend our views to look at such tragedies as we have seen from evidence from Katyn. I agree, and I hope that evidence is brought forward because there is a Polish-Soviet commission at present looking at exactly the evidence that may be turned up over allegations concerning Katyn.

I agree with the Home Secretary over the need to consider legislation, but it will be for the Government to decide, on the basis of views in the other place, in this House and in the Lobby tonight, what course of action to take in the coming months.

It being three hours after the motion was entered upon, MR. SPEAKER *put the Question pursuant to the order [8 December].*

The House divided: Ayes 348, Noes 123.

Division No. 14] **[7.56 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Amess, David
Anderson, Donald
Arbuthnot, James
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, David
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Batiste, Spencer
Battle, John
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bendall, Vivian
Bermingham, Gerald
Bevan, David Gilroy
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyes, Roland
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Bradley, Keith
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brazier, Julian
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy,
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Critchley, Julian
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Durant, Tony
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Evennett, David
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Flynn, Paul
Fookes, Dame Janet
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forman, Nigel
Foster, Derek
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, John
Freeman, Roger
Fyfe, Maria
Gale, Roger
Galloway, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gordon, Mildred
Gorst, John
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grist, Ian
Grocott, Bruce
Hague, William
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hardy, Peter
Harris, David
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hayes, Jerry
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hinchliffe, David
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holt, Richard
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howard, Michael
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Ingram, Adam
Jack, Michael
Janner, Greville
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leadbitter, Ted
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leighton, Ron
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
McGrady, Eddie
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLeish, Henry
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNamara, Kevin
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marek, Dr John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Mellor, David
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Neale, Gerrard
Nellist, Dave
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Oppenheim, Phillip
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Redwood, John
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Robinson, Geoffrey
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowlands, Ted
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Sheerman, Barry
Shelton, Sir William
Shersby, Michael
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Sims, Roger
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Steinberg, Gerry
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Straw, Jack
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo

Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Vaz, Keith
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Walley, Joan
Ward, John
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wheeler, John
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilshire, David
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wolfson, Mark
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Yeo, Tim
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Martin Flannery and
Mr. Ivan Lawrence.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Amos, Alan
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bowis, John
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Dewar, Donald
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Emery, Sir Peter
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Faulds, Andrew
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Maclennan, Robert
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Marlow, Tony
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Sir David
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Paice, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Robertson, George
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Viggers, Peter
Walters, Sir Dennis
Warren, Kenneth
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Nicholas Bennett and
Mr. Harry Ewing.

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of the report of the War Crimes Inquiry; and endorses the need for legislation to permit the prosecution in this country, for acts of murder and manslaughter or culpable homicide committed as war crimes in Germany, or German-occupied territory, during the Second World War, of people who are now British citizens or resident here.

Private Bills (Procedure)

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That

—the Promoters of every Private Bill which originated in this House in the last Session and which is listed in Schedule A to this Order, or which originated in the House of Lords in the last Session and which is listed in Schedule B to this Order may, notwithstanding anything in the Standing Orders or practice of this House, proceed with the Bill in the present Session; and the Petition for the Bill shall be deemed to have been deposited and all Standing Orders applicable thereto shall be deemed to have been complied with;

—every such Bill which originated in this House shall be presented to the House not later than the seventh day after this day;

—there shall be deposited with every Bill so presented a Declaration signed by the Agent for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the last Session;

—every Bill so presented shall be laid by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office upon the Table of the House on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill was presented;

—every Bill listed in Part I of Schedule A shall, after being so laid on the Table, be deemed to have been read the first, second, and third time, and shall pass;

—every Bill listed in Part II of Schedule A shall, after being so laid on the Table, be deemed to have been read the first and second time and reported from Committee and ordered to lie upon the Table;

—when any Bill originating in the Lords, which was brought from the House of Lords in the last Session and to which this Order relates, is brought from the Lords in the present Session, the Agent for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a Declaration, signed by him, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the last Session, and, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office that such a Declaration has been so deposited has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be deemed—

(i) in the case of the Buckinghamshire County Council Bill [*Lords*], the London Local Authorities Bill [*Lords*], the South Yorkshire Light Rail Transit Bill [*Lords*] and the United Medical and Dental Schools Bill [*Lords*], to have been read the first and second time and committed and shall be committed to the Chairman of Ways and Means, who shall make such amendments thereto as have been made by the Committee in the last Session, and shall report the Bill as amended to the House forthwith, and the Bill, so amended, shall be ordered to lie upon the Table;

(ii) in the case of the Nottingham Park Estate Bill *[Lords]*, to have been read the first and second time and committed;

(iii) in the case of the Medway Tunnel Bill *[Lords]* and the Vale of Glamorgan (Barry Harbour) Bill *[Lords]*, to have been read the first time and ordered to be read a second time;

(iv) in the case of the Greater Manchester (Light Rapid Transit System) (No. 3) Bill *[Lords]*, to have been read the first time and referred to the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills;

—in respect of all the Bills listed in Schedules A and B to this Order, the various stages deemed to have been taken shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been taken;

—only such Petitions as were presented against any Bill brought from the Lords in the last Session which stood referred to the Committee on the Bill and which have not been withdrawn shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill with the same title in the present Session;

—in relation to any Bill to which this Order applies, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to Committee of Petitions against Bill)" were omitted;

—in respect of any Bill originating in the House of Lords to which this Order relates and upon which the Examiners have reported in the last Session that no Standing Order not previously inquired into was applicable thereto, the Examiners shall, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the present Session, be deemed to have made the same report in the present Session;

—no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on any of the Bills to which this Order relates so far as Fees were incurred during the last Session;

—this House doth concur with the Lords in their Resolution contained in their Message [22nd November] relating to the River Tees Barrage and Crossing Bill *[Lords]*, the Happisburgh Lighthouse Bill *[Lords]*, the Great Yarmouth Port Authority Bill *[Lords]*, the Southampton Rapid Transit Bill *[Lords]*, the Heathrow Express Railway Bill *[Lords]*, the London Local Authorities (No. 2) Bill *[Lords]* and the Greater Manchester (Light Rapid Transit System) Bill *[Lords]*.

Schedule A

Part I

1. City of London (Spitalfields Market) Bill
2. Hythe Marina Village (Southampton) Wavescreen Bill
3. Isle of Wight Bill
4. New Southgate Cemetery and Crematorium Limited Bill
5. St. George's Hill, Weybridge, Estate Bill
6. Penzance Albert Pier Extension Bill

Part II

1. British Film Institute Southbank Bill
2. British Railways Bill
3. City of London (Various Powers) Bill
4. Redbridge London Borough Council Bill

Schedule B

1. Buckinghamshire County Council Bill *[Lords]*
2. London Local Authorities Bill *[Lords]*
3. South Yorkshire Light Rail Transit Bill *[Lords]*
4. United Medical and Dental Schools Bill *[Lords]*
5. Nottingham Park Estate Bill *[Lords]*
6. Medway Tunnel Bill *[Lords]*
7. Vale of Glamorgan (Barry Harbour) Bill *[Lords]*
8. Greater Manchester (Light Rapid Transit System) (No. 3) Bill *[Lords]*—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I should announce to the House that Mr. Speaker has not selected the amendments.

8.11 pm

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I rise to seek your protection so far as it is possible for ordinary Back-Benchers to do so, whether they support or oppose the Government. Today will not be the first occasion in recent months when private business, which affects some citizens but not others, has been extended beyond 10 o'clock. It means that those of us who are keen to support the Government in the Lobby on Government business find that the hours of the House are extended by means of a motion, in this case slipped through on Friday with almost no notice. Does the Chair have powers to help us avoid extending the hours of the House even longer than they are already for public business? This morning we sat until 2.17 am, and clearly tonight we shall sit almost as long, if not longer. It is because the hours for private business are being extended. Can we avoid that in the future?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I can make two points in answer to the hon. Gentleman. First, the three hours was agreed by the House on Friday. The motion was on the Order Paper and, because business finished early, it could have been debated before 2.30 pm, had the hon. Gentleman wished to do so. Secondly, if he is dissatisfied with the procedure, and I understand his point, his remedy is to put the matter to the Select Committee on Procedure.

8.13 pm

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): I hope not to detain the House long. One should congratulate the Chairman of Ways and Means on tabling this motion. This is not an easy matter and it needs to be put in proper perspective.

Tonight we are dealing not with a carry-over motion but a resurrection motion. At the end of the previous Session these Bills were lost and consigned to the ash can. Tonight we seek to bring them back to life. The motion is unusual and retrospective, so it must be treated with considerable care.

We should understand the principle behind what is essentially private business. Private legislation enshrines the principle, surely as old as Parliament itself, that an individual, a corporation or a specific body should be able to petition Parliament and the petition should be properly considered. I do not want to go into the reasons behind what happened in the past Session, but no reasonable man on the 28 bus or, perhaps more appropriate to the motion, the light rapid transit system could say that the Bills introduced by local authorities and private companies in the past Session received their reasonable expectation of full discussion and fair treatment to bring them to the statute book. Indeed, the blocking treatment that they received had nothing whatever to do with their merits. The merits of the individual Bills were never considered.

The tactics used, although in order, could not have brought credit to the House. In one instance hon. Members set parliamentary records by forcing votes on the trot for over two and a half hours on purely technical Lords amendments to the International Westminster Bank Bill. Such tactics could be said to bring Parliament into disrepute. At the end of the Session only one Bill had succeeded in obtaining Royal Assent. No one can suggest that that is acceptable or that the Bills received anything like fair treatment. This motion tries to ensure that the past can be corrected, so that these Bills are given a second chance.

That is particularly important when one considers that petitioners have gone to considerable expense in some circumstances to bring their private Bills to Parliament. I shall not mention names. The cost of some was only £10,000 or £20,000, but I know of one instance where the costs rose to over £150,000 and another to over £375,000. It is wrong that people should be put to the same cost all over again to bring their Bills back before Parliament. This resurrection motion has been brought about by a specific and unusual instance which I hope will never recur.

I strongly believe that this must not become a precedent. Members of Parliament have a right, through proper debate and consideration, to defeat Bills and to know that at the end of a Session the Bills may be defeated and dead——

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): On their merits.

Sir Peter Emery: —particularly on their merits. If a Bill falls on its merits in the future, this should not be a precedent to resurrect it. This special motion sets out to correct a problem which the House should correct.

Mr. Hughes: I anticipate that the hon. Gentleman is about to finish. Will he make it clear that, if the motion is passed, each Bill will be resumed at the beginning of this Session at exactly the same stage at which it was previously buried? That is important because the Bills have reached different stages and hon. Members need to know that nothing has been changed and that the Bills have not advanced without debate.

Sir Peter Emery: The hon. Gentleman is right. It is quite clear from the motion that the Bills are returned to the state they were in last Session. It is as though we were still in last Session.

It is a credit to the House to be able to show that when things go wrong we can put them right in the most sensible way. I congratulate the Government and the Chairman of Ways and Means on setting out to do that.

8.19 pm

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): I am grateful for the resurrection of the South Yorkshire Light Rail Transit Bill. A great deal was at stake in Sheffield and, even at this hour and with the risk of trying the patience of hon. Members, I should like to put on record the anxieties that were quite unnecessarily stirred in Sheffield because of the abuse of the private Bill procedure.

A year ago Sheffield was empowered to proceed with a line to run from my constituency to the northern part of the city and through the centre. However, we required an additional line in connection with the redevelopment of the east end of Sheffield, especially of Meadowhall and adjoining areas. Powers to construct the second line in conjunction with part of the first line were urgently required to enable the South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive to provide up-to-date public transport for the world student games in Sheffield in 1991. The executive felt that the second Bill would be passed by the end of last Session and that it would be possible for the executive to proceed with the letting of contracts for work to start next month so that as much of the line as is required for the world student games could be completed and be in operation in 18 months.

A substantial part of the second line would pass along or beside railways of the British Railways Board and part would make use of disused railway. On the promotion of the Bill, the PTE reached agreement with the British Railways Board and with all those who objected to the scheme. We were ready to proceed and were awaiting parliamentary sanction. The cost of the promotion to date is estimated at about £350,000. All that was put at risk by the difficulties experienced and so well described by the Chairman of the Procedure Committee, the hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery).

I hope that what I have said will make hon. Members pause before they pursue their ends or betray their exasperation, which can be well known, understood and shared, but which must not be expressed at the expense of their colleagues and neighbours. *[Laughter.]* The hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) may laugh, but this is no laughing matter in Sheffield. That city badly needs regeneration and possibly all that regeneration depends upon the passage of the Bill.

8.22 pm

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): I apologise for mentioning an hon. Member without following the convention of informing him that I would do so. I see that he is absent from the Chamber. The hon. Member for

Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) is reported in the *Southern Evening Echo* on Thursday 23 November to have said:

> "The Isle of Wight Bill will go through the House fairly quickly."

I am therefore surprised that the hon. Gentleman has put down to the motion an amendment which seeks to leave out the Isle of Wight Bill. However, I understand that none of the amendments has been selected.

I draw to the attention of the House the recommendations in the report on private Bill procedure which was published in the 1987-88 Session. Conclusion No. 22 says:

> "The procedure for objecting orally to a Bill should be abolished."

We have allowed television cameras to cover our proceedings and are accountable for all our words and actions in printed form. It is quite wrong that hon. Members are able to object surreptitiously to Bills which represent thousands if not millions of pounds worth of investment by various communities and local authorities. Hon. Members can object from behind a hand or from behind an Order Paper and there is no record of who has objected. People in the Press Gallery are not able to identify objectors and a geat deal of injustice occurs. I have received letters from organisations maligning me, and a national newspaper carried a defamatory article over which, regrettably, I have had to start legal proceedings.

Whatever else emerges from this unfortunate state of affairs, I hope that we will reform that part of the procedure if no other because we do ourselves no service by objecting in such a way. When I objected to Bills after my Bill had been lost on 14 November, I stood in my place so that there could be no doubt about the courage of my convictions and actions. As my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) has said, I hope that when the Bills are resurrected they will be debated in the normal way.

Mr. Simon Hughes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Does the Leader of the House propose to intervene? There are issues about the Procedure Committee's recommendations which are his responsibility and it would be of assistance to hon. Members if they knew whether the Leader of the House intends to speak.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Sir Geoffrey Howe): I was hoping to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, simply to reaffirm what I have told the House already about the way in which we are addressing the recommendations of the Joint Committee. I am not anxious to stand in the way of the speedy consideration of the motion before the House, and I was judging the moment for brief intervention. I am here for a modest purpose.

8.26 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): The House was clogged with business at the end of the last Session, not just because of activity in connection with private Bills but because of the overloading by Government. That led to the Leader of the House having to come here time and again to introduce timetable motions on the Football Spectators Bill, the Companies Bill and the Children Bill. That meant that there was not the time that there would otherwise have been for private Bills to be debated and the possibility, following Divisions, for Bills to be carried over. That would have been better than the omnibus provision that is before us.

Some of us object to the abuse of the private Bill procedure because we feel that many such Bills could be dealt with by way of planning agreement provisions. That would enable local bodies making representations in connection with Bills to be represented at local inquiries. That would be easier than coming to the House to face what seems to them a highly judicial procedure. In some cases the Government could take over measures and produce them as public Bills. The North Killingholme Cargo Terminal Bill has caused great consternation and many problems and is exactly in that category because it clearly had the Government's unofficial backing.

We seem to be resurrecting Bills by some procedural sleight of hand and while it might be legitimate, it is procedurally uncomfortable. We are debating a Lazarus resolution in order to return from the dead measures for which time could not be found in a parliamentary Session. There are reasons for Parliament feeling that measures should go through within a Session unless there are some special arguments that need to be considered and for which a carry-over motion is necessary.

I am not sure how many times motions such as this have been resorted to in an attempt to resurrect whole wads of Bills. Reasonable, decent and necessary though many such measures are, they could be dealt with by other means: in a democracy, after all, we need to be as careful about the procedures in which we engage as we are about the substantive issues that we discuss.

There is a case for arguing that, when a Bill is objected to, the name of the hon. Member who objects should be recorded in *Hansard*. I should not mind that, although my name would feature sometimes. It would be particularly useful on Fridays, when wads of private Members' Bills are defeated by a lone voice, sometimes that of a Government Whip. Thus a Member of Parliament whose identity may be obscure is enabled to bury a group of measures, with no possibility of a motion such as this to bring them back from the dead—although it is sometimes possible for us to go behind the Chair and keep Bills alive in that way.

I find the development of procedures such as this uncomfortable, however. Since the last general election the Government have been ploughing piece after piece of radical legislation through the House without giving the other side a chance to consider it. Their aim has been to keep us going all the time, so that decent reflection and scrutiny are not possible.

8.31 pm

Dame Peggy Fenner (Medway): I am delighted to have caught your eye, Mr. Speaker, as it enables me to speak for a few moments in support of the motion.

In 1981, when the constituency of Chatham lost its famous dockyard, it became clear that considerable input would be needed from both the Government who had closed it and the two energetic local authorities involved if the area was to be rejuvenated, and if lost job opportunities were to be replaced. To that end, a great regeneration has taken place in the Medway towns. The current redevelopment of the industrial part of the

[Dame Peggy Fenner]

dockyard urgently necessitates improvements in our road structure so that the traffic thus generated does not make its way through the heart of the Medway towns.

In Rochester, we have a unique organisation called the Rochester Bridge trust. It was started some centuries ago by people in Kent, who contributed to a fund to provide a wooden crossing of the Medway. Since those days, thanks to a wise investment of the sum that remained, the trust has provided two beautiful modern bridges over the Medway. It was in fact the promoter of the Tunnel Bill, which suffered the same fate as the other private Bills that were objected to.

The Rochester Bridge trust—with the local authority and, I believe, with the support of the Department of Transport—is to pay for a new, modern Medway crossing in the form of a tunnel beneath the Medway, which is intended to preserve the environment of those who live in the Medway towns.

8.33 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I think that I can be as brief as other hon. Members who have spoken.

In any Session a London Member will discover several private Bills of direct or indirect interest to him. I must declare a constituency interest in the United Medical and Dental Schools Bill owing to its connection with Guy's hospital, but five more of these private Bills relate to London: the City of London (Spitalfields Market) Bill, the City of London (Various Powers) Bill, the Redbridge London Borough Council Bill, the London Local Authorities Bill and—because of its general implications—the British Railways Bill.

Some of those Bills—including, certainly, the United Medical and Dental Schools Bill—are uncontroversial, and have never been objected to on their merits; I believe that that also applies to the Medway Tunnel Bill, to which the hon. Member for Medway (Dame P. Fenner) referred. Clearly the passage of such Bills should not have been thwarted. Moreover, if another of the Bills in the list, the Nottingham Park Estate Bill, does not proceed to a conclusion this year it will be too late, because it relates to the implementation of the poll tax legislation next April, and the cost to its promoters has already been such that they will not be able to start again.

As the House knows, the trouble arises from two historical consequences of the private Bill procedure. First, private Bills have been used increasingly in place of the normal planning process. My colleagues and I have traditionally objected to that on principle, as it often constitutes an unsatisfactory way of bypassing those normal and appropriate procedures. Secondly, as the Chairman of the Procedure Committee knows, the procedures governing private business have needed reforming for some time, which is why I intervened on a point of order to ask whether the Leader of the House intended to say a few words on behalf of the Government.

I do not believe that we can leave tonight's debate feeling happy about the motion unless we know that urgent attention will be given to the reform of those procedures. I look forward to hearing from the Leader of the House that time will be found and the appropriate arrangements made by the Government, the Chairman of Ways and Means and officers of all parties in the House to facilitate a necessary and long-delayed debate. We need to discuss the proper consideration given to the matter by the Procedure Committee, and the recommendations that it has made following much thought and the taking of much evidence.

We have not done ourselves a service in our handling of private business; nor, often, have we done a service to the promoters of private legislation, who have quite properly used a method whereby they believed that they could ensure the passage of their legislation, in the expectation that that legislation would be debated and put to a vote on its merits. It is perfectly proper for a private Bill to fall on its merits; it is also proper for a non-private Bill to fall because of procedural devices; but it is not at all proper for a private Bill to fall because of procedural wrangling intended to block another private Bill in which the relevant Members of Parliament have no interest.

I anticipate that tonight's debate will result in—as it were—a restoration of the status quo, and that an unusual, perhaps unprecedented, revival motion will in a sense return us to the last Session of Parliament. I hope that that will facilitate the normal passage of these Bills. If they are objected to individually, so be it, but I hope that we can at last get round to reforming our still antiquated private business procedures. By this time next year, perhaps a long-delayed reform will have occurred.

8.37 pm

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): I, too, welcome the measure, although, like many of my colleagues, I regret the circumstances that have made it necessary. The Nottingham Park Estate Bill affects no one outside my constituency; indeed, it affects only those living within that estate, and I hope that my constituents will be allowed its passage. As the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) pointed out, unless that passage is completed within the next few months the Bill will fall, which would be a tragedy for the people living in the estate.

8.38 pm

Mr. John P. Smith (Vale of Glamorgan): I have no wish to detain the House unnecessarily, nor have I any objection to the revival motion. I would like, however, to draw attention to one of the Bills involved, the Vale of Glamorgan (Barry Harbour) Bill. Let me declare an interest immediately: I am a member of the borough council, and have been for some 10 years. Although the council promoted the Bill, however, I must make it clear that I speak as the Member of Parliament for the area. I have lodged an objection to the Bill, and I intend to put on record the reasons for my objection.

This is one of three Bills that have been presented to the House since 1956 in an attempt to develop the old harbour in the beautiful town of Barry. It seeks two powers: first, to reclaim substantial amounts of land in the old harbour; and, secondly, to implement engineering works so that lock gates can be installed. The intention is to develop housing and leisure facilities in the area. I am afraid that such a development may endanger the far more important and significant development of the docklands in the town that are owned by Associated British Ports. There are 100 acres of derelict land crying out to be developed round the No. 1 dock, which would make an ideal marina. For the life of me, I cannot envisage any town needing two marinas when marinas have already been proposed at about 35 locations on the Welsh coast.

I therefore want an amendment to the Bill. I want the promoters to reduce the amount of land that they wish to reclaim by 30 per cent. They have already agreed in writing to do that. The second amendment would replace the lock gates with a half cill. There would be a salt water lake where water-based recreational activities could take place. It would not compete directly with the No. 1 dock, which is the ideal and obvious site for a marina. It would not, therfore, jeopardise the much more important development in Barry.

Barry was built on coal, on tourism at the turn of the century and on manufacturing industry at the end of the second world war. In the early 1980s we lost 85 per cent. of our manufacturing jobs. Our tourism is somewhat outdated, although I was glad to hear that Esther Rantzen and the BBC have had to pay damages for insulting our town——

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman. I understand his constituency interest, but he is straying from the revival motion.

Mr. Smith: It is important that the Bill should be revived and the debate continued on the Vale of Glamorgan (Barry Harbour) Bill so that we reach the right compromise and achieve the best development of the area. We must take advantage of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to regenerate Barry. I have no objection, therefore, to the revival motion.

8.42 pm

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): On behalf of my hon. Friends the Members for Ilford, North (Mr. Bendall), for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) and myself, Members of Parliament for the London borough of Redbridge, I support the motion. We believe that it would be entirely wrong if the expenditure by our constituents on promoting the Redbridge London Borough Council Bill were to be ignored without the case for the Bill being heard by the House.

The Bill was considered in Committee. The Committee's decision may or may not be what we might have wished, but its decision should be reported to the House so that it can decide whether to support the Committee. Therefore, we support the revival motion.

8.43 pm

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): I support the motion. As the Member for Stockton, South I have sat here on a number of occasions and listened with frustration to the River Tees Barrage and Crossing Bill having its progress delayed by shouts of "Object."

The Bill is crucial to the economic regeneration of Teesside. It has gained the approval of the Teesside development corporation, a number of Labour-controlled local authorities and other local bodies. The various obstacles that the Bill has encountered have led to considerable surprise and consternation. It would attract investment of hundreds of millions of pounds. It would open up unparalleled employment and investment opportunities on Teesside. It is extremely galling to the people of the north-east to find that the Bill has been lost without even a modicum of discussion of its merits.

I am the Member of Parliament for the constituency that will be most significantly affected by the Bill. The river Tees runs through my constituency, and two of the three development sites that will be opened up by the Bill are in my constituency. A number of people in my part of the country will be much encouraged if the House allows the Bill to continue its progress, having been passed by the other place before it collapsed here at the end of the previous Session.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Leader of the House.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover) *rose*——

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I would not want, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to stand in the way of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner).

Mr. Skinner: The right hon. and learned Gentleman is big enough, is he not?

Sir Peter Emery: The hon. Gentleman has only just come in.

8.45 pm

Mr. Skinner: Yes, I have just come in. I spend a lot of time in this place. I was here earlier, between 2.30 and 5.30. I did not see the hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery). The person who was sitting where he is sitting now was his old friend the ex-Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). I did not see the hon. Gentleman move up and let the ex-Prime Minister sit in his customary place, so the hon. Gentleman should not give me all that crap about how long he has been here.

Sir Peter Emery: Without that kind of interjection, the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has been here long enough to know that many hon. Members do a lot of work outside the Chamber. Many of them sit on Committees. I have probably been here today far longer than the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Skinner: That is a debating point. While the hon. Gentleman was making money in whatever business he makes money in now—he used to make it out of diving companies—I was in Committee this morning at 10.30. *[Interruption.]* I did not start this; the hon. Member for Honiton started it and I intend to finish it. I do not intend to be lectured by Conservative Members who make money in the law courts and come here later in the day to make money out of moonlighting jobs, as directors of this or that firm, or as parliamentary advisers.

One of the reasons why many Opposition Members opposed certain Bills was that it was drawn to our attention that the private Bill procedure was in a mess. One of the Bills that we came up against was the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill. We thought that the four Members who considered the Bill in Committee were totally disinterested in the Bill. We took it for granted, perhaps naively, that hon. Members who were sponsored by the National Union of Mineworkers could not sit on the Committee that considered the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill. Since it would lead to huge imports of coal, it was thought that we had a direct interest in stopping the Bill reaching the statute book. That was true, and what happened? NUM-sponsored Members were excluded from the Committee. Even my hon. Friend the

[Mr. Skinner]

Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) was excluded, although he represents a constituency where there are still miners.

Who sat on the Bill? Two hon. Members with no connections with the mining industry were Committee members. The conventions of the House allow two Tory Members to sit on the other side of the Committee. One of them, the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark), who is not here, ended up as Chairman of the Committee that considered the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill. When we made some inquiries, we found that he is not at all disinterested. He is the parliamentary adviser to the British Chemical Engineering Contractors Association. One of the firms that is a part of that consortium has a sister or brother company that promoted a Bill relating to the Humber—the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill.

So we have a Tory Chairman with a direct interest in the Bill. We had a Bill several pages long that took weeks and weeks in Committee, and some of my hon. Friends decided to table some amendments. What happened? Surprise, surprise, the two Tories voted, and the very-much-interested Chairman used his casting vote to ensure that no amendment went through.

Experienced parliamentarians will know—you will know it, Mr. Deputy Speaker—that, when a Bill is in Committee for months, the chances are that one or two amendments will get through. It is almost certain that some major amendments will get through, but with that Bill it was deemed that no amendments should be allowed because the Tories did not want us to have a Report stage. The result was that no amendments went through—it was 2-2 and the casting vote every time. As a result, the Bill was excluded from a Report stage on the Floor of the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the hon. Member that the Bill that he is referring to now is not in the motion before the House.

Mr. Skinner: Yes, I know that, but——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member must direct his remarks to Bills that are contained in the motion.

Mr. Skinner: I have no doubts about the fact that the Associated British Ports Bill is not included in this long list of Bills in the motion, but it is first on the agenda, and there will be a Third Reading debate on it when we come back after Christmas.

I know what the score is, but I have to tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so that you can tell the Clerk sitting in front of you, who is telling you to put me in order. You should tell the Clerk that I am explaining why there has been a backlog of Bills. One of the reasons is that the Tory Government have been playing politics with the Associated British Ports Bill. Why? Because they want South African coal to be imported into Britain. They do not care tuppence about the balance of payments deficit. They are prepared to add to it, and to shut pits to allow South African coal to come in.

Some of us have had the guts to stand up and oppose the Associated British Ports Bill in the House, and so there has been a backlog of Bills. The hon. Member for Honiton knows all about it because he is Chairman of the Procedure Committee. He is not wet behind the ears, and he knows that that is one of the reasons why we have a string of private Bills today, and why there is a revival motion, which is a relatively new procedure and not normal practice for the House of Commons. The revival motion is for all the Bills that fell before the end of the last parliamentary Session.

The Government were so certain that they would get their measures through. Some of those Bills were political, and some were ordinary, run-of-the-mill private Bills that came up in the normal way. I would have supported some of them. The reason for the backlog is that the Government have allowed the private Bill procedure to fall into disrepute. That is why the Chairman of the Procedure Committee has raised the matter before. The Committee has discussed the issue on several occasions.

Sir Peter Emery: The hon. Gentleman is wrong.

Mr. Skinner: I am not wrong. Does the hon. Gentleman want to join in the debate, because I know that he has stood in the Chamber on numerous occasions and said to the Leader of the House, "Why don't you do something about the private Bill procedure?" I have heard him say it.

Sir Peter Emery: The hon. Gentleman may know that the Procedure Committee can deal only with public business. We cannot deal with private business, and the matter has not been discussed by the Procedure Committee at any time. I only point that out so that the hon. Gentleman can get it right.

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Gentleman has raised the matter with the Leader of the House on previous occasions, and with the previous Leader of the House. He knows that the private Bill procedure has created a lot of difficulties. We have a backlog of private Bills because too many people understood what was happening to the procedure.

Public companies make representations in this place, through the promoter, to get their Bills through. They should go to the local authority to get planning permission, but the private Bill is a convenient way to get round that.

Mr. Simon Hughes: It is convenient.

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Gentleman should have told that to some of his hon. Friends who ought to have been in the Coal Industry Bill Committee today, but who were missing. Have they got the 'flu as well? They are falling like flies. I noticed the Prime Minister was in the Division Lobby earlier spreading it. She looked as if she was deliberately bumping into our Members, but I do not think she was all that successful.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey made a worthwhile remark—it is convenient. Companies say, "Can we get this through the local authority?" The answer is, "You haven't got a cat in hell's chance, but I'll tell you what we'll do. I have a promoter, a nice fellow in the House of Commons, he will slip it through". The company asks, "Is it all right?" The answer is, "Yes. It's easy. The Tories have a 150 majority."

A lot of people are not fully aware that one can do anything when one has a 150 majority. They do not have to bring in all their Members to get a Bill through. They can settle it with two-thirds of their members, and allow a third to go missing, go to bed or go to work in the City, or wherever.

More companies are saying "That's a nice little earner. Let's get it through on the Floor of the House." Some

Opposition Members have got wise to that. Naturally, some people want some Bills, and some do not. The result has been a backlog that has continued to grow. The determination of the Tory Government to get the Associated British Ports Bill through has meant that the backlog has got worse.

Some Opposition Members are determined to cut back the current balance of payments deficit, even though the Government are not. We do not want more and more coal to be brought into Britain. We detest the fact that coal is coming from South Africa, in particular, but it is a scandal for any coal to come into Britain when pits are being shut down. That is what the Government's policy is all about.

Some Opposition Members believe that if private Bills are allowed to get through, it will result in a massive drain on the balance of payments. It will lead to the closing of pits in nearly every British coalfield. So, is the Associated British Ports Bill a political Bill? The answer is yes, of course it is. It should have been in the Queen's Speech. The Government should have the guts to say that they want to bring in a Bill that will result in shutting down pits. They do not have the guts, and so they allow promoters to bring in the Bill, through the back door, and then they expect Labour Members to say, "Oh well, we'd better not oppose it. It's a private Bill."

We are not wet behind the ears. We did not drop off a Christmas tree. We know what the game is all about. We understood that when we had the Felixstowe Dock and Harbour Bill. They are political Bills. That is why the Prime Minister used to turn up to vote for the Associated British Ports Bill in her carpet slippers. She knows whose side she is on—the side of people importing South African coal. Making money for her friends in the City—that is what the game is all about. When that happens, somebody has to have the guts to say, "We are not prepared to tolerate it." That is what we have done, although on some occasions it has meant other Bills being blocked.

It is vital to spot the Bill that is a wolf in sheep's clothing—the political Bill which is not really a private Bill. We have to draw its presence to the notice of the authorities of the House. As a result, the Leader of the House has said two or three times that he will do something about this procedure. I do not know what he will do.

Mr. Barry Field: Will the hon. Gentleman explain how the Isle of Wight Bill is political?

Mr. Skinner: I did not say that it was. The hon. Gentleman has not been listening carefully. There may be some political content. We have always had private Bills, but now that we have a Tory Government with a big majority it is easier to get around the planning laws at local authority level by pushing through a private Bill, especially if it suits the Government. The Isle of Wight Bill, like many others, got caught up in the backlog.

There is another Bill in the list called the London Local Authorities Bill. I did not know much about it until I bumped into someone recently and asked about it. It concerns street markets in London in the main. Most Labour-controlled local authorities say that it is not bad, that they have tidied it up and, because most boroughs in London are Labour-controlled, there is no problem. But what about the poor people in Westminster who have to operate in Lady Porter's domain? Street traders in Westminster must be worried about people from Westminster city council operating under that Bill. Such considerations must be explored.

At the end of the previous Session, the Leader of the House had five or six nights without sleep. He kept having to come in at 2 am or 3 am. He has been dropping off ever since. He had to come in and, to use a parliamentary phrase, pull stumps because some of us were protesting about how private Bills were being used. We told him time and again that, if he wanted to get to bed at a decent time and not have to surrender Government business, which he had to do five times, or use the guillotine, he should reform the private Bill procedure so that political Bills did not emerge as private Bills, thus bringing Parliament into disrepute. That is just one of the reasons why this backlog has arisen.

Contrary to the advice that you have received from your Clerk, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I must tell you that we object for reasons that are connected with the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill and others, such as the North Killingholme Cargo Terminal Bill. You cannot hide behind the notion that these Bills are not connected, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Many are. That is why many of us have come here night after night to oppose Government business. That is the only power that Oppositions have.

If you read any textbook about parliamentary government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you will find that they tell you that the Opposition have the power to oppose, day and night. They are taking a bit of a liberty when they write stuff like that, but there is an element of truth in it. It is not the truth and nothing but the truth, but there is a bit of truth in it. If a few hon. Members are prepared to fight and stick it out night after night, they can force the Government to introduce a guillotine. We cannot stop Government business, but we can delay it. It is the Opposition's job to oppose. We do not expect to defeat a Government with a majority of 150——

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Of 150?

Mr. Skinner: It is 150 against Labour. I cannot account for these rag, tag and bobtails behind me who turn up only half the time, nor can I account for hon. Members who represent Northern Ireland who turn up now and again and usually vote Tory. The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) is not sitting in his usual place. I do not know why he is trying to cuddle up to the Government's deputy Chief Whip. Normally he does not and sticks out for his pure, undiluted monetarism. Perhaps he has thrown the towel in because he voted with the Prime Minister on the motion on war crimes. *[Interruption.]* Well, it sounds as though he voted with her. I thought that he would be one of the "certs" to vote against her.

We have power to hold the Government back, but we are not naive enough to believe that we can hold them back for ever. They have increasingly used the power of the guillotine to stop debate and to stop democracy. Other Governments have done that too.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): Does my hon. Friend recall that it has not always been necessary for the Leader of the House to pull up stumps in debates on private Bills? Does he recollect that a very large party was thrown for Tory MPs to keep them here for most of the night?

Mr. Skinner: To keep them here?

Mr. Lofthouse: Yes. The ports authorities threw a party to keep Tory Members here.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) is absolutely right. That is a classic example of the abuse that occurs as a result of the private Bill procedure. The Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill was also entirely political from beginning to end. It sought to change the ports facilities along the east coast. There was real money to be made. It was not about tidying up a little bit of coastline; it was about making real brass. It was all about sweeteners—the current word for bribery and crookedness. So what happened? The promoters of the Bill said, "We had better keep the Tories here." They were not too sure whether Tory Members would stay all night as we had tabled a host of amendments. The Government have not allowed any amendments on the Associated British Ports Bill. That is one lesson they have learnt. The promoters said, "We shall keep the Tories here. We have it all arranged. We know they like a night out. We know that they like their champagne, so we shall put on a little party close by." But somebody on our side managed to get wind of it.

Mr. Simon Hughes: They had an invitation.

Mr. Skinner: I think that they sent an invitation to somebody with a similar name. It is the cock-up theory of history and it happens from time to time. As a result, the whole idea was blown so the Tories had to hurriedly——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is puzzling me now. I cannot find the relationship between what he is saying and the revival motion before the House.

Mr. Skinner: I do not know whether you received an invite, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so you might well be puzzled. If you did not get an invite and you were not there that night, I can understand your bewilderment. We all understand that. We were not invited. We did not want an invite. We should have liked the Tory Members to go to the party because we would have called a snap vote.

You ask whether it is relevant, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You bet it is. It is relevant because this is a revival motion. The Chairman of Ways and Means has probably told you that we are debating a revival motion because the Government could not get the Bill through in the last Session. They could not get a carry-over motion so that the Bills could be debated in this Session. It is really a crazy system. The textbooks say that if the Government lose a Bill in a parliamentary Session, it is dead. But the Government have a quaint little procedure which is very handy when money is being made on the side—to have a carry-over motion. If they cannot get a carry-over motion to the next Session of Parliament, they have a revival motion when the Session is finished.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Disgraceful.

Mr. Skinner: It is disgraceful. I am pleased that someone has woken up to the fact that all that corruption and graft is associated with private Bills. There is no question but that it is disgraceful, especially when it will throw people out of work. Some people in my constituency are playing merry hell about these ports Bills. They say it is disgraceful every day of the week. I hope that the hon. Member for Honiton puts those words into practice when the Associated British Ports Bill comes back after Christmas.

Sir Peter Emery: I did not say that.

Mr. Skinner: So the hon. Gentleman did not say that. It must have been one of his mates. But there is no doubt that it is disgraceful. Does the hon. Member for Honiton agree that it is disgraceful even if he did not say so at the time?

It is all about politics. It is not about private Bills. The Opposition know that and so do the Government, but they shelter behind them.

So we have a revival motion. It does not happen all the time, does it, Mr. Deputy Speaker? I bet that it is the first one since you have been in the Chair. I am taking a bet on it, but I might be right. I think that the first time a revival motion was used was for one of the Channel tunnel Bills. It was one of the ones with which the Government got mixed up. They got mixed up with the latest one because they ran out of money. In 1974, a snap election was called during the recess and the Channel Tunnel Bill was still on the stocks. When they called the general election the parliamentary Session ended. What did they do? They said, "We have not had a carry-over motion for the Channel Tunnel Bill, so we shall invent another name." That is what they did, and they called it a revival motion.

It is said that this mother of Parliaments has the sort of democracy that we shall sell to every country in the world—every Third world country comes trotting here to see the mother of Parliaments—but, by God, it is a bit seedy when one examines what happens. Not only are there 1,000 people down the other end of this mother of Parliaments who have not been elected by anybody, but in here the Government twist and turn and use the procedures to get their business through in order to line the pockets of their friends.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I have resisted intervening so far. Although the hon. Gentleman's lecture on constitutional law is welcome, he always misses one salient point—none of the private Bills that are supported by the Government would get through if the membership of this place reflected the views of the electorate. When he supports a proper electoral system I shall more frequently support his arguments on constitutional law.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am sure that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) will not be tempted to broaden the debate to the electoral system.

Mr. Skinner: I am talking about a revival motion. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey knows all about revivals—his party has tried about three in the past 12 months. Only a few weeks ago, he was threatening that if the Liberal party did not revive itself and change its name for the 15th time in the past 12 months he would join the greens. He was going to start a revival motion for the Green party, but now that it has fallen in the opinion polls he never talks about it; he has gone back to the Mary Rose and all the rest of it. I do not want any lectures about revivals from the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Simon Hughes: We are very good at revivals.

Mr. Skinner: No, the hon. Gentleman's party is not. It has tried mergers with Dr. Death and now it is trying them with Paddy Backdown. It has had revival after revival, but it is as far away from power as the Vietnamese boat people in Hong Kong. The hon. Gentleman talks about something that I am not allowed to refer to——

Mr. Hughes: Comedian.

Mr. Skinner: "Comedian?" The hon. Gentleman's party talks about proportional representation and bringing more of its people into Parliament. We want people to work when they get here; we want them to do a stint; and we want them to chuck a shovel full on when they come here. But the truth is that on the occasions when we have needed them, such as on the vote on charges for spectacles and dentistry, when we came close to defeating the Government, what happened to the champions of PR? They were having a seminar somewhere, and I think that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey was one of those who went missing——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I realise that the hon. Member for Bolsover has been tempted by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), but I am sure that he will come back to the straight and narrow.

Mr. Skinner: I do not want to go down that road because I have dealt with why we have the revival motion. Labour Members understand why we have it and that it should be put right.

The Leader of the House has not had his job long. Other Leaders of the House threatened to change the procedure but never did so. Some were shifted because they were semi-detached and did not carry it through. I do not know what is in the Prime Minister's mind, but in this Session the deputy Prime Minister might have a chance to change the procedure. One thing that he could do that would make a massive difference to our view is to take some steps to ensure that the Associated British Ports (No.2) Bill is not given a Third Reading. He should have words with the authorities, as they call them in this place. He should bring out some new steps for the procedure and hold back the Bill. There may be some collaboration—I cannot guarantee that personally, but some of my hon. Friends might agree. Then, having established that good will, the procedure might be changed. The Leader of the House would have fewer headaches and the Government might return to using the private Bill procedure for what it is really intended—those Bills that have come through in the normal fashion. The political Bills that I and other hon. Members have described should be shoved on to an agenda where they belong and be returned to the planning authorities. If that happens as a result of this discussion on the revival motion, it will have been worthwhile.

9.15 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Sir Geoffrey Howe): After the speech of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), I have a little hesitation in responding to the invitation extended to me by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). However, I hope that it will still be helpful if I intervene in the context of this mass resurrection motion that is designed to correct the near-slaughter of the innocents that took place towards the end of the previous Session. I remind the House that the motion stands in the name of the Chairman of Ways and Means, but it was commended earlier in its life by my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery), who is the Chairman of the Procedure Committee.

'Private Bills do not always complete all their stages in one Session, but the promoters of such Bills have the right to expect the House to reach a decision on their proposals and to reach that decision—as hon. Members have pointed out—on the merits of the Bill, not as a consequence of procedural hazard. Our procedures allow for carry-over and revival motions. They exist to provide the framework —as they always have—within which we conduct business in the House, whether public or private. They exist for the effective operation of the House as a whole irrespective of the political complexion of the Government of the day. The diversity of the various private Bills referred to in the motion shows beyond doubt the wishes of their promoters for them to continue and the fact that the motion stands in the name of the Chairman of Ways and Means shows that he is satisfied that everything is in order.

The merits of the individual Bills have nothing to do with the motion. They have parents and godparents of various political and other persuasions. Several of my hon. Friends have spoken, including my hon. Friends the Members for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field), for Medway (Dame P. Fenner), for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) and representatives from Nottingham and Redbridge. Opposition Members have also spoken, including the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Smith), who is not here now. I listened with some affection to his speech because the Vale of Glamorgan is the only part of Wales where members of my family still dwell. The last time I went to the Vale of Glamorgan was to try to prevent the hon. Gentleman from being elected, but I was not successful.

As many hon. Members have emphasised, private Bills should be considered and should pass or fail on their merits. There is no real reason for any of them to be grouped into a type of mass dismissal. We should consider the innocent and virtuous titles listed in the two schedules. The promoters of those Bills are entitled to a decision on the merits of the proposals and not to see the decision frustrated by procedure.

It is clear from what has been said by the hon. Member for Bolsover and others that some hon. Members either oppose the whole system of private legislation or oppose the present scope or pattern of it. We must deal with matters as they are on the basis of our existing procedures. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) was not alone when he suggested that some of these things would be better handled by means of planning inquiries. I am not an overwhelming enthusiast for the merits of planning inquiries, which have their own shortcomings. That may be a reason why private Bills have become a more attractive alternative. He suggested that they might be the subject of Government or hybrid Bills. They could be dealt with by other methods but this method has been used for many years. It is a route that exists and we should not allow our irritation with one route or one vehicle on that route to block the vehicles that have set out with high expectations.

On the substance of what to do about this procedure in the future, I have said to the House more than once that the whole question of the private Bill procedure is an important subject. However, I find increasingly that it is complex. At first, it appears to be rather obscure and procedural, as though it was dealing with topics of

[Sir Geoffrey Howe]

peripheral interest, but the more one looks at it, and the more one considers our debates here, the clearer it becomes that private Bills can and do deal with important topics.

The existing arrangements, which have worked quite well, have lasted for a long time under various Governments. It is important that any changes that we undertake should lead to an improvement in the overall balance of procedures and should be equally enduring. For that reason, we are looking at the matter not only with a real sense of urgency, but with some care. I am not sure that the Joint Committee has said the last word on what we should do. Following the debates earlier this year and my own learning curve on the subject, I am consulting a number of my right hon. Friends and colleagues from several parties to try to tackle the problem, which we must take seriously. I assure the House that our sense of urgency is genuine, and the contribution of the hon. Member for Bolsover underlines my feeling of that sense of urgency.

The reasons that prompted the Joint Committee to recommend major changes have not disappeared. Clearly, we need to deal with them, but because the changes may be substantial and difficult to work out, and may require wide consultation, I must warn the House that I cannot promise when we shall be able to come forward with them.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Can the Leader of the House say whether he hopes to be able to reach his own conclusions and to make recommendations this Session?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I hope to be able to reach conclusions and to bring them forward this Session, in whatever may be the appropriate place—*[Interruption.]* That is a matter for consideration—*[Interruption.]* It is not a bad answer for all that. It may be possible to deal with some points quite early, whereas others may require rather more substantial legislation.

Mr. Barry Field: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it would not be a major step for the House to accept the simple reform of ensuring that the names of hon. Gentlemen who object to a Bill are recorded in *Hansard*? That would at least bring some accountability to this process.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As with so many topics, several of the 39 different proposals that are contained in the Joint Committee report are simple and identifiable, such as the one mentioned by my hon. Friend, but one has to try to identify a group or groups with which to proceed, step by step, as effectively as we can.

As many hon. Members have said, this is an unusual motion, but it has arisen from unusual circumstances. It is a matter of real concern that the House has departed from the tradition of discussing and objecting to private Bills solely according to the merits of each of them. The attempt to tackle one Bill by directing an onslaught at a number of them at the same time has contributed to our present problems.

Like other hon. Members, I hope that revival motions will not become a habit and I hope that the tactics that have given rise to them will not become a habit. On that basis, we intend to go ahead with a study of the necessary changes and I intend to report back to the House as soon as I can. I hope that the House will accept and vote on the motion for what it is—a procedural motion directed to the Bills that are listed in the schedules to enable consideration of them to continue, as it should.

9.24 pm

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): I welcome those remarks from the Leader of the House. In the style of certain television interviewers, let me repeat what he said so that there can be no misunderstanding about it. As I understand it, he will look at the procedure that so many hon. Members realise is deeply unsatisfactory with a real sense of urgency. If he does that, he will certainly have the co-operation of Opposition Members. Even during this brief debate a number of hon. Members have expressed their profound dissatisfaction with the procedure on private business. Private Bills affect environmental matters and circumvent planning procedures, and Bills that are clearly of national importance are dealt with under this procedure. It seems that we are substantially to revise and reform the procedure. Opposition Members look forward to that happening rapidly.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That

—the Promoters of every Private Bill which originated in this House in the last Session and which is listed in Schedule A to this Order, or which originated in the House of Lords in the last Session and which is listed in Schedule B to this Order may, notwithstanding anything in the Standing Orders or practice of this House, proceed with the Bill in the present Session; and the Petition for the Bill shall be deemed to have been deposited and all Standing Orders applicable thereto shall be deemed to have been complied with;

—every such Bill which originated in this House shall be presented to the House not later than the seventh day after this day;

—there shall be deposited with every Bill so presented a Declaration signed by the Agent for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the last Session;

—every Bill so presented shall be laid by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office upon the Table of the House on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill was presented;

—every Bill listed in Part I of Schedule A shall, after being so laid on the Table, be deemed to have been read the first, second, and third time, and shall pass;

—every Bill listed in Part II of Schedule A shall, after being so laid on the Table, be deemed to have been read the first and second time and reported from Committee and ordered to lie upon the Table;

—when any Bill originating in the Lords, which was brought from the House of Lords in the last Session and to which this Order relates, is brought from the Lords in the present Session, the Agent for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a Declaration, signed by him, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the last Session, and, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office that such a Declaration has been so deposited has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be deemed—

(i) in the case of the Buckinghamshire County Council Bill [*Lords*], the London Local Authorities Bill [*Lords*], the South Yorkshire Light Rail Transit Bill [*Lords*] and the United Medical and Dental Schools Bill [*Lords*], to have been read the first and second time and committed and shall be committed to the Chairman of Ways and Means, who shall make such amendments thereto as have been made by the Committee in the last Session, and shall report the Bill as amended to the House forthwith, and the Bill, so amended, shall be ordered to lie upon the Table;

(ii) in the case of the Nottingham Park Estate Bill *[Lords]*, to have been read the first and second time and committed;

(iii) in the case of the Medway Tunnel Bill *[Lords]* and the Vale of Glamorgan (Barry Harbour) Bill *[Lords]*, to have been read the first time and ordered to be read a second time;

(iv) in the case of the Greater Manchester (Light Rapid Transit System) (No. 3) Bill *[Lords]*, to have been read the first time and referred to the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills;

—in respect of all the Bills listed in Schedules A and B to this Order, the various stages deemed to have been taken shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been taken;

—only such Petitions as were presented against any Bill brought from the Lords in the last Session which stood referred to the Committee on the Bill and which have not been withdrawn shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill with the same title in the present Session;

—in relation to any Bill to which this Order applies, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to Committee of Petitions against Bill)" were omitted;

—in respect of any Bill originating in the House of Lords to which this Order relates and upon which the Examiners have reported in the last Session that no Standing Order not previously inquired into was applicable thereto, the Examiners shall, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the present Session, be deemed to have made the same report in the present Session;

—no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on any of the Bills to which this Order relates so far as Fees were incurred during the last Session;

—this House doth concur with the Lords in their Resolution contained in their Message [22nd November] relating to the River Tees Barrage and Crossing Bill *[Lords]*, the Happisburgh Lighthouse Bill *[Lords]*, the Great Yarmouth Port Authority Bill *[Lords]*, the Southampton Rapid Transit Bill *[Lords]*, the Heathrow Express Railway Bill *[Lords]*, the London Local Authorities (No. 2) Bill *[Lords]* and the Greater Manchester (Light Rapid Transit System) Bill *[Lords]*.

Schedule A

Part I

1. City of London (Spitalfields Market) Bill
2. Hythe Marina Village (Southampton) Wavescreen Bill
3. Isle of Wight Bill
4. New Southgate Cemetery and Crematorium Limited Bill
5. St. George's Hill, Weybridge, Estate Bill
6. Penzance Albert Pier Extension Bill

Part II

1. British Film Institute Southbank Bill
2. British Railways Bill
3. City of London (Various Powers) Bill
4. Redbridge London Borough Council Bill

Schedule B

1. Buckinghamshire County Council Bill *[Lords]*
2. London Local Authorities Bill *[Lords]*
3. South Yorkshire Light Rail Transit Bill *[Lords]*
4. United Medical and Dental Schools Bill *[Lords]*
5. Nottingham Park Estate Bill *[Lords]*
6. Medway Tunnel Bill *[Lords]*
7. Vale of Glamorgan (Barry Harbour) Bill *[Lords]*
8. Greater Manchester (Light Rapid Transit System) (No. 3) Bill *[Lords]*

Electricity Supply (Northern Ireland)

9.25 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Peter Bottomley): I beg to move,

That the draft Electricity Supply (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 24th October, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.

I welcome Northern Ireland Members and others to this debate. In case one or two other hon. Members are on their way, let me just say in passing that I am grateful to the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) for his remarks. Lest he should think that I have changed my interest completely, I would point out that my hon. Friend the Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham), who would normally be introducing the order, is on his way back from a "boost Northern Ireland" visit to the Far East. I am sure that he would wish me to take his place as best I can.

As we do not always have the opportunity to debate Northern Ireland matters properly, I should also like to declare that it has been eight days since someone died on the roads in Northern Ireland. That is a remarkable change in the normal pattern, and I hope that it will continue.

The purpose of the draft order is to ensure that Northern Ireland Electricity has the authority to take any steps necessary to facilitate the implementation of privatisation proposals that will be brought forward in due course by the Government. It will enable Northern Ireland Electricity to influence the working out of the detail of those proposals.

The order replicates the provisions of section 1 of the Public Utility Transfers and Water Charges Act 1988, which conferred similar powers on water authorities and electricity boards in Great Britain in preparation for the privatisation of those industries.

Last year the Government announced their intention to privatise NIE. This brought policy regarding the electricity supply industry in Northern Ireland into line with that for the rest of the United Kingdom. It is right that Northern Ireland too should benefit from private sector involvement in the industry.

The benefits are potentially very great. The injection of private sector management skills, a commercial approach that will put a premium on efficiency and economy of operation, the stimulus of new thinking from outside the public sector and the pressures of the capital market will all help to create an industry which performs better and gives the consumer a better deal.

Work on the privatisation has been progressing steadily. Preliminary studies of the major issues involved —structure, regulation, method of sale and so on—has been carried out by consultants and the Government have been looking more deeply into some of the points which those studies have highlighted.

The Department of Economic Development has recently appointed its financial and economic advisers for the privatisation and the other necessary advisers will be taken on board as soon as possible. These, and the industry itself, will assist in the formulation of firm proposals which Government hope to finalise in the first half of next year.

[Mr. Peter Bottomley]

The privatisation of Northern Ireland Electricity will present a unique challenge. There are a number of complex issues to be addressed, mostly arising from the size and nature of the Northern Ireland electricity system.

It is a very small system in European terms and at present it is not interconnected with any other grid. Because of the scattered nature of the Northern Ireland population, NIE's customer density is low and its distribution network correspondingly large.

The industry is somewhat over-dependent on oil-fired generating plant. Its financial performance is therefore vulnerable to movements in world oil prices. The smallness of the system also presents a challenge as regards the introduction of competition. There will need to be a balance between competition and regulation. The more competition can be introduced, the less intensive regulation will need to be. The Government are exploring and considering various ways of dealing with these issues and others that inevitably arise in the privatisation of an essential industry.

In developing our proposals we shall have the benefit of the thinking that has gone into the privatisation of the electricity supply industry of Great Britain. Once they are developed, after full consultation, Parliament's approval will then be sought for the substantive legislation which will be required to put them into effect.

The short draft order does not confer any power to give effect to proposals for the privatisation of Northern Ireland Electricity. That is a matter for substantive legislation—the Northern Ireland equivalent of the Great Britain electricity legislation.

The present order is modest. It is paving legislation.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Is it proposed that the substantive measure which will follow this proposal will be a Bill that is capable of amendment, or will it be a further order which is not amendable?

Mr. Bottomley: It will follow the normal pattern for Northern Ireland. It will not be a Bill in the conventional sense. I do not think that that comes as a surprise to hon. Members.

The order is needed for two reasons: Northern Ireland Electricity needs to be able to make early plans to ensure that once the proposals have been approved by Parliament they can be promptly implemented; NIE needs also to be able to assist in working out the practical details of the proposals, and, where appropriate, argue for modification of these details. Examples include the nature of the regulatory regime or the structure of the successor company or companies.

Northern Ireland Electricity may well wish to commission financial, legal or other expert advice to help it work out the implications of the Government's proposals or suggest alternatives. This order will establish its power to do those things and to incur expenditure on them.

Northern Ireland Electricity already has the power to do things of that kind for the purpose of its statutory functions. This order will remove any doubt as to its power to do them for purposes related to the transfer of its assets or functions.

It is important that Northern Ireland Electricity should make its full contribution to the detailed working through of the Government's proposals and so help to ensure a successful privatisation.

It is right that Northern Ireland Electricity should be able to take any preliminary steps to put itself in a position to implement the privatisation proposals expeditiously, once Parliament approves them, so that there need be no unnecessary delay. This order ensures that there is no impediment to NIE doing so.

The order does not confer powers on the Government. The powers it confers on Northern Ireland Electricity are limited. Northern Ireland Electricity may react only in response to Government proposals and may seek only to modify related proposals giving effect to the basic proposals, not the basic proposals themselves.

The powers are important. It is fair and prudent to ensure that Northern Ireland Electricity is in a position to make a full contribution to the debate about the future form of electricity supply in Northern Ireland. It is vital to the economic and social well-being of Northern Ireland that the privatisation arrangements are such that the electricity supply industry will be reliable, efficient and responsive to consumers' needs. Northern Ireland Electricity's input is essential to achieve that.

I commend the order to the House.

9.32 pm

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): The translation of what the Minister said at the conclusion of his remarks is that Northern Ireland's electricity service will be invited and ordered to arrange its own funeral. Hon. Members are becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the way in which issues of great importance for the future of Northern Ireland are discussed in such a brief and inadequate way. This order, simple though it appears on the surface, and simple though the Minister would have us believe it is, raises many issues of great complexity and importance. We will have no opportunity to amend the order or to give it the serious, in-depth consideration that it deserves—nor, indeed, the succeeding order which will privatise Northern Ireland Electricity.

I part company with some hon. Members on the solution to the difficulty. This issue should be discussed in a devolved Assembly in Northern Ireland. I hope that, one day—perhaps in the near future—the parties involved will be able to agree among themselves so that legislation of this nature will be dealt with in such an Assembly and discussed by Northern Ireland interests, and not be dictated to by a Government from Britain. I hope also that they will be able to discuss such legislation in the context not only of Northern Ireland but of 1992 and the implications of an energy policy for the island of Ireland as a whole.

It has been suggested that Northern Ireland is regarded as a laboratory where new policies can be tested without running the risk of incurring the hostility of the population of Great Britain.

This order is relatively unusual in that we see the reverse—policies that have been rejected by the vast majority of the British people and have already been publicly demonstrated to be failures will now be introduced into Northern Ireland. The Government have learnt nothing from the shambles of electricity privatisation in Britain, and therefore we have this order. However inappropriate electricity privatisation is for the much larger British economy, the effect is magnified in Northern Ireland. In this case, the Government are intent on ensuring that farce repeats itself as tragedy.

Before considering privatisation in detail, it is necessary to look at the order itself. A most defective order has been presented to the House which fails to spell out, even in outline terms, the framework for future regulatory mechanisms for the privatised electricity industry in Northern Ireland. The House will no doubt be surprised that we are considering this order because the Minister has promised to publish a White Paper on this issue next spring. He seems to have inverted the normal timetable for legislation and is asking the House to buy a pig in a poke.

I have two main criticisms about the drafting of the order. First, it gives no indication of the parameters of the investigations that must precede privatisation. It is a piece of enabling legislation that gives us little idea about what we are being asked to enable. Secondly, we are being asked to abrogate our responsibilities for public expenditure by giving a blank cheque to the Northern Ireland electricity service so that it may proceed with arrangements for its own demise. I should think that many hon. Members, even those who are committed supporters of privatisation, would be somewhat worried by the extent of the mandate that the Government are asking them to give to NIES.

As for the substance of the policies represented by the order, there is a striking difference between the position in Britain and that in Northern Ireland. If the privatisation of the electricity industry in Great Britain demonstrates the economic bankruptcy of the Government's position, the proposed privatisation of electricity in Northern Ireland completely contradicts one of the fundamental tenets of the Government's philosophy. We are frequently reminded of the virtues of competition. The Department of Trade and Industry turns out endless streams of propaganda on the theme; the Lord Chancellor wants to strengthen competition in the legal profession; and the Secretary of State for Health talks about an internal market in the National Health Service. For the Government, competition is clearly a principle, not even just even a means to an end.

The Government have made gestures towards the idea of ensuring competition in the electricity industry in Great Britain by the separation of National Power and PowerGen. They have at least recognised that their philosophy of economic liberalism should not allow the natural monopolies to be controlled by private interests. Such private control of the public purse is a recipe for the exploitation of the public by private interests—a sort of legalised, electrified Mafia. But as far as anyone can tell, given the paucity of information from the Government and the Minister tonight, that is precisely what the Government propose to do in the case of the Northern Ireland electricity service. They want to place the monopoly enjoyed by the electricity service in the hands of the private sector. All the signs are that the Government intend to sell off Northern Ireland Electricity as a single entity. That is the germ of what the Minister has said, despite his lip service to the concept of competition.

Such an arrangement is simply a recognition of the economic and technical realities of the Northern Ireland electricity service—realities that would make the National Power-PowerGen type of arrangement impractical for Northern Ireland. As the Minister said, the market is too small to make the operation of more than one firm profitable. Competition within the industry is almost impossible. Given that a larger number of power stations is required than is strictly necessary for economic reasons to guarantee security of supply, it is difficult to envisage a situation in which there would be competing generating authorities.

The monopoly problem is compounded by the position of electricity within the energy industry in general in Northern Ireland. It is correct to say that electricity is not the only source of power. However, its position is substantially assisted by the absence of an equally clean and convenient source of energy, such as gas. This privatisation is particularly appalling given the efforts which the Government devoted in the early 1980s to the destruction of the gas industry and its attendant jobs in Northern Ireland. Now, having given electricity a much stronger position in the energy market than it would otherwise have enjoyed, they intend to sacrifice the future of the electricity consumer in Northern Ireland to the tender mercies of the so-called free market.

This is a classic example of a case where the grounds for maintaining an industry in public hands are overwhelming, even from the perspective of the prophets of laissez-faire.

The next major concern of the Opposition about the practical effects of privatisation on electricity in Northern Ireland is the impact that it will have on the price of electricity to industrial and domestic users—to the manufacturer, farmer and housewife.

The Northern Ireland electricity service suffers from a number of natural disadvantages which ensure that it is a high-cost supplier of electricity. Those factors have little to do with any inefficiency that can be corrected by a more efficient management, whether in public or private hands. In that sense, the arguments in favour of privatisation—which, in any case, I do not accept—are a complete irrelevance. It cannot have any significant impact on the costs of the generation and supply of electricity in Northern Ireland.

The NIES is a high-cost supplier because the dispersal of population means higher distribution costs. Outside Belfast, the population is widely scattered throughout the Province, which naturally involves greater cost in delivering electricity to where it is required. Coupled with that are the costs of generating electricity. The NIES must provide a higher margin of reserve capacity because it is a stand-alone system; it cannot import from elsewhere to make up its shortfalls. Therefore, it needs the security of additional generating capacity. In the interest of security of supply, generating capacity must be shared around a number of units so that the system is not over-dependent on the output of a particular plant.

There is a much higher ratio of capacity to average demand. In addition, the lack of a significant number of large industrial users means that the peaks and troughs of demand are more divergent in Northern Ireland than in Great Britain or the Republic. There is a larger gap between the average demand and peak demand. That requires the Northern Ireland electricity service to provide a generating capacity which it would not otherwise need. In addition, the service is extremely vulnerable to rises in the dollar price of oil.

We are talking about differences—this is where the Government are making their great error—between the electricity industry in Northern Ireland and the industry in Great Britain. That fact has been recognised by the

[Mr. Kevin McNamara]

institution of the tariff link. The Minister must be aware of the great concern in Northern Ireland about the implications of privatisation for the tariff link. Under the present system, Northern Ireland's electricity prices are linked to the highest prices in Great Britain and any shortfall is made up by a subsidy to the electricity service. Privatisation obviously contains substantial dangers to the tariff link.

With privatisation, the rate of return on the capital employed in the industry will become all-important. Investors will expect a rate of return that compares with equivalent forms of investment. The Government should publish as soon as possible the rate of return that they expect the Northern Ireland electricity service to produce if they wish employers in the Province to make the necessary decisions about their future investment requirements. They must also make clear the valuation of the assets of the service.

One can see two ways in which the Northern Ireland electricity service could gain sufficient revenue to provide a higher rate of return than it does at present. The first would be for the Government simply to increase the subsidy. But if the NIES were in private hands, that would be an extremely peculiar way in which to proceed. Are the Government seriously suggesting that not only should the taxpayer be relieved of an existing asset, but that the new owners should then be given an increased subsidy to take the asset off the hands of the taxpayer? That reveals the absurdity of the privatisation scheme. But then that happened in the case of Austin Rover, so it is not impossible in Northern Ireland.

The second, more fearful alternative would be to increase the cost of electricity to domestic and industrial consumers. The size of the increase will depend largely on the rate of return which the Government will expect Northern Ireland Electricity to yield in private hands. A reasonable assumption is 5 per cent. If, for the sake of argument, the industry was privatised in 1990, an increase in prices of 13 per cent. above the rate of inflation would probably be required. There is some speculation in that suggestion. That is why it is important that the Government make their intentions known as soon as possible. Such speculation is going on in every firm in Northern Ireland and is hampering investment decisions. That is not Opposition scaremongering but a serious issue which will affect the future of the economy of Northern Ireland.

We know that prices will rise, but we do not yet know by how much above the rate of inflation. We shall pose a serious problem for future industrial competitiveness and development in Northern Ireland if we compound uncertain energy prices with transport costs due to the remoteness of major markets. I hope that the Government will accept their responsibility in this respect and act quickly to alleviate that anxiety among firms in Northern Ireland.

Privatisation is bound to increase prices, but any rise above the rate of inflation will place substantial burdens on industrial and domestic consumers. Faced with the prospect of increased competition with the advent of the single European market, rises in production costs will not help industry to meet its difficulties, particularly if it is to compete with lower energy costs in the Republic.

With regard to domestic consumers, we are all too well aware that Northern Ireland is one of the most deprived areas in the United Kingdom. Fuel costs are an important item in most domestic budgets, but they loom larger the poorer the family is. We should not increase the burden by unnecessarily raising the cost of electricity in a low-wage economy and an area with a greater proportion of families dependent on social benefits than anywhere else in the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland. No doubt the Minister is already aware that in recent months there has been a substantial increase over and above the estimated rate of 30 per cent. for electricity disconnections in Belfast.

The privatisation proposals contained in the order raise another problem specific to Northern Ireland. It is the issue of energy problems and energy supplies in the Province. No doubt the Minister is well aware of the widespread anxiety among trade unions and employers about the possible severe problems of energy supplies in the mid-1990s. He will also be aware that the deafening silence of the Department of Economic Development only increases that anxiety. So too is his deafening silence and the shortness of his speech tonight. The East German secret police is a less secretive organisation than the Department of Economic Development is on the question of privatisation and the electricity costs that it expects.

We need to know about the effect of privatisation on electricity supplies in the Province, particularly with reference to the Kilroot 2 project. The costs are escalating, and the need to comply with the EEC directive on gas emissions from power stations will further increase the cost of Kilroot 2. Clearly, there are substantial financial implications which will affect the terms of privatisation and the future of the electricity industry about which the Government have not been sufficiently forthcoming.

I should like to put several points to the Minister which I hope that he will answer at the end of this short debate. Are the Government still determined to go ahead with Kilroot 2? What is its estimated cost and how will it be paid for? Which anti-pollution measures will be adopted? Will low-sulphur content or high-sulphur content fuel be used? How will that particular provision be paid for? When can we expect Kilroot 2 to come on stream, and will the cost be borne by the taxpayers directly or by the new company and thus the consumer? What are the Government's plans for interconnectors or a linked interconnector, either with the Republic of Ireland or Scotland, or both? What effect will the interconnectors have on the cost of Kilroot 2 and the cost of electricity for industrial and domestic consumers?

Will the Minister confirm that the tariff link will be maintained, or will it be broken, as most people expect, at the start of the next financial year? Does he accept the need for action to protect industrial and domestic consumers and to give them reasonable price stability? Which, if any, of the various options of consumer protection does he intend to support—direct subsidy, Government guarantee or nothing?

The Minister has an opportunity to allay some of the fears which the Government's behaviour is inciting, but so far he has not taken it. Unfortunately, the circumstances in which this order has been presented to us do not inspire confidence in the Government's handling of the electricity issue as a whole. The order is a reminder of how remote the Government have become from the economic difficulties of the Province.

Northern Ireland needs an effective and efficient energy policy. The Government should think again and formulate their policies for the 1990s on the basis of economic realities in the Province, not on the discredited dogmas of the Thatcherite 1980s which have caused so much harm to industries in the Province.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: When the Department published the draft order for consultation in May, did the hon. Gentleman or any of his right hon. and hon. Friends respond to it? I should be interested to know. Some of the hon. Gentleman's accusations do not lie full square with the facts.

Mr. McNamara: It is for the Government to produce and justify a scheme, and to give us opportunities to examine it. They should not take action and then cook up ideas to justify it, which is what they are doing now.

Many organisations, including the CBI and the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, hope that serious debate and consideration of the real issues will take place. So far the order has not given us that opportunity. We have not seen the papers before the Northern Ireland electricity service, the discussion documents or the options on which the decision is being made. Until we have them, we shall have an argument about Government suggestions in the dark. We should have had a Green Paper on energy policy for Northern Ireland, not the vague promise of a White Paper after the decision has already been made.

Far from making a genuine contribution to the future of Northern Ireland's energy supplies, the order works actively against the prospects of such a policy. Therefore, I have no hesitation in saying that my right hon. and hon. Friends will invite the House to reject the motion.

9.52 pm

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): The House sits yet again to participate in the charade that continues as we deal with Northern Ireland business through Order in Council procedure. Right hon. and hon. Members know that old and famous quotation,

> "The moving finger writes; and having writ, moves on: nor all thy piety nor wit shall lure it back to cancel half a line, nor all thy tears wash out a word of it."

If we replace the word "finger" with "Secretary of State" the words would aptly apply to this objectionable, unacceptable method of dealing with Northern Ireland affairs and to the futility of all our efforts to change this order. The combined efforts of all right hon. and hon. Members present cannot produce the slightest change in this or any other order. That fact has been acknowledged in the past by some Tory Members.

The order prepares the way for privatisation of the electricity supply in Northern Ireland. The Government's aim in privatising the supply of electricity in Great Britain was to maintain a diversity of supply and to strike a balance between the interests of taxpayers, customers and future shareholders. The Government have had second thoughts on privatising the nuclear energy industry. They recognised that the cost of underwriting the private sector to take over nuclear power stations would have effectively retained those stations in the public sector. Privatisation would have been in name only. As a result, the privatisation of nuclear power stations was abandoned.

As the Government proceed towards privatising electricity supply in Northern Ireland, perhaps the Minister will tell us how he expects to achieve diversity of supply and how competition will be introduced. Can either he or the Secretary of State ensure that Northern Ireland industry and consumers will not be held to ransom on prices for future supplies and on the supply controlled from Dublin by the electricity supply board for the Irish Republic? Will the Minister assure us that there are no plans for the foreseeable future to break the tariff link with Great Britain on electricity prices for Northern Ireland consumers? The tariff link at least held prices in Northern Ireland to the same level as the highest tariff rated region in the United Kingdom.

Will the privatised monopoly supplier, whether it is Northern Ireland Electricity or some other similar body, be required to take up surplus production from, for example, hydro-electric generating plants already in the private sector and at prices fixed at an economic level by an independent body? We would all like to know how competitive private generation of electricity in Northern Ireland will be encouraged and promoted.

Has interest been expressed through the Anglo-Irish Conference about the possibility of the southern Irish electricity board acquiring NIE? There is concern in Northern Ireland about future prices, especially when profit making and profit taking for shareholders primarily motivates those managing the electricity supply industry.

Why are the Government not realising the economies that would arise from the reinstatement of the interconnector with the Irish Republic? Why has there not been an interconnection between Northern Ireland and Scotland such as that which has been provided to the Scilly Isles? An interconnection between Northern Ireland and Scotland would be less expensive a project than the supply of electricity to the Scilly Isles, and many more consumers would benefit.

Why has no decision yet been made for the dual firing for oil and coal conversion at Kilroot phase 2?

What are the reasons for delay in approving a lignite-fuelled power station in Northern Ireland? Would the reinstatement of the interconnector between the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland open up Northern Ireland to competition from the Irish Republic?

Substantial investment is needed now to modernise the electricity industry in Northern Ireland. Environmental pollution should be reduced to European Community standards now, and Northern Ireland should now be connected to cheaper generating sources in Great Britain. The conversion of Kilroot phase 2 should proceed and a decision to utilise the lignite resource should be made now.

Privatising the electricity supply in Northern Ireland without guarantees that we will not become totally dependent on or have our electricity supply controlled by the southern Irish Government or the electricity supply board in the Republic is unacceptable. Without guarantees that the Government through tariff linkage will maintain reasonable prices, privatisation will be harmful to Northern Ireland industry and electricity will become more expensive to consumers.

Like the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), we feel obliged to vote against the order for the reasons that have been stated. It is an outrage that a matter of such importance to Northern Ireland can be decided by the stroke of a pen and without a full and meaningful debate. Many Northern Ireland Members

[Mr. Roy Beggs]

absent themselves deliberately and will not by their presence give a veneer of respectability to Order in Council debates.

9.59 pm

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): This flimsy one-page order belies the extent of the powers that it confers on Northern Ireland Electricity and on the Department of Economic Development. In his introductory speech the Minister seemed to be saying that it conferred no new powers, yet the order states:

> "Where the Department is at any time proposing that any assets or functions of Northern Ireland Electricity"

should be transferred, it may take the necessary powers. Paragraph 3(3) states that

> "it may also do anything which in its opinion is appropriate for the purpose of promoting the interests of . . . any body corporate to which it is proposed to transfer the assets or functions".

I have never come across a piece of legislation that gives such sweeping administrative powers to either a Department or a state industry as those two short paragraphs. They seem to give the Department and the NIES carte blanche to do what they wish in the coming months, in advance of proposed substantive legislation that the House may or may not debate.

We in Northern Ireland have two primary concerns. First, we are concerned about the interests of the taxpayer, and about how public assets are to be transferred to the private sector. Even more important perhaps is the fact that—as other hon. Members have pointed out—the consumer will inevitably be faced with increased costs. While the taxpayer may experience a one-off loss as a result of the actual transfer, the consumer will pay for the transaction year after year.

We now know that the Department has been fattening the calf for slaughter. Over the past few years, percentage increases in Northern Ireland's tariff charges have greatly exceeded both the increase in inflation and the increase in primary fuel costs—which last, in fact, had been decreasing. Our first concern, therefore, must be for the consumer and not for the profit-oriented corporation or company that will take over electricity supply.

Let there be no doubt: there will be a monopoly, and the Northern Irish community will be held ransom to it. Even under state control, that monopoly was exercised under a political banner. In 1972, when Stormont fell, the energy supply was withdrawn from Northern Ireland's private, public and industrial consumers, and in 1974 the so-called workers' strike had the same effect. Subsequent turns of the political wheel caused the state monopoly to exercise its muscle by again withdrawing supply from consumers. What, then, will happen when state control is ended and the private company can exercise the enormous monopoly power that it will gain, not only in terms of trade and prices but in political terms?

Here we have a paradox. In 1973 it was argued that the private electricity companies should be amalgamated for the sake of efficiency, rationalisation and economy; now, 15 or 16 years later, it is argued that for those very reasons NIE should be dismantled. On 21 July, *Financial Weekly* published an in-depth article stating that Northern Ireland Electricity would be transferred en bloc to a private corporation or company which would generate, transmit and distribute Northern Ireland's total electricity supply.

The Government are making obeisance to the holy cow of privatisation. They are blindly pursuing a dogma that the circumstances do not fit: the circumstances should not allow one and a quarter million people to put up with privatisation aimed—if the Minister's argument is correct —at a diversity of generation, transmission and distribution. By whose authority—if I may be so presumptuous as to ask—is this happening? In a survey carried out by the Northern Ireland Consumer Council, only 4 per cent. of those questioned said that they were strongly in favour of privatisation, and only another 17 per cent. said that they tended to support it. Four out of five people in Northern Ireland oppose electricity privatisation. Who, therefore, in Northern Ireland has authorised such a transfer?

The fifth report of the Energy Select Committee makes two interesting points in paragraph 12 on page 8 that must be dealt with by the Minister. It points out that in Northern Ireland there is no real competition from other fuel sources. Furthermore, there is no piped gas in Northern Ireland, even in the city of Belfast. That will lead to an even greater monopoly by the new body. The Committee recommended that very stringent regulations must be applied and said that strict regulations would negate privatisation. However, the Department says that this is the rational and reasonable way forward. It pays homage to a sacred cow.

Does the Minister intend to privatise sectarian practices in Northern Ireland Electricity? In 1982, 10 years after the imposition of direct rule, 4 per cent. of those who belonged to minority religious groups were in senior management; in middle management there were 3 per cent., only 3·5 per cent. among senior directors and only 9·5 per cent. in all in engineering grades. The Minister is just as aware as I am that substantial lawsuits are pending against Northern Ireland Electricity for sectarian practices and procedures when awarding contracts. I wonder who will inherit that can of worms? Efforts have been made to improve the position, but we are a long way from a real improvement.

Our primary concern is the plight of the consumer. Electricity is expensive in Northern Ireland. However, many people do not yet have electricity. It costs the ordinary householder £3,000 to £4,000 to instal electricity. How much will it cost him when there is a private sector monopoly?

The price of energy will rise under the new regime. The Northern Ireland industry operates on the north-western limit of the European Economic Community. Its margins are tight. As energy costs increase, the number of jobs that will be lost will also increase.

We cannot amend the order. It paves the way for an Order in Council. I question why we should stand here night after night talking about the problems of Northern Ireland if we have no opportunity to amend legislation. Tomorrow we shall debate an order that will affect the education of children in Northern Ireland. Again we shall be unable to change the Order in Council. It is an absolute disgrace that Northern Ireland affairs should be administered in such a way.

For those reasons, all Northern Ireland Members will oppose the order.

10.9 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): I shall begin with a few brief procedural matters. The substantive issues about paving the way for electricity privatisation in Northern Ireland are important, but they have been mentioned by other hon. Members. I hope that the serious questions posed by those hon. Members will be answered by the Minister.

The hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) described the order as flimsy, but highly significant. It is a paving measure that is equivalent to the paving measure for electricity privatisation in the rest of the United Kingdom—the Public Utility Transfers and Water Charges Act 1988. That measure was fully debated on Second Reading and followed the full procedure of the House in its subsequent Report stages and amendments. Contrast that with the measure before us tonight, which has had none of those opportunities.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) that we want a devolved Government in Northern Ireland, with a Bill of Rights attached to it. In the meantime, while we await that legislation, Northern Ireland measures should be dealt with on a basis similar to other measures in the House. There should be full opportunity for debate, and proper timing of the issues to give us the chance to discuss them.

The paving measure adds provisions to the Electricity Supply (Northern Ireland) Order 1972, which was a complex measure in six parts, with 52 clauses and five schedules.

The schedules cover subjects such as the constitution of the Northern Ireland electricity board, as it was called, superannuation, the Electricity Consumers Council, and an electricity supply code. All those measures will be affected by the paving development, and all of them will begin to be subject to adjustment under the provisions for a future order that may be brought before us. There are 64 pages in the order, and it is as bad as the order that we shall debate tomorrow night on education.

The previous order on Northern Ireland electricity supply was debated on 7 July 1987. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland at the time, the hon. Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers), said:

> "This has been described as a most controversial draft order and the forerunner to privatisation of electricity in Great Britain. Those criticisms are utterly misconceived. It is nothing of the sort."

Presumably something of the sort would have been thought to have been a bad thing. Therefore, this order should be considered a bad thing. He continued:

> "The draft order works broadly on the lines of the Energy Act 1983 and permits the private generation of electricity in Northern Ireland in much the same way as that Act permits it for Great Britain."

Later in the same debate the hon. Gentleman said:

> "The order will enable private generation of electricity and NIE is already under a statutory obligation to acquire electricity at the most advantageous price from the point of view of the consumer."—[*Official Report*, 7 July 1987; Vol. 119, c. 301-02.]

Members of Parliament representing constituencies in Northern Ireland refused to participate in that debate. The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) made a point of order stating that they would not be involved, although later they were involved in the Division Lobbies. In that debate, speeches were made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer), the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) and my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist). There was also an intervention by the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace). That was the extent of the debate as hon. Members from Northern Ireland were not there to speak. That shows the low level of involvement in the debate.

The order had 21 articles, covered 16 pages and referred to six other orders or Acts of Parliament, one of which went back to 1933 and was being amended by the order. I hope that tonight the Division Lobbies will reflect the strength of feeling on that occasion, when there were 236 votes in favour and 201 against the order, giving the Government a majority of only 35. I do not know whether we have fallen back in our strength of feeling about Northern Ireland issues since then.

The order is the forerunner of a Northern Ireland electricity privatisation order, not a Bill. It is equivalent to the Electricity Act 1989, which we debated at considerable length. It had 113 clauses, 18 schedules and covered 164 pages. I am confused about how we decide which is to be an order and which is to be a Bill. We have had Northern Ireland Bills such as that which became the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1989. It went through the appropriate stages in the House. This measure is equally important and foreshadows something of shattering significance, but it will be dealt with by this wholly inadequate procedure.

I wish that more hon. Members were present when we discuss paving measures that are the stuff of politics and of day-to-day concern in Northern Ireland. Labour Members are often vociferous about the problems of terrorism in Northern Ireland, but do not contribute to debates on day-to-day affairs.

In the debate of 7 July 1987, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West described the problems with this procedure far better than I can when he said:

> "I want to begin by placing on record the view that this is not a responsible way for a democratic Government to behave. The procedure places everyone under an impossible pressure of time and it discourages some hon. Members from contributing. It offers no opportunity for discussions on detail. It manifests a contempt for Northern Ireland and for this House. And it strips away all pretence that the Government retain an open mind to the arguments."—[*Official Report*, 7 July 1987; Vol. 119, c. 302.]

I fully endorse those sentiments and look forward to the day when Northern Ireland issues are given correct consideration in the House and in Northern Ireland itself.

10.19 pm

Mr. Peter Bottomley: With the leave of the House, I should like to reply to the debate.

After that slashing attack by the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) on his colleagues who do not seem to be interested in the social and economic welfare of Northern Ireland, may I say that, in view of the remarks of some Opposition Members, I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for Health for coming in to ensure that no patching is needed.

The hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) asked whether we intend to sell off Northern Ireland Electricity to the electricity supply board in the south. The answer is

[Mr. Peter Bottomley]

no. There is no intention to sell it to a publicly-owned utility in another country. The Government's clear aim is to privatise the business.

The right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) and the hon. Member for Belfast, North (Mr. Walker) have been present throughout the debate, but they have allowed most of the comment to be made by their colleagues. There may be some sedentary interventions from them as I speak, but I hope not to provoke too many.

The Government believe that lignite is certain to be used for electricity generation in due course, but after more economic projects. Last year the Government decided that Kilroot 2 was more attractive economically than a new lignite station, so that should be carried out first. One of the essential elements of privatisation is to make sure that decisions are taken in the best interests of private consumers rather than as a result of political pressures. Those who had the opportunity of watching the "Counterpoint" programme will agree that that was one of the points it left out. It is important to recognise the interests of consumers throughout, rather than to use a researcher's good notes.

I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara). His researchers provided him with some good notes, although they took no account of what I said, apart from refering to the fact that he spoke for longer than I did. That was predictable, which is no doubt why it was part of his speech.

Mr. McNamara *rose*——

Mr. Bottomley: I seem to have provoked the hon. Gentleman. Perhaps he should think twice before intervening.

Mr. McNamara: I spoke for longer than the Minister did because I had more and better things to say than he did. Will he answer the points that I raised about the future of Kilroot? Is it going according to plan? Are the costs as originally envisaged or are they greater? What will be done about the gas emissions? The Minister has to answer those questions. They are not matters of research; they are matters of environmental concern in Northern Ireland, the United Kingdom and Europe. They affect the quality of life and the standard of living of people in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Bottomley: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman decided to intervene before I had got through more than two lines of my speech so that he could repeat some of the points he made in his own speech. That may be his way of operating, but if he can wait perhaps I shall give him some answers.

I have dealt with lignite. Perhaps the most important point is the separation between the order and what will follow. I was asked whether the Government still intend to produce a White Paper on the privatisation proposals. The answer is yes. It is important to ensure that Northern Ireland Electricity should be able to contribute to the process of deciding what the proposals should be. If only part of article 3 is considered it provides wider powers than are currently available. I refer to part of the speech by the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady).

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North asked about the cost of Kilroot 2. The power station will cost about £215 million at 1989 prices, about £95 million more for the flue gas desulphurisation if required. I was asked who will pay for Kilroot 2. The customer will pay, whoever owns the electricity service, whether it is private or public.

I was asked about the tariff link. The changes to area boards in England and Wales and the way in which Northern Ireland has derived tariffs under the link arrangements mean that it is right to review the link. When the companies produce the conclusions to that review, they will make them public. It would be wrong to anticipate the results, in the same way as it is wrong to assume that the link always works in the interest of consumers.

The hon. Member for Antrim, East asked about the reinstatement of the interconnector with the south. I do not think that that interconnector has proved durable in the past, so we should not automatically replace it. The question arises whether it is better to have an interconnector or whether to bring forward Kilroot 2 early. The preliminary results of a current study suggest that there may be advantages to providing new capacity by means of an interconnector with the Great Britain grid. The Government must try to make the most beneficial arrangements for electricity supply in Northern Ireland. We propose to consider that option in more detail before deciding on the timing of Kilroot 2. In the meantime, the action which Northern Ireland Electricity is taking on Kilroot 2 will ensure that construction can begin at short notice if required. That is a comprehensive and proper description of the situation. Nothing should be done which works against the consumers of electricity in Northern Ireland.

Mr. McGrady: Except privatisation.

Mr. Bottomley: People keep talking about privatisation and accusing the Government of trying artificially to distort the decisions that the electricity industry has to make. One of the advantages of privatisation is that we move away from that to a clear regulatory system, which makes up for any deficiencies there may be in terms of competition. A decision has not been made as to the form of privatisation. I give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson) who has been here throughout the debate.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): Before my hon. Friend leaves the point about the possibility of an interconnector with the national grid, will he say who will pay for it if it is decided to go ahead with it?

Mr. Bottomley: In essence, the consumer, but if there were commercial advantages to the Great Britain grid—if it could sell electricity that would not otherwise have a customer—one assumes that the balance would be worked out between the two supply networks. It is wrong to assume that Northern Ireland will carry the cost of commercial advantage to people outside Northern Ireland.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North said that privatisation was bad and unpopular, but I remember the same remarks being made a week ago about water privatisation; we are hearing a little less about that now. I suspect that privatisation will be popular in Northern Ireland with consumers, potential shareholders and those who work in the industry, who should like to have a chance of owning part of their own business. It is worth remembering that there are now more shareholders in the

United Kingdom than trade union members, and I speak as someone who is rather more of a trade union member than a shareholder.

I do not intend to go into the issues about private monopolies that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North raised.

The hon. Member for South Down asked about competition for fuel. Northern Ireland Electrictity reckons that 50 per cent. of its load in things such as space heating and water heating is open to competition. Consumers—not every individual consumer—have other fuels available, and in general bottled gas, coal and oil are competitive with the supply of electricity.

Mr. McGrady: Is the Minister suggesting that the consumer in Northern Ireland should go back to gas light?

Mr. Bottomley: I was not suggesting that. I was trying to give the information that Northern Ireland Electrictity has supplied.

I want to emphasise that the order is not a substitute for the privatisation proposals but a way of ensuring that Northern Ireland Electricity can contribute to the development of them.

Many more people are moving to the use of electricity. I shall give an example that may be small to the House, but it is important to the 60,000 consumers who over the past six years have moved to Economy 7 for their space and water heating. Electricity is important to people in Northern Ireland, its industry, its domestic consumers and its agricultural sector. I am giving much attention to electricity supply in the rural sector under the rural policy initiative, which I hope will be welcomed throughout the House.

I commend the order to the House. It is an important paving order so that privatisation can go forward.

Question put:-

The House divided: Ayes 212, Noes 171.

Division No. 15] **[10.27 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howard, Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John M. Taylor and
Mr. David Lightbown.

NOES

Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Litherland, Robert
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McGrady, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Vaz, Keith
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wall, Pat
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr Frank Cook and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Electricity Supply (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 24th October, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.

Ministerial and Other Salaries

10.40 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Sir Geoffrey Howe): I beg to move,

That the draft Ministerial and other Salaries Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 1st December, be approved.

I hope that, as previously this evening, I need not detain the House for long on this matter—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] I hear a menacing noise from the Opposition Benches below the Gangway. I hope that the menace is of a gentle kind. I shall outline briefly the changes that we are proposing and will hope to deal at the end of the debate with any other points requiring an answer.

As the House knows, under the terms of the resolution of 21 July 1987, all hon. Members will receive an increase in their parliamentary salary on 1 January 1990 which will amount to £2,594, of which £1,027 represents the final stage of the 1988-89 settlement for the Civil Service grade to which parliamentary salaries are linked. The increase in the parliamentary salary for 1989 is 6·9 per cent.

On Friday 1 December, in response to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry), I announced our intention that Ministers and paid office holders should each receive the same total cash increase as all other hon. Members, £2,594, from the same date, 1 January 1990. I set out in my written answer and in the order the revised salaries proposed for Ministers and paid office holders. The average increase in the ministerial pay bill resulting from the proposals is 6·5 per cent.——

Mr. Sydney Chapman (Chipping Barnet): Too low.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend is expressing some interesting variations in points of view—*[Interruption.]* I am unnerved, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The average increase in total salaries in the House, parliamentary and ministerial, will be about 6 per cent. and the average increase in the other place will be a little over 7·5 per cent. The percentage increase for their Lordships is higher because the salaries of Ministers and paid office holders in the other place are significantly lower than those in this House, but all Ministers and paid office holders will receive the same cash increase, and I repeat that the total average increase will be 6·5 per cent.

In detail, the proposals that the order will implement will be as follows. All Ministers and paid office holders in this House will receive an increase of £641 in their official salary. Taking into account the increase of £1,953 in their reduced parliamentary salaries, which they receive automatically on 1 January 1990, this means that they will receive a total increase—remarkably, the same total increase—of £2,594. That is the same as all other hon. Members will receive in their salaries.

In the other place we propose that Ministers and paid office holders should receive the full £2,594 as an increase in their official salary. They, of course, have no separate parliamentary salary to be taken into account. The total increase in salaries for Ministers and paid office holders in both Houses amounts to over £120,000, which, as I have said, represents 6·5 per cent. on the pay bill.

I believe that our proposals represent a modest, fair and realistic conclusion. They are fully consistent with our anti-inflationary policies, and I commend the motion to the House.

10.45 pm

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): As a lifelong trade unionist, may I say that there are certain aspects of the order that I find encouraging and surprising in the Government's attitude. For example, this salary increase is an emphtatic rejection of what Ministers frequently say when talking about the pay claims of other people. It represents an emphatic rejection of market forces as an important determinant of wage rates.

The Prime Minister, who is fond of using that as an argument for other people's pay rates, would not dream of applying it as a principle to the determination of her own. We know of at least one other person who is anxious to do her job. I have not checked with the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer), but I have reason to believe that he would do the right hon. Lady's job for less money. I am sure that many Conservative Members would do it for a great deal less, and I fear that some might even agree to pay us so that they could do it. But, rightly, market forces have been rejected as a basis for the payment of salaries in this case.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): If the hon. Gentleman's argument holds any water, how would he explain salaries of £250,000, £300,000 and even £450,000 a year for presenting television programmes on BBC or ITV? Even for political programmes people are paid £300,000 to £400,000 a year. There are, I am sure, many people in the House who would love to do those jobs for much less money.

Mr. Grocott: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that it is absurd for salaries of that magnitude to be paid when they have nothing to do with the application of market forces. Clearly other forces are at work in determining such salaries.

It is interesting to note that there is no suggestion in the Government's proposals that the pay of those concerned should be determined by whether they come from a low-wage area. After all, Conservative Members often say that we should scrap national agreements. Accordingly, if Ministers or other Members come from areas of lower wages, presumably they should accept the prevailing pay rates in those areas. I am glad that such a concept is rejected in the order, and I, too, reject it.

I like the way in which the Government are observing the principles of collective agreements—in other words, that people's pay rates should not be determined by individual deals with the boss. I hope that Conservative Members will use what influence they have in the current industrial dispute affecting Associated Newspapers Group Limited and journalists on *The Daily Mail, The Mail on Sunday* and *The Evening Standard* and that they will reject the management proposals to scrap all collective agreements——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member is referring to people who cannot possibly come within the scope of the order.

Mr. Grocott: I simply hope that Conservative Members who are tonight supporting principles of collective bargaining will remember those principles when other matters come before the House.

The Leader of the House frequently referred to 6·5 per cent. I hardly need remind the House that people pay their grocery bills not with percentages but with pounds and

[Mr. Grocott]

that 6·5 per cent. of a large salary is very different from 6·5 per cent. of, for example, an ambulance man's or woman's salary. That figure of 6·5 per cent. is the most that has been offered to them and, in the light of what will be happening later this week, I hope that Conservative Members will think more in terms of the amount of money on offer as a weekly increase and less in terms of percentage rises.

10.49 pm

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): On this occasion the Government have taken exactly the right decision by keeping ministerial salary increases, although they may be well earned, below the rate of inflation. If everybody has wage increases up to the rate of inflation, next year inflation will be higher, so the ratchet principle operates and the spiral of inflation is never broken. I applaud the Government on their decision.

I have never heard such flawed, silly arguments as we heard tonight from the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott). [HON. MEMBERS: "We hear them every day."] My colleagues say that they hear them every day. I know, but one tries to shut them out.

If a Minister were in Birmingham, Newcastle or Huddersfield——

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): What about Macclesfield?

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Macclesfield is far too good for most of us.

What if salaries were based on a different system? Why cannot the hon. Gentleman see that we should encourage prosperity to seep beyond the midlands to the north and north-east? A house which in Huddersfield or Sheffield might cost £50,000 would cost £90,000 in Birmingham and £150,000 in London. National wage bargaining, whether for Ministers or workers on the factory floor, produces huge distortions, and that is what causes great trouble. It is not Government grants that create prosperity, but sensible, natural market forces.

Mr. Hanley: Does my hon. Friend believe that the discrepancy between Back-Benchers' pay and ministerial pay should be reduced, maintained or increased?

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: I am sorry that my hon. Friend has brought up the subject of Members' pay.

Mr. Hanley: I asked about the discrepancy in pay.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Hon. Members may think that they can get away with fixing their salaries to that of someone else and saying, "It's not me, guv", but that is not something that people fully understand.

Tonight I heard that the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) has decided, unfortunately, to leave the House and that 953 people would like to succeed to his constituency. I have a hunch that, even if our salaries were halved, 950 would still like to succeed him.

If the House is to lead the people forward to prosperity, the one great certainly is that there must be pay differentials. In that way people will be encouraged to move to the north because there is a greater sense of prosperity. On that basis the Government's decision to grant increases below the rate of inflation is on the right lines. Unless we kill inflation, we shall never get the country firmly and properly on the move. That is why this evening I intend to support the motion of my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House.

10.53 pm

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): I know that others wish to speak, so I shall say a few words in support of the amendment in the names of my hon. Friends——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The amendment has not been selected. That would be out of order.

Mr. Salmond: I wholly accept your guidance, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Although the amendment has not been called for debate, surely it is in order to discuss its content.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Let me see how we get on.

Mr. Salmond: There is an anomaly in proposing ministerial salary increases, especially in the case of the Leader of the House, when there is a blatant failure to observe the Standing Orders of the House. I and my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) were recently deemed to have fallen foul of the Standing Orders and our punishment was to be expelled from the premises for five days. Standing Order No. 130 is quite specific that a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs shall be established. That order is being blatantly breached, yet its custodian and the Minister responsible for its enforcement, rather than being punished for not abiding by it, or at least arranging for the House to keep to its Standing Orders, is to be rewarded by a salary increase of £2,554.

Our amendment proposed to cut the salary of the Leader of the House by £1,000. Many people would say that that cut was too modest given the punishment meted out to me and my hon. Friend the Member for Govan for not obeying Standing Orders. It might have been argued, had our amendment been selected, that the Leader of the House should have experienced a punishment more severe than a salary cut of £1,000. I and my hon. Friends are reasonable people and we acknowledge that in the past year the Leader of the House has experienced some uncertainty in his domestic circumstances because of ministerial changes. We do not want to impose an additional burden or strain on the right hon. and learned Gentleman.

A reasonable question can be asked about our attempt to oppose the increase in the salaries of Ministers in general and the Leader of the House in particular. We could ask whether the right hon. and learned Gentleman responsible for the failure of Scottish Back-Bench Tories to serve on a Select Committee——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not pursue that argument. He is getting away from the motion that is before the House and discussing the amendment that Mr. Speaker ruled out of order.

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Was the amendment not selected, as distinct from being ruled out of order?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I thought that I had made it clear that Mr. Speaker ruled that the amendment was out of order.

Mr. Salmond: The answer to the question of whether ministerial salaries should be approved will depend on whether we are satisfied that Ministers are pursuing their responsibilities in an effective manner. Therefore, it must be in order to debate whether the Leader of the House is pursuing his responsibilities in an effective manner. Surely one of those responsibilities is to see that the House abides by its Standing Orders and we are entitled to ask whether he is personally responsible for the failure to set up a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs or whether the responsibility lies elsewhere.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Obviously the hon. Gentleman can refer to the conduct of the Leader of the House, but he is not entitled to embark on a discussion about the merits or otherwise of the failure of the Leader of the House to set up that or any other Select Committee. That is where the hon. Gentleman is out of order.

Mr. Salmond: Of course I accept your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker. However, the question of whether the Leader of the House is pursuing his responsibilities in an effective manner is surely central to the question of whether the House grants him a salary increase of more than £2,500. If we are not entitled to examine the conduct of the right hon. and learned Gentleman, not just on the matter of setting up a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs but on the range of his responsibilities, how are we meant to debate the motion that is before the House?

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): Would the hon. Gentleman follow through the logic of his argument by accepting that if an hon. Member does not turn up for a certain percentage of votes that hon. Member should have a cut in salary?

Mr. Salmond: Of course we are not discussing the salaries of hon. Members. In a Scottish television programme I was unexpectedly revealed as the Scottish Member with the best record of attendance for Scottish issues, far higher than the attendance record of the hon. Lady. However, not for a second would I suggest that I should be paid more than the hon. Lady.

Let me return to the question of whether the Leader of the House is pursuing his responsibilities effectively and is therefore justified in receiving a salary increase of £2,500. Surely the House is entitled to establish whether he is responsible for not carrying out his duties, or whether the responsibility lies elsewhere.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I must repeat that I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not take up too much time by seeking to debate this matter with me. He is entitled to say that, because of the conduct of the Leader of the House or any other Minister, he will withhold his support for a proposed salary increase, but he cannot go into details. If that were allowed, we should find ourselves examining in detail the conduct of every Minister in every Department, which would clearly not be in order on a motion such as this. I hope that hon. Members will stick to the motion, and not discuss amendments that Mr. Speaker has declared to be out of order.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As we have to approve the order, surely it is in order for hon. Members to say why they do not approve. That, I feel, is at the heart of what is being said.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is coming dangerously close to debating my ruling, and he must not do that. I hope that he and his hon. Friends will observe my ruling and not seek either to challenge or to debate it.

Mr. Salmond: To oppose a salary increase for the entire ministerial team, I must be able to pass some comment on why I do not think that its members deserve such an increase. My hon. Friends and I will certainly oppose this unwarranted increase in the Lobby tonight, and I am sure that the House will be very interested in our justification for that opposition. I must therefore be allowed to pursue my argument about why the Leader of the House—or any other Minister—is not doing his job effectively.

Sir Hal Miller (Bromsgrove): I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has quite taken on board the fact that, if he opposed the order successfully, Ministers would receive more money than they would otherwise. That is a curious way for him to show his disapproval.

Mr. Salmond: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would therefore wish me to pursue my argument and to justify the placing of a question mark over these salary increases, be they the increases mentioned in the order or those that would apply if it were not carried. There is no doubt in my mind that the conduct of the Leader of the House does not match the way in which we expect Ministers to perform their duties if such large increases are to be justified.

The question is this—and I will accept your guidance, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As a Minister, has the Leader of the House a special responsibility for saying that the House is able to follow its own Standing Orders? I know that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are a keen enforcer of those Standing Orders, as indeed you must be. It must surely be a serious matter that reflects on the appropriateness of a ministerial salary increase, if it is established that the Leader of the House is in some way responsible for failing to enforce one of its own Standing Orders, Standing Order No. 130. Surely that must influence the question of whether Ministers are entitled to a large increase, a modest increase or any increase at all.

Some people have argued that the fact that Standing Order No. 130 has not been enforced is not the responsibility of the Leader of the House, but that of other hon. Members. If that were so, Opposition Members could have no objection to an increase in the salary of the Leader of the House or that of any other Minister. Let us consider, however, the operation organised by the usual channels to try to ensure the political survival of the Prime Minister —backed enthusiastically, no doubt, by the Leader of the House and other Ministers—by cajoling and pressuring Conservative Back Benchers into giving their loyal support. Have the right hon. and learned Gentleman and his colleagues put the same effort into persuading and cajoling Back Benchers to assist the House in obeying Standing Order No. 130? I hope that the Leader of the House, who I am sure is paying rapt attention to the debate on ministerial salary increases, will deal with that point. It is a ministerial responsibility to establish the Scottish Select Committee and, according to Standing Orders, there is no requirement that there should be an automatic Government majority on Select Committees.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is in order for the hon. Gentleman to say that he does not intend to support the

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

motion because the Leader of the House has not, in his view, fulfilled his obligations under a particular Standing Order. However, it is not in order for the hon. Gentleman then to discuss in detail that particular failure, as he sees it, to implement the Standing Order. That is what I am ruling is out of order.

Mr. Sillars: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is very kind of you to make my hon. Friend's speech for him, but if it was in order for him to say that the Leader of the House should not get a salary increase, or should have his salary cut because he had not obeyed Standing Order No. 130, surely it is in order for him to justify that allegation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not question my ruling. I said that the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) was entitled to express his view that a salary increase should be withheld from a particular Minister because of his failure to implement an obligation that, in his view, has been imposed upon him. He is not in order, however, to go into the details of that obligation. That has been said two or three times. I hope that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) will accept my ruling without seeking to debate it further.

Mr. Salmond: I do not wish to pursue my arguments against ministerial salary increases, but may I put a final and helpful suggestion to the Leader of the House that would enable him to fulfil his responsibilities to the House and keep within Standing Orders. I ask him to accept that no fewer than 40 Scottish Back Benchers are willing to serve on the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. Therefore, the Select Committee could be set up forthwith. I commend that suggestion to him.

11.7 pm

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): I have no particular wish to follow Mutt and Jeff, the barrack-room lawyers behind me, but there is a serious point to be made about the motion, without using trick language or ill-informed attempts to confuse. The result of dividing the House against the motion would lead to Ministers receiving more, not less money. That is somewhat confused thinking, even by the formidable standards of the Scottish National party.

Ever since it was first set up, the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs has had a tradition of boycott. Between 1980 and 1987 it was boycotted by the Scottish National party.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman heard my earlier rulings. I hope that he does not intend to ignore them.

Mr. Wilson: That was a mere historical footnote. It was boycotted in the past by the Scottish National party, which since 1987 has developed an enthusiasm for it. The Leader of the House should have something docked off his pay every time he nods off. Since 1987 the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I very much hope that the hon. Gentleman will speak to the Ministerial and other Salaries Order, which so far he has failed to do.

Mr. Wilson: What I am saying relates directly to the order. Part of the job of the Leader of the House, for which he is paid that salary and this increase, is to set up a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. Like his predecessor, he has consistently failed to do so. We are entitled, not under the guise of bogus procedure but as a point of political fact and political dispute, to say that he has failed in that purpose and to demand that when he comes to the Dispatch Box he should say when he intends to do his job.

11.9 pm

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): I should like to bring the debate back to the point at issue, which is whether we should increase ministerial salaries.

The differential between the pay of Members of Parliament and Ministers is far too narrow. I have always voted against increases in hon. Members' pay, but I do not in any way object to Ministers' salaries because they have immense responsibilities in addition to their constituency responsibilities. I shall vote for this increase, as I have done consistently.

11.10 pm

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan): I shall speak plainly from the start. I believe that there is a fix by the establishment in this debate. There is no question about that whatever. There is a fix by the establishment to ensure that there is no Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. There is a fix by the establishment to ensure that we cannot debate why there is no Select Committee on Scottish Affairs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Member is not reflecting on Mr. Speaker's selection of amendments.

Mr. Sillars: That is a matter for your interpretation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, not mine.

I repeat that there has been a fix by the establishment, and not for the first time, either. The strongest objections have to be made. I believe that I am entitled to argue, on a wide-ranging motion such as this, why I do not believe the motion should be carried.

One of those reasons is the inability, unwillingness, or perhaps deliberate unwillingness, of the Leader of the House to give effect to Standing Order No. 130 to ensure that a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs is set up. He is not entitled to a salary increase because he did not set up a Select Committee, under Standing Order No. 130, to consider school boards in Scotland, because he did not set up a Select Committee, under Standing Order No. 130, to enable it to examine the steel industry in Scotland, because he did not set up, under Standing Order No. 130, a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs to examine environmental issues in Scotland, particularly Nirex, because he did not set up, under Standing Order No. 130, a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs which could examine water standards in Scotland, because he did not set up, under Standing Order No. 130, a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs which could examine in Glasgow the loss of £14 million this year and £16 million next year under the share formula that is operating in the National Health Service, or an examination of how the chairman of the Scottish Conservative party, who is a Minister—we are talking about ministerial salaries—appoints nobody but Tories to hospital boards all over Scotland.

It is perfectly reasonable to argue that the Leader of the House should not get a salary increase, and that no other Minister should get a salary increase, because of their failure to carry out Standing Order No. 130. Mr. Speaker wrote to my hon. Friend the Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) saying that setting up the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs is not the Leader of the House's responsibility and that

> "the resolution of 20th December 1988 excuses the Committee from taking such action".

That is a reference to the Committee of Selection acting under Standing Order No. 140. I have to disagree. I am sorry to offend Mr. Speaker. I believe that responsibility for Standing Order No. 130 rests squarely on the shoulders of the Leader of the House. He has failed to carry out his responsibilities to the Scottish people. If he looks way back to 1979, when this type of Select Committee was established, immediately after the Tories repealed the Scotland Act 1978, he will see that responsibility lies with the Government.

I believe that there has been a fix by the establishment. If the establishment is not prepared to stand by its own Standing Orders, it has a brass neck to expect us to stand by them. We will not do so and we shall take action at the appropriate time.

11.14 pm

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): It was not my intention to intrude in the private feud between the Socialists in the Labour party in Scotland and the Socialists in the Scottish National party. However, as the matter affects some of my right hon. and hon. Friends I feel that I should contribute to the debate.

I apologise to my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House as I was not in the Chamber when he stated his case, and I hope that he will not consider my intervention to be a discourtesy.

I understand the argument that it is the Government's responsibility to set an example to the nation, and in many ways hon. Members fall short on that—perhaps Opposition Members more than Conservative Members. However, it is a mistake to imagine that reducing ministerial or other salaries will do anything to combat inflation. As monetarists on the Conservative Benches will know, inflation is driven not by wage demands but by too much money in the economy chasing too few goods. To suggest that restraining Members' or Ministers' pay would contribute greatly to the battle against inflation would be to mislead the House.

It is not my intention to set myself up as the trade union negotiator on behalf of the Cabinet or other Ministers. I understand that the chairman of the board is listening to representations from all sides; therefore there is no need for me to do that. However, we would be mistaken if we were to believe that we are currying favour by saying that we must restrain Ministers' pay and set an example and play ourselves down.

There is something bizarre about a nation which prides itself on being better managed than it ever was paying Secretaries of State £44,591 when we pay each chairman of the nationalised industries, for which one Secretary of State is reponsible, sums ranging between £90,000 and £200,000 depending upon whether his name is Bob Reid mark 1 or Bob Reid mark 2. It is bizarre that we should have such an extraordinary discrepancy that the man responsible for running one part of a business is paid £200,000 and the man who has overall responsibility is paid £44,591, when the Prime Minister's salary is only £47,000. It is incumbent upon us to point out to people that that is bizarre.

Mr. Salmond *rose*——

Mr. Howarth: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman does not have anything helpful to say, but I shall give way to him.

Mr. Salmond: Before the hon. Gentleman leaves the subject of people falling down on their responsibilities and the relative value of individual Ministers, would he care to comment on the relative value of the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), who has been reducing his ministerial responsibilities so that he can assume the chairmanship of the Conservative party in Scotland? In the light of that reduction in his ministerial responsibilities, does he merit a ministerial salary increase this evening?

Mr. Howarth: My hon. Friends believe that my hon. Friend the Minister is grossly underpaid for the tasks that he performs in Scotland. The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) should consider how much my hon. Friend would be able to earn were he able to offer his service to the marketplace. He is making a sacrifice on behalf of the nation. The Scottish people will come not only to be grateful for but proud of his achievements.

My right hon. Friends who are responsible for the remaining nationalised industries should be given an increase in their salaries for every industry that they dispose of and return to private ownership. For every penny off income tax, the Chancellor of the Exchequer should be given an increase in salary. In that way, we might introduce the concept of competition and incentives into the highest levels of Government.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Howarth: I will not give way because I believe that the House wishes to move to a Division. I note your assent, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to that proposal.

My hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) was not given an answer to his point about differentials. There is a considerable narrowing in the differentials between Ministers, of whatever rank, who are charged with an enormous and increasing work load. We ordinary, old, bloody infantry on the Back Benches do not believe that we serve any valuable purpose in allowing that to continue. Those who accept office make an increasing sacrifice, because they are normally younger people who have families and additional responsibilities.

Sir Hal Miller: What about the Monte[illegible]?

Mr. Howarth: If my west midlands friend, the hon. Member for Bromsgrove (Sir H. Miller), honestly thinks that riding around in the back of a 1·6 Montego constitutes a great privilege, his sense of priorities are different from mine. It is interesting that suddenly the Opposition are changing their policies because they want to get their backsides on the back seat of a Montego 1·6L. That is the height of their ambitions.

I think that I have made my points, and I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House has noted some of them.

11.22 pm

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): The purpose of our opposition this evening is to make the point that the Leader of the House is not doing his work and does not deserve the salary that he receives.

My hon. Friends have said that the Select Committee on Scotland is needed. You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, ruled them out of order when they tried to give the reasons why it should be considering Scotland's environment, its steel industry, the crisis facing its fishing industry and a range of other issues. The Leader of the House has failed in his duty by not carrying out the Standing Orders of the House. It is ironic, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you tell hon. Members to obey the Standing Orders of the House, yet he cannot be told to obey those self-same Standing Orders.

In a letter to me, Mr. Speaker rightly pointed out that there are certain Standing Orders that he is duty-bound to follow because they lay obligations specifically on his shoulders, but there are other Standing Orders, such as Standing Order No. 130, which make it clear that there shall be a Scottish Select Committee. That is linked to Standing Order No. 104, which says that it is the duty of the Committee of Selection to produce that Committee. The Leader of the House is failing in his obligations to the Standing Orders by not implementing them. The resolution of 20 December merely said that the House recognises the inability of the Committee of Selection to produce the Committee. The Committee of Selection was not unable but unwilling to do so. The Leader of the House should implement the Standing Orders to be worthy of the salary that we are discussing.

The order concerns the rights and powers of Parliament to scrutinise the Executive. It is the duty of the Leader of the House to allow Back-Benchers to exercise proper scrutiny of the Administration. The right hon. and learned Gentleman has not fulfilled that duty, so how can he deserve his salary? The Scottish Office is the only major Department whose activities are not surveyed by a Select Committee. Such scrutiny is especially important given that the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) is chairman of the Scottish Conservative party as well as a Minister. The Leader of the House should give the House, through the Select Committee, the power to scrutinise the connection between party politics and the Executive. It is important to scrutinise what is happening, but at the minute Scotland is being denied that right.

The Leader of the House should be worthy of his hire, but he has failed the House and Scotland. The resolution of December 1988 applied to the previous Session. If its powers are to be exercised once more, that resolution should come before the House again. If the right hon. and learned Gentleman is to be worthy of his hire he should establish a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs so that Members representing Scotland have the opportunity to question Scottish Ministers. We cannot ask English Ministers about Scottish matters as that would be ruled out of order.

The Leader of the House should earn his money by doing right by Scotland. Members representing Scotland should have the right to scrutinise the Administration—*[Interruption.]* We should be free from such abuse. All English Members can do is shout as they have no interest in Scotland. When they turn out on occasions such as this it is akin to organised hooliganism.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): Unlike the hon. Gentleman, I sat on the Committee that considered the Self-Governing Schools Etc. (Scotland) Bill earlier this year.

Mr. Welsh: The hon. Gentleman makes my point. I have been elected by the Scottish people, but I was not allowed to be a member of that Committee. He represents an English constituen[illegible]nd had no interest in the subject, yet he was a member of the Committee. That proves how little the House is willing to do for Scotland. The Conservatives, in organised collaboration and ably abetted by the Labour party, ensure that failure. It is about time that Scotland counted in this place, but that will probably never happen. We have the answer—we should return to our Parliament. The hon. Gentleman makes that case for us. I hope that the television cameras will show how little hon. Members representing England care about my country.

The Leader of the House should take such matters into account. He is a unionist and he wants to preserve the system whereby Scotland is meaningless. To earn his salary the right hon. and learned Gentleman should ensure that Scotland is taken into account. The Select Committee on Scottish Affairs is in his remit and he should prove that he is fulfilling his duty and earning his money. Mr. Speaker is not duty-bound by the relevant Standing Orders, but the Leader of the House should implement them. Surely he has some connection with the Committee of Selection, whose duty under the Standing Orders is to produce a Scottish Select Committee. We are bound by the Standing Orders and so should be the Leader of the House.

The Leader of the House should be worthy of his hire and he should do something, for once, for Scotland.

11.28 pm

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): As a life-long trade unionist, I believe that the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) and his colleagues have got it slightly wrong. There is a certain rate for a job and, although the rate for this particular job is grossly over-inflated, that rate is tied to the job and not to the individual who holds the post.

If I were the shop steward in this dispute, I would argue to the hon. Member for Angus, East that the proper course of action would be not to reduce the salary, but to give a verbal warning to the incumbent of the post about his failings. If that was not sufficient, I would follow it up with a written warning, and if the individual still failed to carry out his duties properly he could get the sack. The same argument applied to the right hon. and learned Gentleman's predecessor.

The Leader of the House could be saved from that eventual fate if Members such as the hon. Members for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth), for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) and others who suddenly acquire a great interest in Scotland late at night or during Scottish questions were willing to serve on the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. That would solve the problem, and the House would stop wasting its time in this fashion.

11.29 pm

Sir Geoffrey Howe: There is one point on which I would not wish the House to be under any misapprehension. The notion was put across, as a result of some intervention, that if the order were to fall, ministerial salaries would be increased more substantially than if the order were passed. I must remove that misapprehension from hon. Members' minds. If the order fell, Ministers in another place would get nothing and Ministers in this House would get an increase of only £1,953. I hope that those who are moved with sympathy for the motion will retain that emotion firmly in the front of their minds.

I shall say nothing about the observations of the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott), who claims as one of his leisure-time occupations the role of writer of fiction and who tried his best in his speech. I turn to the observations which have flickered recurrently across the debate and which came from hon. Members from north of the border, particularly the hon. Members for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond), for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars), for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) and for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe). The simple answer to their question is that the issue of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs was debated on 20 December 1988, as I said in the debate on the Loyal Address. The conclusion was reached when the House recognised the inability of the Committee of Selection to nominate Members to serve on the Scottish Affairs Select Committee in accordance with Standing Order No. 104(2). That was a conclusion reached by the House, not by me. I urge the hon. Member for Govan to disabuse himself of the idea that there has been any fix by the establishment and still more to disabuse himself of the idea that by making such allegations he can establish a kind of pre-emptive alibi for himself.

Mr. Salmond: The conclusion to which the right hon. and learned Gentleman refers was reached last Session. Does he not think that there is a responsibility in this new Session to have a fresh debate on whether the House will obey its Standing Orders? Does not the right hon. and learned Gentleman, as Leader of the House, feel some special responsibility for seeing the implementation of Standing Order No. 130?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Because I recognised the importance of that point, I addressed myself to the issue and made the position clear in my first speech in the current Session in the debate on the Loyal Address, notwithstanding a certain amount of unwelcoming hubbub from the Opposition.

Mr. Sillars: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am afraid that I will not give way, because I must draw to a conclusion.

I appreciated the support from my hon. Friend the Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Dr. Glyn), who was alert, as always, in our interests; my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark), who is always the source of helpful quotations of many kinds; and, above all, my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth), who gave us a lucid exposition of his analysis of the causes of inflation. Like him, I am a monetarist. I regard monetary supply as having great importance in the control of inflation. I would go a little further—I regard the exemplary management of salaries as a sensible part of good management, not to be entirely disregarded in achieving a sensible reaction to proper monetary discipline. I acknowledge my hon. Friend's other point that differentials tend to get squeezed disagreeably at a time of inflation. That is a strong reason for seeking to get on top of inflation.

My judgment about the validity of the salaries that are generally available under this Administration has been that they have been sufficient to recruit and retain Ministers of suitable talent. Here I look at my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth). There was a happy time—I hope that it was happy—when he served as my parliamentary private secretary. Suddenly, he was offered a ministerial position, and the massive enhancement in salary was sufficient to recruit him to the Front Bench forthwith and retain him there ever since. That is a fairly practical judgment.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Maryhill, who sought to protect me from the erosion of my salary even though she threatened me with the prospect of a verbal ticking off from herself, which is almost more alarming.

I commend the order to the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 124, Noes 17.

Division No. 16] **[11.34 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Colvin, Michael
Dixon, Don
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Duffy, A. E. P.
Durant, Tony
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Derek
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lilley, Peter
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Eric
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steve
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Pike, Peter L.
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor

Speller, Tony
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waller, Gary
Warren, Kenneth
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Michael Fallon.

NOES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cryer, Bob
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Meale, Alan
Parry, Robert
Salmond, Alex
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Wallace, James

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Welsh and
Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Ministerial and other Salaries Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 1st December, be approved.

ESTIMATES

Resolved,

That this House agrees with the Report [28th November] of the Liaison Committee—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

PETITIONS

Broadcasting (Deaf People)

11.45 pm

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): I wish to present a petition signed by 10,000 people in Wales on behalf of the deaf community. They are concerned

> that the broadcasters are not providing complete access for deaf television viewers, for example, with subtitles or sign language; the number of viewers affected are at least 4 million; deaf viewers, as equal members of the general public, are entitled to equal access to television programmes.

The petition states:

> Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House will ensure that legislation be passed placing an obligation on television channel operators to make their programmes more accessible to deaf people by using Teletext subtitles, sign language and other means and to reach complete coverage by a fixed date.

I strongly endorse the view that broadcasters should be under an obligation to ensure that the deaf community has full access to television programmes through the use of sign language and subtitles and by other means.

To lie upon the Table.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): I have a similar petition, which was presented to my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Pollok (Mr. Dunnachie) and me at a recent meeting of the Glasgow association for deaf people. The petition carries about 8,000 signatures from people living in Glasgow and surrounding areas. The petitioners argue that

> the broadcasters are not providing complete access for deaf television viewers, for example, with subtitles or sign language; the number of viewers affected are at least 4 million; deaf viewers, as equal members of the general public, are entitled to equal access to television programmes.

They, too, pray that the House

> will ensure that legislation be passed placing an obligation on television channel operators to make their programmes more accessible to deaf people by using Teletext subtitles, sign language and other means.

To lie upon the Table.

Leicestershire Knitwear Industry

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

11.48 pm

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): At a slightly earlier hour than one had feared, I am glad to welcome my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State to this short debate about the desperate plight of the Leicestershire knitwear industry. As my hon. Friend is an east midlands Member himself, I am sure that he will be knowledgeable. I hope that he will also be sympathetic. I am also pleased to see my hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell) in his place. As a Government Whip, he is not allowed to speak in the debate, but I know of his longstanding commitment to those of his constituents who work in the knitwear industry.

My hon. Friends the Members for Harborough (Sir J. Farr), who is unwell, and for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick), who has a prior commitment away from the House, and the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) who, sadly, has had a close relative suddenly taken ill, have all sent me good wishes for the debate and strong expressions of support for the Leicestershire knitwear industry. Any Leicestershire Member who seeks to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will have my permission to speak. This is a united cause for us all because the largest industrial sector in our county is the knitting and clothing industry which currently employs 33,000 people in 490 companies. Alas, that number seems to be diminishing daily.

Last Tuesday here in Westminster, Leicestershire Members met representatives of employers and trade unions. I do not overstate it if I say that they were desperate. They are not given to exaggeration—I have met them many times in nearly 16 years in the House—but some of the most famous and honoured industrial names in the county—firms such as Corah, and Kemptons, which also has a factory in Grantham—and many others have experienced major closures, receivership or significant redundancies. The trade union, the National Association of Hosiery and Knitwear Workers, has been notified of 3,500 job losses in Leicestershire between June 1988 and 1989, but there have been many more since and the true figure is much higher. The industry's leaders stressed to us last week that the position had never been worse. Leicestershire Members cannot accept such grave damage to one of our most basic and honoured local industries. We have to raise our voice in concern, as we are doing in this debate.

As the industry sees it, the main problem is economic, with the pound and interest rates too high. As a result, imports flood in, exports are penalised and British jobs are lost. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister of State cannot do much about those problems because they are basic economic questions. The pound has fallen recently, which I welcome, and I hope that interest rates will be cut in the Budget, even if taxes have to be raised.

However, my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade can do something about the trading environment. There must be a renewed multi-fibre arrangement after July 1991. The existing MFA should be toughened and better enforced. Why does it take so long to restrain sudden surges of imports? Why should countries that are not EEC members and have only applied to join, such as Turkey, be given zero tariffs to export to EEC countries such as Britain when Turkey has a 125 per cent. duty against our imports? What about the United States of America with its 30 per cent. duty? The Americans exclude textile and clothing imports from their generalised scheme of preferences. Why cannot the EEC act much more speedily and much less bureaucratically to enforce ceilings which should limit duty-free quantities under the EEC's own generalised scheme of preferences?

Why did we, as part of the EEC and as a trading and manufacturing nation, boot the ball so effortlessly into our own goal by making it difficult to know the country of origin of manufactured goods? It would be highly desirable and it is still possible under EEC rules for all retailers to declare the true country of origin of their knitwear and hosiery so as to provide such information to customers. Mail order catalogues could play an important role by allowing housewives or other home shoppers to know the real country of origin of the goods that interest them in the catalogues.

All Leicestershire Members regularly visit knitwear factories in the county or related operations, such as yarn throwsters and machine manufacturers, or go to see the splendid work that is done in our local education institutions, such as Leicester polytechnic, which is a world leader in knitwear technology. When we go round such factories, we do not see an obsolete sunset industry. Instead we see modern technology, bright and imaginative design, high standards of production and a very responsible and mostly female work force with excellent industrial relations. It is certainly not highly paid, but it has moved well with the times, especially over the past 10 years. But now it is in an utterly dejected state, with many of its finest firms fighting for their very existence.

The Minister has seen the brief prepared by the Leicester and District Knitting Industry Association because I provided it for him last night. I beg him to appreciate the crisis that is overwhelming this vital industry in Leicestershire and to take action with other Ministers to help it now. I invite other Leicestershire colleagues to share the experiences of their constituents with the Minister in the remainder of this short debate.

11.55 pm

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): I thank the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) not only for raising this matter tonight but for kindly giving time to his colleagues from Leicestershire to comment. As he said, this is a concern that we share, for the knitwear and hosiery industry in Leicestershire provides work for fewer of our constituents than it did and is in a bad way.

In the 19 years that I have been in the House, this traditional and essential industry has never been in a more desperate plight. I join the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton and other Leicestershire Members in calling on the Government to step in and help the industry before it slides away into total disaster.

In the past, mainly the badly managed companies have gone under. When Kemptons, a respected, well-managed and first-class business in my constituency, went into the hands of the receiver, we knew that the time had come for urgent action. I hope that it will be forthcoming.

11.56 pm

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) for raising this vital issue. Like most hon. Members who represent Leicestershire constituencies, I have in my area a number of companies involved in the knitwear industry and I well know their problems. Unfortunately, I was not able to attend the meeting that was held in the House with other Members last week, but I am grateful for all the information that I have been given following the meeting, and I have been able to understand more the problems of the firms.

As my hon. Friend rightly said, the problem is essentially one of cheap goods, low wages and undercutting our industry—in all, amounting to unfair competition. The only solution lies in the renewal of the multi-fibre arrangement. I implore the Minister to examine that agreement and—remembering our partners in the EEC—renew it, because that is essential for our industry.

We must look after this industry. It is ailing and it needs all the help that it can get. It is essential for the agreement to be renewed to give it that much-needed help.

11.57 pm

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): I, too, thank the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) for giving us time in his debate. I also pay tribute to the speech earlier today in another debate of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner). This is certainly a Leicestershire day in the House.

The House will recall that on 30 June 1988 I initiated an Adjournment debate on the Leicestershire textile industry. Then, as now, I paid tribute to the work of the employers in Leicester and to the National Union of Hosiery and Knitwear Workers, whose members, like hon. Members on both sides, are united in the defence of the industry. Indeed, the last time we spoke in a similar way was in a debate on policing, again initiated by the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton, and that resulted in 51 extra police officers being allocated to Leicestershire.

This is indeed an industry in crisis. The number of job losses nationally in the past six months has been 2,800, and locally 1,500. In the last year, the industry has lost over 7,000 jobs—more than 10 per cent. of the entire industry—4,000 of them in Leicestershire. As other hon. Members have mentioned, firms that were household names—Kemptons, Corah and many others—have suffered because of the damage.

The damage is due, first, to the high interest rates that are currently the policy of the Government; secondly, to the current level of the pound; and thirdly, and most important, to the extremely high level of imports. It is impossible for manufacturers in my constituency and in the city of Leicester to compete with the current high level of imports.

Only two weeks ago the Minister came to my constituency to visit J. & S. Garments. He saw the way in which manufacturers are attempting to compete with the high level of imports. It is impossible for them to do so. Productivity, output, job losses and the preparations that must be made for 1992 are clear signs that the industry is in deep trouble.

The industry demands assisted area status, and I support that. It demands renewal of the MFA in1991, and I support that. If this trend continues, in 10 years' time there will be no textile industry in Leicestershire. The industry goes back to the 16th century and its history has embellished the social fabric of our county. I urge the Minister to act now.

12 midnight

The Minister for Industry (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) on having secured this Adjournment debate which gives him the opportunity to explain to the House the concerns that he and other Members representing the county of Leicester have about the knitwear industry. I am afraid that he flattered me in one respect. I am not the Minister for Trade within the Department for Trade and Industry. My noble Friend Lord Trefgarne is the Minister for Trade, and I shall ensure that he has every opportunity to understand the anxieties expressed in tonight's debate.

It is never possible to hear news of any factory closing or redundancies occurring with anything other than a deep sense of regret. However, I must say that it is not useful to suggest that the solutions to the industry's problems lie with the Government. The truth is that many and probably most of them lie beyond the control of Government and are inherent in the nature of the industry being undertaken. All are the product of external circumstances, for example, weather and fashion, and beyond the control of Government.

It is interesting that in rather a useful paper produced by the Knitting Industries Federation dated 4 April 1989 the 10-point plan pays considerable attention to the steps that the industry should take. I agree that many of the solutions lie primarily within the control of the industry.

I shall consider the state of the knitwear industry in Leicester and the effects that the downturn of the industry is having on the local economy. I understand that the 1987 census showed that about 34,755 people were employed in the county's textile industry, which is equivalent to about 9·6 per cent. of the working population. Clearly there has been a substantial number of redundancies between November 1988 and October 1989. The figures given in the House tonight have not been wholly consistent and are not wholly compatible with the figures before me, but let us not fall out over such matters. A substantial number of redundancies have occurred.

I am aware of the redundancies that have occurred at Kemptons. As my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton said, Kemptons has a factory in my constituency. Curiously, the redundancies have not yet shown up dramatically in the unemployment figures. Until October 1989 unemployment continued to fall. In October 1989 the percentage unemployed in Leicestershire was 4·5 per cent. compared with 5·6 per cent. at the same time last year. That represents a fall of nearly 5,000 during the same period. In the Leicester travel-to-work area, unemployment was 5 per cent. compared with 5·9 per cent. the previous year, a reduction of 2,308. It is interesting to note that jobcentres are still advertising vacancies in the knitwear industry locally and that there is a particular shortage of workers with skills to offer.

Although one would not wish to minimise the impact of recent closures on the families of those concerned, it seems that vacancies exist at least for the more highly skilled workers and that there should be good prospects for finding employment. Those facts are also relevant to the proposal by the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) that Leicester should be given assisted area status. There is no prospect of that, for two reasons. First, we have made it plain that we have no plans to change the map within the lifetime of this Parliament. That remains our policy. Secondly, and much more substantively, I am afraid that the unemployment figures do not even begin to justify making Leicestershire an assisted area. For example, the unemployment rate in the Leicester travel-to-work area is 5 per cent. That is far below the average rate in development areas, which is 11·9 per cent., or the average rate in intermediate areas, which is 8·3 per cent.

Mr. Janner: That is an unfair way of putting what is already a difficult case for the Minister. The travel-to-work area includes areas where there is no unemployment as well as areas such as Braunstone in my constituency where there are still vast numbers of unemployed people. We are talking about unemployment in the hosiery and knitwear industries and so far the Minister has offered no help.

Mr. Hogg: I was dealing with a specific point made by the hon. Member for Leicester, East who asked that Leicester or Leicestershire should be given assisted status. There is no possible justification for doing that. An important criterion, although not the only one, is the level of unemployment and, with 5 per cent. in the Leicester travel-to-work area, there is no possible justification for making Leicester part of an assisted area. I do not want to arouse expectations about that because it will not happen.

I shall now turn to the multi-fibre and GATT arrangements. Those matters were touched on by hon. Members and are extremely important. In general, the Government do not believe that it is helpful to increase trade barriers as that only invites other countries to retaliate or follow suit. Generally, it diminishes trade and as a trading nation it is in our best interests to expand rather than to restrict trade.

Mr. Vaz: Other Governments are assisting their textile and hosiery industries. It is a question not of fair competition but of unfair competition because other Governments are subsidising their industries.

Mr. Hogg: That is not a reason for derogating from the general principle that I have outlined. It is a reason for toughening the GATT provisions, and I shall shortly turn to that. The hon. Gentleman's intervention did not make clear whether he was referring to subsidies in the European Community or without it. If there are subsidies in the European Community, I should be grateful if the hon. Gentleman would bring them to my attention.

Mr. Vaz: Rover, although it is not a textile company.

Mr. Hogg: It is not a textile company by any standard. That is not even a helpful point for the hon. Gentleman to make to support his case. If the hon. Gentleman has any evidence of subsidies within the European Community that is relevant to the textile industry, he must let us know, because the Commission would like to investigate.

Like their predecessors, the present Government have recognised the special problems faced by the United Kingdom textile and clothing industry. Under the MFA, a wide range of textile and clothing imports from major low-cost suppliers are restrained. Let me mention in passing, however, that the main part of the problem is caused by the fact that the countries concerned are low-cost countries, many of which have much lower wage costs than ours. That is the essential difficulty, and we should not blind ourselves to its importance.

As a major derogation from GATT, the MFA has always been seen as a temporary arrangement, designed to give industry in developed countries a breathing space in which to adjust to new competition. GATT Ministers are generally already committed by the Punta del Este declaration—made at the start of the Uruguay round of multilateral trade negotiations—to phasing out the MFA on the basis of strengthened GATT rules and disciplines. That, I believe, is the way forward. Exactly how it will be dealt with is the subject of negotiations that will continue throughout the round, but the European Community has repeatedly made it clear that the phasing out of the MFA must be accompanied by a reinforcing of those GATT rules and disciplines.

It is our firm objective to achieve, in particular, a more effective safeguard to protect against sudden surges of imports, to improve provision to deal with unfair trade and intellectual property rights, and to provide greater access for our exports to developing-country markets—particularly the more developed ones—through a reduction in their own tariff and non-tariff barriers. The Commission also maintains—and this is generally accepted in GATT—that there must be a gradual transition towards the full integration of the textiles and clothing sector into GATT. That would give industry a further period in which to adjust; the length and nature of that period is, however, a matter for negotiation.

It would be wrong for me to try to persuade the House that the MFA will be extended permanently, for that is not the case. The plain truth is that this aspect of trade must be brought within GATT, but, to the extent that it is necessary, GATT rules must be strengthened to provide more safeguards in the respects that I have identified, and also to allow a proper period of transition.

Mr. Latham: I hope that we can get one point absolutely clear—that there can be no question of British Ministers allowing the MFA to expire until new Uruguay rules are firmly in place.

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend makes a powerful point, but it must be resolved within the context of the negotiations in GATT. In the end, it will be a GATT decision. British Ministers will urge the case as best they can, but the decisions will be made in GATT, and—as my hon. Friend will appreciate—we do not have an automatic or self-evident veto.

Meanwhile, there are steps that we can all take to assist the industry—and, primarily, that the industry can take to assist itself. I shall not go into much detail, because the hour is late, but there is scope for further research and development. There is, indeed, scope for collaborative ventures in which the Government are prepared to play a part. I am somewhat disappointed that there are not more applicants for assistance in that regard, and I should like to think that further applications will be presented for appropriate schemes.

We can also do a certain amount to improve the industry's competitiveness—for example, through the consultancy initiative. We have also participated with the working groups in an effort to expand exports and encourage improvements in design.

[Mr. Hogg]

We have to look forward to the time when the industry will be working within the general GATT rules and trying to make itself more competitive by focusing its efforts on those parts of the market where Britain has an obvious lead. To suppose otherwise is to peddle an illusion. I know that neither my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton nor the hon. Member for Leicester, East wishes to do that. It is a serious problem, but it will not be solved by peddling solutions that do not achieve that purpose. It can be solved only by trying to make the British industry as competitive as any in those sectors where there is a reasonable prospect of survival. I invite hon. Members to agree that that is the way forward.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at fifteen minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 13 December 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

ENVIRONMENT

City Grant, Birmingham

1. **Mr. Bevan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the total amount of city grant money awarded to programmes in Birmingham in the current financial year.

The Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities (Mr. David Hunt): Five city grants totalling almost £10 million have been awarded to programmes in Birmingham, including one of £3·2 million to support a major commercial and leisure development known as the Arcadian centre, which I have approved today.

Mr. Bevan: Can my hon. Friend confirm that the grant for the Waterlinks development in Birmingham is worth more than £6 million and is the second biggest city grant approved so far? Is that not convincing evidence of the Government's commitment to Birmingham's needs? Can thought now be given to a grant-aided scheme for the restoration of the Grand Union canal in Yardley, Birmingham and the areas around it?

Mr. Hunt: I congratulate my hon. Friend and other hon. Friends on having so skilfully and effectively lobbied on Birmingham's behalf, in particular on city grant programmes. The answers to his questions are yes, and yes. The major Waterlinks development is the second biggest scheme approved so far and is equivalent in value to 10 per cent. of the annual approvals programme. I congratulate Birmingham on the exciting and imaginative schemes that it has submitted and I look forward to examining further schemes in due course.

Mr. O'Brien: How much of the city grant, to Birmingham in particular and throughout the country in general, goes to housing for rent? According to the terms of reference, houses for rent should be provided by those who receive city grants. When will the same amount be spent on providing houses for rent as is being spent on commercial undertakings in Birmingham? Does he agree that assistance should be given to provide houses for rent throughout the country.

Mr. Hunt: The purpose of our inner city policies is to provide inner city people with job opportunities, to match their skills to the jobs available, to provide retraining, better homes, better community facilities and a better environment in which to live and work. We have increased the amount spent on city grants from £29 million in 1987-88 to £67 million in 1988-89 and we intend to maintain that rate of increase in future years.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Does my hon. Friend accept that we are mindful of the fact that the Government have been generous towards Birmingham? They understand that Birmingham needs a lot of money for the changes that need to take place. Will he encourage his ministerial colleagues to ensure that the spine road to the Birmingham heartlands, which will set it on the road to growth, goes ahead so that Birmingham can be given a real chance to provide something of great worth to its people?

Mr. Hunt: I completely agree with my hon. Friend. Four large projects in Birmingham are under appraisal, including one in the heartlands area. My Department and I look forward to working with heartlands. We shall continue to support worthwhile city grant schemes. However, because of the complexity of the problems in heartlands, schemes may take longer than usual to appraise. Nevertheless, I shall do my best to speed up their consideration. I completely agree with my hon. Friend that important infrastructure improvements are vital to inner city regeneration.

European Community Ministers

2. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next plans to meet his EEC counterparts; and what matters will be discussed.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Chris Patten): I met my European Community counterparts as recently as Tuesday 28 November at the Environment Council in Brussels, following which on 30 November I gave a report of the meeting to the House in answer to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South (Mr. Bright).

I intend meeting my European Community counterparts again at the next Environment Council on 22 March. The Republic of Ireland takes over the presidency of the European Community on 1 January 1990, and it will be for the presidency to determine the Council agenda.

Ms. Quin: Has the Secretary of State discussed with his European counterparts the speeding up of Britain's full compliance with EC water quality directives? Does he agree that instead of the taxpayer having to fork out more than £3 billion for privatisation, the money would have been better spent complying with those directives earlier? If we are supposed to enter the single European market in 1992, why do we have to wait until 1995 at the earliest for better quality standards?

Mr. Patten: I am sure that the hon. Lady will be delighted to know that we have the most comprehensive, fully funded and obviously committed programme of investment in raising our water quality standards so that they will be in full compliance with EC directives and, perhaps even more to the point, so that we can meet all our standards, some of which are higher than those set by the European Commission. In the other parts of the question, the hon. Lady seemed to be muddling together a number of facts, but I am sure that she will be as delighted as the rest of the House at the extremely successful flotation of the water industry and at the large number of new shareholders in the water industry.

Mr. Hunter: In dealings with his European counterparts, will my right hon. Friend ensure that there is no wasteful overlap between the activities of the European environmental statistics office, the European environmental CORINE programme, the European environmental agency and the European environmental monitoring and information system? It all sounds rather excessive, as though it involved creating or adding to the bureaucrats' paradise.

Mr. Patten: We are all against other bureaucrats' paradises, although we may be in favour of our own. I agree with my hon. Friend about the importance of avoiding overlap. I believe that the establishment of a European environment agency, for which we pressed so strongly at the last Council meeting, will help to establish a common basis for information and debate on European environmental issues. I believe that Britain would come out of such debate pretty well.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: When the Secretary of State next meets his colleagues in Europe, will he ask them how France and Germany are managing to secure reductions in carbon dioxide emissions, while in the United Kingdom they increased by 2·6 per cent? In view of his comments outside the House, does he believe that more intelligent public transport policies and energy conservation measures have contributed to those reductions, and will he be recommending that we take similar action?

Mr. Patten: I am delighted to follow the hon. Gentleman's last point. Since the substantial increase in investment in public transport announced in the Autumn Statement, I believe that we are now looking forward to the largest investment in British Rail since the move from steam to diesel, and we should all welcome that. Carbon dioxide emissions will be a major issue on the international agenda in the next few years. It is extremely complicated, and I am surprised that the Opposition have found it so simple to resolve, but I am sure that the rest of us will continue to do what we can to stop global warming and prevent climate change.

Mr. Heddle: Does my right hon. Friend recall that despite vigorous opposition from the British Government, the EC imposed VAT on non-domestic construction work in the United Kingdom? If the matter comes before his EC counterparts now or in the immediate future, will he give them notice that in no circumstances do the British Government want VAT to be imposed on domestic construction work in the United Kingdom which would increase house price inflation?

Mr. Patten: I well understand my hon. Friend's concern and the argument that he has put so vigorously. Were the issue to come to the Environment Council, my first reaction would be to tell my distinguished colleagues that it should be discussed not by the Environment Council but by other Councils in the Community. I assure my hon. Friend that I would want the closest consultation with my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer about any such proposal.

Community Charge

3. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received in the last month on the community charge.

Mr. David Hunt: I have received about 150 representations from local authorities and others on transitional relief. I continue to receive many representations on the community charge.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Do not the Government accept by now that the poll tax is utterly and totally discredited in the minds of people throughout the country? Can he not see that the people who gain are those who live in large, expensive properties and those who lose are those who live in small, inexpensive properties? In so far as the poll tax is now discredited because it is grossly unjust, is it not time that the Government withdrew the legislation and set about re-evaluating the rating system once again?

Mr. Hunt: No, no and no. Things are on course for the successful introduction of the community charge on 1 April next year. As for the position of the hon. Gentleman and his party, what is discredited is the present rating system, which all major parties now agree should be abolished. We believe that we have a fair and simple alternative. The hon. Gentleman should not pontificate on these matters until he and his colleagues have decided whether they wish to pursue their plans for twin-tax torture for the British people or whether they have some other alternative to bring forward.

Mr. Fishburn: Can my hon. Friend tell the House at this stage what proportion of the British public have registered for the community charge?

Mr. Hunt: I am happy to tell my hon. Friend that I am able to publish today the community charge population figures for England. They show that the proportion of the Government's estimate of people liable to the charge who have been registered is 99·95 per cent. on average throughout the country.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Is the Minister aware of the strong feeling in Tameside about the way in which the poll tax formulae have been applied? He will be aware of the representations that were made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), my hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) and myself to the Department, and of the puzzlement of people in Tameside as to why Tameside appears to have done so badly under the formulae compared with other towns such as Rochdale and Oldham, which are within the same area of Greater Manchester. I hope that the Minister will look seriously at the particular problems of Tameside and the way in which this treatment has been particularly unfair to that authority.

Mr. Hunt: We do not regard as unfair the fact that we have increased the total spending for local authorities next year by 11 per cent. above the current figure and the amount of external finance by 8·5 per cent. Obviously, we are now in a consultation process and I would not want to comment further, except to say how delighted I am that in Tameside more than 100 per cent. of people—*[Interruption.]*—have now registered.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: So that local authorities can levy a community charge which is fair and is seen to be fair, has my hon. Friend had representations from local authorities worried about the treatment of reserves and balances which, as he knows, distort the perceived spending and perceived needs of each authority, making it difficult for my hon. Friend to assess a reasonable and sensible support grant?

Mr. Hunt: I agree with my hon. Friend. The use of balances has always distorted the picture for local authorities. To compare like with like, we have endeavoured to leave the use of balances out of our calculations. Their use can create the kind of problems to which my hon. Friend refers.

Mr. Blunkett: In view of the obvious dismay on the Conservative Back Benches at the fact that the £1 billion bribe offered to the electorate to soften the political impact of the poll tax is clearly not working, will the Minister tell the House whether there are any further plans for financial changes between now and 1 April, whether he understands the existing administrative chaos and whether he understands and appreciates the fact that, whatever the Government do to try to bribe the electorate and to provide what are becoming known as sweeteners, the poll tax will show its full implications when people vote in the local elections in May and display their disgust at and distrust of the Government's proposals to use their money to try to persuade them that the tax that they do not want is acceptable?

Mr. Hunt: When the hon. Gentleman refers to administrative chaos, he can hardly be referring to the excellent work of community charge registration officers throughout the country in achieving a national average of 99·95 per cent. I greatly regret the fact that many local Labour parties have been associated with non-registration campaigns—which have been singularly unsuccessful. On implementation, we believe that the transitional relief scheme is generous and important in trying to overcome the problems in certain parts of the country. However, the certainty that is now present in the system will continue until 1 April, although we have not yet announced the results of our consultations on the amount of rate support grant and external finance.

Mr. Ward: Will my hon. Friend undertake to consider carefully all the representations that have been made to him recently about the community charge and especially those that were made by representatives of the borough of Poole to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope) last Monday, when they demonstrated clearly that they had been treated unfairly in comparison with neighbouring areas? There must be other areas like this, so can my hon. Friend guarantee that they will all be considered carefully?

Mr. Hunt: In paying tribute to my hon. Friend for the robust representations that he has made on behalf of his area, I confirm that all the points that he and the delegation that he headed made will be considered carefully.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of the wholly unsatisfactory nature of that reply and the fact that the Minister has refused to respond properly, I propose——

Mr. Speaker: Order. All that is necessary is to announce that a matter will be raised on the Adjournment. The hon. Gentleman need not go into the arguments now.

War Memorial, County Hall

4. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to ensure that the war memorial and inscripted marble in county hall, London SE1 will be safeguarded in the event of redevelopment.

Mr. Chris Patten: I understand that, as part of their proposals for the development of county hall, the London residuary body and the County Hall Development Group are prepared to provide for the restoration of the memorial and inscripted marble.

Mr. Banks: I am grateful to the Secretary of State for that reply. Is he aware that the great majority of Londoners still find it most offensive that county hall, which was built with ratepayers' money to be the headquarters of the old London county council and then of the Greater London council, should be turned into something as wholly inappropriate as a luxury hotel? Will the Secretary of State take a message from this House to the spivs who propose to build a luxury hotel that the place will be taken back by the people of London for the government of London and that the Opposition will ensure that that happens?

Mr. Patten: My impression has been that most Londoners are able to contain their misery and despair at the abolition of the GLC within the bounds of public decorum. The capital receipts from the sale of county hall will, in due course, be used for the benefit of Londoners —would that all the money which flowed through county hall in the past had also been used to the benefit of Londoners.

Mr. Hanley: Talking of war memorials, may I thank my right hon. Friend, his Department and the Property Services Agency for at long last illuminating the cenotaph in Whitehall? It is now a site of remembrance worthy of those who died for all of us and one of the most attractive monuments in London.

Mr. Patten: I note what my hon. Friend has said, and I agree with him about the importance of what has been done and about the attractiveness of the result.

Miss Hoey: Will the Secretary of State tell the people of Waterloo what direct benefits their community will derive from the conversion of county hall into a luxury hotel, and especially what the benefits will be for people sleeping in the nearby bull ring?

Mr. Patten: As the hon. Lady knows, one proposal for the development of county hall is before an inspector at the moment and another is before the courts, so it would be injudicious for me to be drawn into too much detail in responding to her question. I am sure that one result of the development of county hall which would benefit the hon. Lady's constituents would be the creation of more jobs.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Does my right hon. Friend accept that many people will be glad to hear that the war memorial is to be preserved and properly presented for the benefit of the people of London? Does he also accept that, whatever one thinks about the structure of local government in London, county hall will not be needed again by any body that is established? Will my right hon. Friend take care about answering questions from the hon.

Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) because when the hon. Gentleman sees valuable things lying around county hall they tend to end up lying in his loft?

Mr. Patten: There are many places that I would like to visit, but I have never included the hon. Gentleman's loft among them. I accept what my hon. Friend said about the government of London. I also agree that it is important to protect the interior of county hall and, whatever our disagreements, that is a point on which the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and I agree.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Is the Secretary of State aware that if the Government allow the demolition of any part of county hall it will be seen as an act of vandalism motivated by political spite, and as an attempt by the Government to prevent the next Labour Government from re-establishing Londonwide regional government based at county hall? We shall not be deterred. County hall is as much a part of our heritage—[HON. MEMBERS: "Ask a question."] I am asking a question.

Hon. Members: What is it then?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Mr. Allan Roberts.

Mr. Roberts: Is the Minister aware that county hall is as much a part of our heritage and of the Thames skyline as the Houses of Parliament? It is not surprising, however, that the Government refuse to intervene to protect the former workplace of Ken Livingstone, given that they refuse to intervene to protect the former workplace of William Shakespeare.

Mr. Patten: The hon. Gentleman is right that the building in question is part of our heritage, but I have never regarded the GLC as part of that heritage.

Nature Conservancy Council

5. **Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the chairperson of the Nature Conservancy Council; and what was discussed.

Mr. Chris Patten: My colleagues and I regularly meet the chairman of the Nature Conservancy Council. The most recent meeting was on 23 November, when my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside met Sir William Wilkinson to discuss proposals connected with the forthcoming reorganisation of the council.

Dr. Thomas: Will the Secretary of State, who will shortly be addressing an important conference to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the national parks, accept that the transfer of responsibility and the decentralisation of the scientific base to Wales is generally acceptable in Wales and that the combination of the powers with those of the Countryside Commission will provide a new body able to promote conservation and encourage access, within limits, to the Welsh countryside? Will he now state that it is the Government's intention to organise a joint statutory committee to ensure that Great Britain-wide and United Kingdom-wide issues are dealt with in the reorganisation?

Mr. Patten: I agree with the first part of the hon. Gentleman's remarks. We intend to establish a joint statutory committee. People in Wales, as in England and Scotland, wish, as we do, to ensure that scientific matters which should be taken on a Great Britain basis are taken on such a basis.

Mr. Boswell: Does my right hon. Friend agree that both within and outside the Nature Conservancy Council and its advisory bodies, many more people support his restructuring proposals than have raised their voices against them?

Mr. Patten: I agree with my hon. Friend, and one of those who have supported our proposals is the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Gould: Has not the proposed dismemberment of the Nature Conservancy Council met with almost universal hostility on the part of all those directly concerned with conservation? There is still time to withdraw the proposals and I urge the Secretary of State to do precisely that. Does he not accept that his proposed palliative of some form of joint committee has also been decisively rejected as an inadequate piece of sticking plaster for a wound that should never have been opened? Would it not be better if he stayed his hand from surgery altogether?

Mr. Patten: I repeat that the Leader of the Opposition is among those people who have not condemned the proposals. I have in front of me, as barristers are able to say, a letter from the office of the Leader of the Opposition which says:

> "Mr. Kinnock . . . welcomes the proposal to establish a countryside council for Wales."

If the Leader of the Opposition welcomes the proposals for Wales, I do not see how he cannot welcome them for the rest of the country. Perhaps Labour party policy varies from one part of the country to another.

I share the hon. Gentleman's determination to ensure that we safeguard the science base of the Nature Conservancy Council's work. I share the Leader of the Opposition's determination to ensure that there is a profile for nature conservancy work in Great Britain. Our arrangements on the machinery allow for that. We are not talking about changing conservation policy, but changing the machinery, and that is justified. The only real difference between us and the Nature Conservancy Council now is whether or not there should be an independent chairman of the joint statutory committee.

Sir Hector Monro: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, despite what the governing bodies may have said or written to newspapers, the majority of Nature Conservancy councillors are firmly in favour of the changes, and the individual countries are particularly pleased because they look forward to a more practical involvement in nature conservation, with a stronger scientific base?

Mr. Patten: I note what my hon. Friend says. He has made a distinguished contribution to the work of the Nature Conservancy Council. I am sure that the majority to which he referred will be delighted at the confirmation that I have been able to give this afternoon and they will be delighted that the Leader of the Opposition agrees with them.

Water Charges

6. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how he intends that the level of payment to be made for water and associated charges in respect of domestic hereditaments will be determined in future; and from what date any change of system shall take effect.

The Minister for Housing and Planning (Mr. Michael Howard): It is for each water service company to decide how to charge domestic customers for its services, subject to the limits placed on each company's charges by the Secretary of State and the director general, and the other conditions of their appointment. The use of rateable values as a basis of water charges will not be permitted beyond the year 2000.

Mr. Michael: Will the Minister therefore confirm three principles to the House now—first, that compulsory metering will not be introduced; secondly, that the new system, whatever it is, will have to relate the charge to the ability to pay; and thirdly, that nothing will be introduced that could be regarded as any sort of water poll tax?

Mr. Howard: There are provisions in the licence of appointment against any kind of unfair discrimination against different categories of customer. That is more than sufficient protection for water consumers.

Mr. Paice: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that metering means that people will pay more for the water they use and that a household containing a bigger family will pay more than a household containing one person, and, what is more important, the more water that they use, the more they will pollute, and that will conform to our policy that the polluter pays?

Mr. Howard: There is a great deal in what my hon. Friend says. Metering is used almost universally in other countries, but will not necessarily be adopted by the water service companies. It is for them to choose the most appropriate method of charging.

Mr. Beith: What will the Minister do about the impact of charges upon the customers of long-established private water companies, such as the Newcastle and Gateshead water company? Customers of those companies have already faced increases of more than 18 per cent., which is partly due to the demands of privatisation legislation. They will face greater increases, because those companies do not get the green dowry that is being given to the newly privatised companies.

Mr. Howard: We are engaged in discussions with those companies to decide the appropriate level for the limit on charges during the next 10 years, and those discussions are continuing.

Mr. Dover: Is the Minister able to confirm whether arrangements have been made for housing developers, with regard to the charges that they have to pay for the provision of water services to housing developments?

Mr. Howard: Infrastructure payments have to be made under the legislation by developers so that the costs that their developments impose on the water infrastructure are fully met.

Litter

8. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has as to the number of tonnes of litter left on British streets every day; what was the average figure for 1988; and what was the figure for 10 years ago.

The Minister for the Environment and Countryside (Mr. David Trippier): No statistics of this nature are available, but it is perfectly clear that there is far too much litter on many of our streets. We are determined to put this matter right, and we shall shortly introduce legislative proposals to tackle the problem.

Mr. Cran: Does my hon. Friend agree that the key to the Government's estimable anti-litter proposals is not just an increase in fines, but enforcement? The City of Westminster is undoubtedly trying to solve the problem, but all we see is innumerable signs telling us of fines and nobody backing them up, with the result that Marsham street, in which the Department of the Environment and I reside, occasionally resembles a street in Cairo rather than London.

Mr. Trippier: I can give my hon. Friend the assurance he seeks. There will be strong enforcement powers in the forthcoming Environmental Protection Bill. Litterers who default on paying fixed penalties within the prescribed time will be prosecuted. That is an important element of enforcement. Moreover, an aggrieved citizen will be able to apply to a magistrates court for a litter abatement order. That is broadly welcome and means that a citizen will be able to take the local authority to court if he is not satisfied with the standard of cleanliness in its area.

Mr. John Evans: Would the Minister care to estimate how many tonnes of litter are left lying on Britain's trunk roads all year long? Is it not time that he instructed his ministerial colleagues in the Department of Transport to clean trunk roads such as the East Lancs highway, which is in my constituency and is so littered with debris and shoulder-high weeds that it often looks like the main thoroughfare in a refugee camp?

Mr. Trippier: I agree with every word that the hon. Gentleman has uttered. He knows that I am familiar with that road. I am delighted to be able to tell him that we shall deal with that problem in the forthcoming Bill.

Mr. Churchill: Will my hon. Friend enter discussions with supermarkets, brewers and the soft drinks trade to explore the possibility of introducing a system of refundable deposits on cans and bottles such as operates so effectively in Switzerland for example?

Mr. Trippier: I am happy to confirm that we are anxious to talk, to supermarkets in particular. I am about to meet representatives of the leading supermarkets, and I hope to raise that issue with them.

Ms. Walley: Rather than extol the virtues of what Westminster city council has done, will the Minister face the fact that, for many years, that council did not charge for the collection of trade refuse? He has not so far got to the heart of the matter. What discussions is he having about the importance of waste reduction and waste minimisation, and applying a precautionary principle rather than enforcement? He is not giving local authorities the money they need to deal with competitive tendering. Where is the ability to recycle in this? Where is the Government's real concern about the environment?

Mr. Trippier: I would not disagree with what the hon. Lady said about precautionary measures. When we are talking about waste minimisation, we are talking about recycling in the main. The Government have entered a partnership with Friends of the Earth to launch an initiative for recycling the city in Sheffield. I hope to have the support of the Labour party and other political parties represented in the House for it. We all hope that the initiative will be a success. We hope to learn from it and to replicate it elsewhere.

It is not fair for the hon. Lady to knock what Westminster city council has done. Its initiative to tidy up Westminster has been a tremendous success. The appointment of litter wardens has had a significant deterrent effect. We have chosen the city of Westminster as an example and are building the forthcoming Bill around it.

Mr. Tracey: My hon. Friend has quoted the example of the work that is going on in Westminster, but is he aware that other London boroughs are taking just as much action and setting just as good an example to the rest of the country, for example, Kingston's "Bright and Clean" campaign involves both schoolchildren and the community at large and in Wandsworth, which sets so many examples to other local authorities, there is an anti-litter blitz squad?

Mr. Trippier: I am anxious to pay credit where it is due and I am happy to confirm a number of examples in London where the local authorities have acted responsibly and can be held up as a superb example that the rest of the nation should follow. I hope to visit all the authorities that my hon. Friend has mentioned and I add to his list the London borough of Sutton, which has achieved a considerable degree of success in this area.

Water Quality

10. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to receive a response from the European Community on the programmes presented to it to implement the tap water quality and bathing water quality directives.

Mr. Howard: I have received no indication from the Commission as to when it expects to respond.

Mr. Griffiths: Does the Minister agree that there is a good possibility that the Commission will insist on the implementation of both directives at an earlier date than many of the schemes that have been put before the Commission suggest that the Government are prepared to accept? Given that on the bathing water directive alone, the Government intend that £760 million worth of work will be done after 1993, does he agree that if the Commission insists on 1993 as the date, there will be a big shock for those people who are making short-term gains from the water privatisation?

Mr. Howard: No, the hon. Gentleman is wrong on all counts. Our programmes, which are very detailed, provide for the work that can be done to be done as soon as is practicable. I cannot believe that the Commission would be so unreasonable as to insist on earlier dates. In any event, that would not be to the disadvantage of investors, who are entitled to a reasonable return on their capital in accordance with the provisions of the legislation.

Mr. Steen: Is my hon. Friend aware of the bad quality of the sea water along much of the coastline of south Devon, where a young lady swimmer caught hepatitis A last summer as a result of swimming in the sea? Does he agree that lengthening the outfall pipes will not solve any of the problems because it will simply divert the sewage right along the coastline to other beaches?

Mr. Howard: I agree that much needs to be done to improve the quality of our bathing waters, but the proposals of South West Water plc, in common with other plcs, amount to much more than simply lengthening the outfall pipes. Their proposals are carefully considered and prepared and will achieve compliance with the European Community's directive.

Mr. McGrady: Will the Minister discuss with his EEC colleagues the rise in pollution in the Irish sea, which is so damaging to the marine aquasystem? Will he suggest setting up a tripartite commission involving the Governments of the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland and the Isle of Man to study pollution and to make suggestions for its eradication?

Mr. Howard: These matters receive careful and continuous attention by those of my hon. Friends within the Department who have responsibility for them.

Mr. David Shaw: Is my hon. Friend aware that in the run-up to water privatisation Southern Water announced that it would invest heavily to improve the sewage situation in the English Channel in the Deal, Dover and Folkestone area? Is he further aware that the privatisation will bring that investment forward and that more money will be available to improve the quality of the water in that area?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Both his constituents and mine will benefit in precisely the way that he has identified.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: But if there are to be extra costs to meet EEC standards, who is to pay? Is the Minister aware that some stockbrokers are already warning the new shareholders that extra spending may require another rights issue? Will the Government allow that to happen or will Ministers step in again to put the interests of shareholders first? Will Ministers make taxpayers or consumers foot another bill on top of the £3 billion that the privatisation has already cost the taxpayers of this country?

Mr. Howard: The limits on price rises that I announced in August provide for the £24·6 billion investment programme which will take place during the next 10 years and accounts for the industry's predictable investment needs. The success of the privatisation lay behind part of the hon. Lady's question. The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) said in the *Financial Times* of 14 September that

> "Success . . . will be measured in terms of how enthusiastically the small investor goes for the issue."

I am content to accept his criteria, and on that test it is clear that the issue was a resounding success.

Miss Emma Nicholson: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that this hostage to fortune matches in its eloquence and efficiency the hostage to fortune put forward earlier this summer by the hon. Member for Dagenham's colleague who said that South West Water would not be a triumph when it was offered for privatisation? That is now selling superbly.

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The Labour party was determined to wreck the privatisation, did everything it could to wreck it and manifestly failed to do so. All we have from it now are the sourest of sour grapes.

Walkers and Ramblers

11. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to increase access to the countryside for walkers and ramblers.

Mr. Trippier: The Government are committed to protect public access to the countryside through the rights-of-way network. We fully support the Countryside Commission's initiatives, working with local highway authorities, to raise the profile of rights of way work and improve the quality of access.

Mr. Bennett: Does the Minister accept that walking is a growing recreational activity in this country and that the number of people who enjoy it both in wild and mountainous areas and on urban fringes is steadily increasing?

We should look for new areas to which people can obtain access to avoid the overuse of some of the existing honeyspots. What are the Government doing to improve access as opposed to protecting existing access?

Mr. Trippier: We must put this matter in context. The 140,000 mile network of rights of way is, as the hon. Gentleman suggests, the main means by which the public can gain access to the wider countryside. Walking as a recreation is certainly on the increase. The Countryside Commission has come forward with a new initiative entitled "Enjoying the Countryside". It has made specific recommendations to which we are anxious to respond and has also made specific recommendations to the highway authorities to which I hope that they will respond.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: Is my hon. Friend aware that in many districts around the urban areas of this country, footpaths are cluttered with a horrible accretion of discarded supermarket trolleys? When he meets the supermarket operators, will he take a strong line with them and ask them to introduce a system whereby before trolleys are taken into the stores supermarkets demand a deposit which can be reclaimed when the trolleys are left behind in the parking lot?

Mr. Trippier: I am sympathetic with the point made by my hon. Friend. I shall certainly ensure that this matter is on the agenda when I discuss the issue with the supermarket chiefs.

Mr. Denis Howell: Since 20 per cent. of the nation walk in the countryside each year and the Countryside Commission has just reported to us that up to half the rights of way are difficult or impossible to use—it estimates that one cannot walk further than two miles before reaching a ploughed right of way or some other obstruction—will the Minister consider asking the Countryside Commission to take a new initiative to propose, with the regional sports councils and recreational councils, a new development plan for walking? That is desperately needed in this country. Will he consider increasing the Government grant to highway authorities from £14 million to £21 million so that they can meet their programme? Will he kindly consider giving the Countryside Commission default powers to deal with ploughed footpaths which need to be opened up but the landowners or farmers are unwilling to do that.

Mr. Trippier: I shall try to remember all those questions. In reply to the first, I am happy to respond positively to the right hon. Gentleman's request that we should approach the Countryside Commission to see whether we can enter into partnership with the regional sports councils. That seems to be a good idea. In terms of the amount of money that the Countryside Commission referred to in its report and the initiative that I mentioned earlier, the Commission suggests that a great deal can be achieved through money being made available by local authorities. The amounts are between £40,000 and £90,000 —not high amounts but that money could go a long way. The right hon. Gentleman asked about the ploughing of footpaths which he said can destroy public enjoyment of the countryside. Of course there is legislation which says that footpaths should be reinstated within two weeks. I am not entirely satisfied that that is happening. I welcome the opportunity to say that farmers who break the law must expect to face the penalty.

Association of County Councils

12. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the Association of County Councils; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Chris Patten: My Friend the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities met the Association of County Councils on 6 December and discussed the proposals for the 1990-91 grant settlement.

Mr. Oppenheim: When my right hon. Friend meets the association in the near future will he make it absolutely clear that if community charge levels in Derbyshire are higher than expected it will be solely due to the profligacy of the county council whose spending included the cost of sending a delegation to that well-known home of liberal democracy, North Korea? Will he urge the county council to emulate the example of Amber Valley borough council which has saved a huge amount through competitive tendering and which has ploughed much of that money back into improved services, including environmental schemes and recycling?

Mr. Patten: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right to suggest that life would be much happier for charge payers and people in Derbyshire if Derbyshire county council were as prudent as the Amber Valley district council. My hon. Friend asked me to make representations to Derbyshire county council. Alas, as it is not a member of the Association of County Councils, I would not be able to get through to it in that way.

Mr. Hardy: Does the Association of County Councils share with many other bodies, including the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, the serious concern about the inadequacy of Government regulations, especially with regard to toxic waste—an inadequacy which is deplorably and sadly continuing and is a very great problem in my constituency?

Mr. Patten: I hope that our proposals in the Environment Protection Bill will help to deal more sensibly with waste. As the hon. Gentleman may know, we have made proposals to the other members of the European Community about toxic waste and I hope that we shall have Community support in trying to follow them up in the OECD.

Mr. Hind: When my right hon. Friend meets the Association of County Councils, will he tell it that the community charge protects and benefits many people on low incomes? I am speaking especially of single pensioners and single-parent families. In my constituency 80 per cent. of council house tenants in receipt of housing benefit will not pay the full community charge and that also applies to 38 per cent. of owner-occupiers and private tenants. The only real danger to those people is from Labour-controlled county councils who will heap additional costs on the community charge in order to try to win seats that are held by Conservative Members.

Mr. Patten: I totally agree with my hon. Friend. The best way to help all charge payers, including those who are less well off, is to ensure that councils provide value for money and reduce their spending to what is absolutely essential. My hon. Friend was also right to mention the substantial support being given through benefits to charge payers. That will amount to at least £2·5 billion.

Nuclear Waste

13. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has a meeting scheduled with Nirex before Christmas to discuss the disposal of low and medium-level nuclear waste.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State does not expect to meet representatives of Nirex before Christmas.

Mr. Salmond: Although the Secretary of State will not meet representatives of Nirex before Christmas, will the Minister take this opportunity to bring some Christmas cheer to the north of Scotland? Will he instruct the nuclear agency to accept the democratic and overwhelming vote of the people of Caithness against the Nirex proposals? Does he accept that that vote, in line with other expressions of opinion throughout Scotland, makes it clear that no area of Scotland will consent to be somebody else's nuclear dustbin?

Mr. Trippier: We must put the matter into context. First, we are talking about planning applications not for the facilities but for test bore drilling. That is the point that the hon. Gentleman addresses. The matter is before my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and he is obliged to take into account views expressed by local people.

Mr. Skinner: Will the Minister have a word with the Secretary of State for Energy? Does he recall that when the Secretary of State was Chief Whip, he and three of his hon. Friends were not anxious about having that low-level nuclear waste dumped in their constituencies? Now that the former Chief Whip is the Secretary of State for Energy and seems to believe that nuclear power is God's gift to the human race, perhaps he has changed his mind. Perhaps he might like to have it dumped in his constituency. Will the Minister ask him?

Mr. Trippier: Much of what the hon. Gentleman says is completely irrelevant to the question about Nirex. The principal point is that the safe disposal facilities have been suggested and welcomed by the House of Commons Select Committee on the Environment and the House of Lords Select Committee. I need hardly point out that those are all-party Committees.

Playing Fields

15. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures he is taking to protect school and community playing fields; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: It has long been Government policy that local authorities should consult sporting and recreational interests in considering any application for the development of recreational land. The Department is currently preparing a planning policy guidance note on sport and recreation which will consolidate and update the existing guidance.

Mr. Greenway: Is the Minister aware that we are in danger of becoming a nation of Billy Bunters?

Mr. Hayward: Not all of us.

Mr. Greenway: I did not say of all ages but perhaps I should have done. We are in danger of becoming a nation of Billy Bunters because playing fields are disappearing owing to local authority pressure on them for building. Is he aware that in my constituency the beautiful Cayton road playing fields—17 acres with trees and the rest—have been children's playing fields for over 50 years? The national Labour party says that it is in favour of retaining playing fields, but Ealing Labour-controlled council is doing its utmost to build on them and to take them away from the community and from children. Will he do something about it?

Mr. Howard: Were it not for the Government's sensible policy on these matters, the danger referred to by my hon. Friend might well exist. I know that he has made a strenuous effort to fight for the retention of the playing field to which he referred but he will understand that, as the decision may come before my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, I cannot comment on the matter further today.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Does the Minister know of any case where playing fields sold for redevelopment have been returned to use as playing fields? Does not the absence of such cases make vital a proper national Government strategy rather than mere guidelines?

Mr. Howard: We have asked the Sports Council, the Central Council of Physical Recreation and the National Playing Fields Association to combine to consider the matter and to determine whether it is desirable to compile a register of playing fields. That might go some way to meet the hon. and learned Gentleman's points.

Homelessness

16. **Mr. Arbuthnot:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many additional lettings over the next two years are expected to be made available for the homeless as a result of his Department's homelessness initiative.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Government estimate that around 15,000 additional lettings will be made available as a result of the extra £250 million to be allocated over the next two years to local authorities and housing associations for schemes to assist the homeless.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Is my right hon. Friend aware that that is extremely welcome news and that two ways of encouraging a reduction in homelessness are first, to encourage private tenancies rather than discourage them by rent controls and other restrictions and secondly, to encourage housing associations rather than rely or impose too heavily on local authorities? Will he confirm that the Government's policies are achieving precisely that?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend has certainly set out our objectives clearly. That is why, for example, we are proposing to double the Housing Corporation's programme in the next three years, which will allow it to produce many more homes. That is also why we have encouraged the private-rented sector through legislation and in other ways. I am delighted that the business expansion scheme is providing an additional £350 million for private renting.

Mr. Soley: Does the Secretary of State recognise that almost every housing organisation recognises that this panic-striken cash hand-out is nowhere near enough to meet the disgrace of homeless teenage children begging on our streets, possibly for the first time in 80 years? Why does he not do what the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) urged a previous spokesman on housing to do, namely allow local authorities to use capital receipts from council house sales to build, repair and renovate? Why was it that when that Minister made that recommendation, he suddenly became a junior Minister in the Northern Ireland Office?

Mr. Patten: The hon. Gentleman is the first person to describe the £250 million initiative that we have launched in that way. The figure that we announced a few weeks ago exceeded some of the figures we had been pressed for by housing associations, including one which represents the Labour party. It is insulting to refer to Northern Ireland as the hon. Gentleman did. Moreover, there would not have been any receipts from the right to buy if the Opposition had had anything to do with it.

Points of Order

3.30 pm

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I draw your attention to the terms of Question 26 on the Order Paper? I should make it clear that I took the first opportunity I had to notify the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) that I intended to raise this point of order. I understand that he has now withdrawn his question. Nevertheless, the question was tabled and appeared on the Order Paper, which is why I wish to raise the matter.

The question asks

> "by how much more the rate support grant figure for 1989-90 would be increased if 2,000 of the residents of Langbaurgh were black."

The question is undeniably racially discriminatory in intention and it is racially offensive and inflammatory in effect. It breaches the usual rules of good order which we attempt to establish in this House, and it is potentially in breach of the statutory rules applied by race relations legislation.

How was it that the Table Office accepted the question? Are there not rules which we can deploy to protect the House against such offensive questions? In asking you for your ruling, Mr. Speaker, may I add that I invite the Secretary of State to join me in dissociating himself from the terms of the question?

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On the same point——

Mr. Speaker: No. Why does the hon. Gentleman always rise when I seek to reply? I can give the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) the answer to his question. The Table Office accepted the question because various criteria are used in calculating rate support grant, including the make-up of the population. As for the motives, any hon. Member can table a question provided that it is in order. That is a matter for him.

Mr. Winnick: On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I remind you that, when I raised the point of order about events in Hong Kong, it was valuable and a statement followed?

Mr. Speaker: I know. Oh, go on.

Mr. Winnick: My point of order arises from that of my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould). On Monday, when the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) made certain comments that many of us considered to be an incitement to race hatred, you said that every hon. Member has a right to express a view. If legislation forbids the incitement to race hatred and it is illegal outside the House, why is it that remarks such as those made by the hon. Member for Northampton, North or offensive questions about blacks are accepted by the Table Office? Does that mean that we can ask questions relating to the number of Jews, Catholics or Protestants? It is difficult to believe that such questions would be accepted.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that the hon. Gentleman is challenging what I have said. I have already explained why the Table Office accepted that question. As to what the hon. Gentleman said about other matters, I can only remind him that, over many centuries, we have achieved freedom of speech in this House, and it is for each hon. Member to decide how to use that right. As Mr. Speaker, I am certainly not in the business of rationing freedom of speech in this place.

Mr. Denis Howell (Birmingham, Small Heath): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. With great respect, and further to your explanation in response to the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), I wonder whether you would reconsider the matter. I do not believe that local authorities collect information on the basis of the colour or the ethnic origin of citizens. That being so, I submit for your consideration —and I accept that you need time to think about this—my belief that the question should not have appeared on the Order Paper, under any circumstances, as it is grossly offensive. Although we understand and value the help that we receive from the Clerk's Department, this is an unfortunate matter that requires further consideration.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall reflect further on this matter.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Very wise.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Very prudent.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is an Opposition Supply day. This is taking time away from those who wish to speak.

Mr. Allen: This is a point of order for you, Mr. Speaker. Given the subsidy for the sale of our water industry of £3·3 billion, or £65 for every man, woman and child in the country, would it not be for the convenience of the House if the Secretary of State were to submit a memorandum and all the side papers involved in this matter to the Public Accounts Committee now, rather than in a year's time?

Mr. Speaker: What has that to do with me?

Mr. Allen: It is for the convenience of the House.

Mr. Speaker: The question is——

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On another matter——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am on my feet.

BILL PRESENTED

GOVERNMENT TRADING

Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, supported by Mr. Secretary Waddington, Mr. Secretary Walker, Mr. Secretary King, Mr. Secretary Ridley, Mr. Secretary Rifkind, Mr. Secretary Parkinson, Mr. Secretary Patten, Mr. Norman Lamont, Mr. Richard Luce, Mr. Peter Lilley and Mr. Richard Ryder, presented a Bill to amend the Government Trading Funds Act 1973 and section 5 of the Exchequer and Audit Departments Act 1921 and to repeal the Borrowing (Control and Guarantees) Act 1946: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 10.]

Mr. Speaker: On another matter—Mr. Campbell-Savours.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you were here during Question Time and heard what happened on water questions, and as you know that many Conservative Members of Parliament have bought shares in water companies and that Labour Members have refused to do so, is it right that those Conservative Members should be allowed to ask questions which, by their effect, may help further to drive up the price of water shares on the stock exchange? Is it not improper for them to ask questions that might influence whether a further rights issue should be made to secure further money for the water companies? Could you rule on this matter? Surely it is quite improper——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have absolutely no knowledge of the shareholdings——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: They should be on the Register

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman said, "As you know". I have no knowledge of such matters. If they are recorded in the Register of Members' Interests, I would have knowledge of them, but I have no knowledge about the matters raised by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is taking time from his Front-Bench spokesman, but I will hear him.

Mr. Corbyn: Is it not correct that those Conservative Members who have bought shares in the water companies should now declare that and should not take any part in any debate or discussion of the matter in this House, because otherwise they could be thought to be feathering their own nests as a result of being Members of Parliament?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows that there are well-known rules about the registration of interests in companies. If an hon. Member had a certain number of shares that fell within those rules, he would have to register them.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Bearing in mind your answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), which I well understand, would it now be in order for you to rule that an hon. Member can table a question asking for a breakdown by colour of how many people are stopped by immigration officials and how many are deported? A breakdown by colour would prove categorically that the Government are racist in their immigration policies.

Mr. Speaker: That is a hypothetical question. If the hon. Gentleman cares to table such a question, I shall look at it carefully.

Opposition Day

[1ST ALLOTTED DAY]

Mortgage Costs and Housing

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

3.39 pm

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): I beg to move,

That this House condemns the Government's responsibility for the growing housing crisis; deplores the rise in mortgage interest rates which has destroyed family budgets, cost some their homes and placed home ownership beyond the reach of others; warns that Government-inspired increases in council rents above the rate of inflation will cause hardship to many low-income people; deplores the Government's failure to maintain the condition of the housing stock and the consequent shortage of affordable housing; and believes that the scandal of growing homelessness is just the most visible sign of a wider housing failure.

Of all the mistakes made by the Government, and there have been many, none is more resented, none is more painfully felt and none is more likely to cost the Government support than the steep and sustained increase in interest rates—a rise which in itself is an admission of economic failure and is a sign of desperation in the pursuit of economic policy, and a rise which has its most immediate effect, and does its most immediate damage, in its impact on mortgage rates.

The anger and resentment that that has caused are not just the result of the damage that it has done to family budgets, although that is real enough. Average monthly repayments for the country as a whole since May 1988 have risen from £259 to £347, an increase of no less than £88 per month. In London, the figures are even worse, because they reflect a rise of £162 per month. Increases of that magnitude will have shattered even the most careful of household budgets and will have plunged thousands of families into the most desperate of financial plights.

But the anger and resentment arise not just on that account, nor just because, for a tragic minority, the increase has meant the shock, despair and humiliation of losing their homes. In the first half of this year there were 6,350 building society repossessions. There is precious little comfort to be gained from the fact that that high figure represents a small decrease from the even higher figure of the earlier year or two; little comfort because the lower figure reflects the fact that building societies are playing a somewhat smaller proportionate part in the provision of mortgage lending, and even less comfort because, in prospect, the outlook is much grimmer.

Already we see the volume of mortgage arrears growing fast. In June this year, no fewer than 45,100 mortgages were between six and 12 months in arrears, which represented a jump of more than 20 per cent. What is already a grim reality for many people is rapidly becoming a frightening prospect for many more.

But the true reason for the widespread resentment and anger is the sense of betrayal felt by many thousands of people who recall that they were enticed on to that treadmill of spiralling house prices, of ever-rising mortgage repayments, by a Government who told them that we were enjoying an economic miracle; a Government

[Mr. Bryan Gould]

who made them glib promises to the effect that home ownership was a risk-free one-way bet; but a Government who, with equal irresponsibility, threw everything into reverse when their own mistakes caught up with them and then blamed the victims of those mistakes for being so easily duped.

It is the Government's heartlessness, their almost moralistic zeal in turning the screw, which has added insult to injury, and it is that which has created mortgage misery for millions. In case anybody thinks that that easy alliteration conceals nothing much, let us be clear that it conceals a true degree of desperation. It is that desperation which has made home ownership an impossible dream for some and an impossible nightmare for many more.

It is not just mortgage payers who are suffering. Tenants, too, find that their housing costs are going up sharply. It is not surprising that tenants feel somewhat aggrieved at what they consider to be the excessive attention paid to the interests of mortgage payers. They, too, find that housing costs are rising inexorably against them. Council tenants have been put on notice by Ministers—including the Secretary of State—that the Government intend to force their rents up to near market levels. The new subsidy arrangements and the ring-fencing provisions of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 mean that the Government now have the power to make their writ run, whatever local democracy may require or suggest. Council rents are set to rise much higher than the inflation rate, often against the wishes of local authorities and almost always against the interests of some of the lowest-income families in our society.

At the same time, private sector rents will also rise sharply. The Housing Act 1988, which allows market rents to be charged in place of fair rents and reduces security of tenure, is just beginning to have its malign effect. What that will mean in terms of affordable housing is clearly shown by a survey commissioned by the Department of the Environment and carried out by Price Waterhouse, which was published in August. It shows that a married couple with two children and an income above the qualifying level for housing benefit would be able to afford a market rent for a two-bedroomed house in only two cities in the country—Leicester and Newcastle. For the rest, market rents will mean that private rented accommodation is placed beyond their reach. That is a prime instance of the futility of looking to the market to meet unmet housing needs.

Even housing associations, which are now looked to by the Government as the instrument of salvation, will find that their rents will rise as they are forced to turn to private sector funding. It is little wonder that over the past year housing association rents have risen by no less than 24 per cent.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Is my hon. Friend aware that, in the London borough of Newham, we will be faced next April with rent increases of about 21 per cent. because of Government diktat? Is he also aware that, because of the benefit changes last April, rent arrears—not only in Newham but throughout the whole of London and the country—went up by an average of 38 per cent.? What impact does he think that this enforced rent increase will have on rent arrears throughout the country?

Mr. Gould: My hon. Friend lends detail and substance to the point that I am making. His experience in his borough is echoed and repeated up and down the country—certainly in my part of London. He is right to point out that rent arrears have risen and the difficulties have become manifest before the real impact of the recent changes has been felt. Therefore, as I have argued on other issues, the prospect is even grimmer than the current reality.

Wherever people turn, as owner-occupiers or tenants in the public or private sector, they find that the cost of housing is moving sharply and inexorably against them. That is sometimes because of deliberate and direct Government policy—as with the recent legislation—and sometimes because the market is distorted by the excessively high interest rates imposed by the Government.

However, affordable housing is a matter not just of price but of supply. Here, too, the record of the Tory Government is appalling. Housing completions have fallen steadily throughout the decade. In the public sector, they have fallen from 113,800 in 1978 to just 24,800 last year. The total number of housing completions has fallen also—from 240,800 in 1978 to just 184,600 last year. Those figures complete a picture of a grim decade for house building. Worse is to come. I expect the Minister——

The Minister for Housing and Planning (Mr. Michael Howard) *rose*——

Mr. Gould: The Minister rises on cue.

Mr. Howard: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that 2 million houses have been built in this country since the Government took office? Does he regard that as a record of failure in house building?

Mr. Gould: I am grateful to the Minister for putting the question in that direct and simple way because I can give him a direct and simple answer. Yes, that is housing failure. When it is measured against the unmet housing need—which I will come to shortly—the record is appalling.

It is far worse than the house completion record under the Labour Government. The Government having decimated—in literal terms, having far more than decimated—public sector house building, the prospects for the Government's policy on private sector house building are equally grim. Even the brief 1988 revival in private sector house completions has come to a sticky end as the construction industry grapples with the full brunt of high interest rates. During the first six months of 1989, there was a 17 per cent. slump in private sector housing building. Comparing the second quarter of this year with the second quarter of 1988, we see that fully a fifth of what was then achieved has been lost.

It is hard to understand how value added tax on new domestic house construction will help. I, in common with many others, felt a sense of alarm when the Secretary of State failed earlier this afternoon at Question Time to rule out in absolute terms any willingness by the Government to accept diktats from the Commission in Brussels.

Mr. John Heddle (Mid-Staffordshire): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way on this point, because it was the reply to my question to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to which he has just referred. My interpretation of his answer was not quite the same as the hon. Gentleman's. My right hon. Friend said that he would consult his right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer to ensure that all possible opposition was mounted if the EC threatened to impose VAT on domestic house construction. The hon. Gentleman is a responsible Member of the House. He should not try to attach such a dishonourable interpretation to my right hon. Friend's answer.

Mr. Gould: I bear with equanimity the fact that the hon. Gentleman's interpretation and my interpretation of what the Secretary of State said are different. We start from different points of view. The hon. Gentleman is intent upon finding the most favourable interpretation. However, the hon. Gentleman has gone even further. Perhaps he should have given the answer at the Dispatch Box; it would have been a much better answer than that given by his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, I have no doubt that the hon. Gentleman is fair and honourable. I am sure that he will concede when he consults *Hansard* tomorrow that he added substantially to his right hon. Friend's answer and that my interpretation was exactly correct; that the Secretary of State promised only to consult the Treasury and that he gave no assurance, either on his own behalf or that of the Department or the Government, that he was implacably opposed to the imposition of VAT on domestic house building.

Housing costs have risen. Housing supply, in terms of new build, has fallen below what we have a right to expect. Housing supply is not just a matter of new build; it is also a matter of the condition of the existing housing stock. The brutal fact is that the condition of the existing housing stock is growing worse. There are now 2,400,000 houses in serious disrepair, or 13 per cent. of the total. To put those houses into proper repair would cost an estimated total of £30 billion. That is a shocking record for any civilised country, but it is especially shocking for a country and a Government who have enjoyed over £120 billion of North sea oil revenues. Surely the Government ought to have spent some part of that bonanza on providing decent housing for all our citizens.

The failures have not happened by accident. The problem is—we have had 10 years' experience of it—that the Government prefer dogma to decent housing. They are prepared to carry on a war of attrition against the most obvious and efficient instrument for the provision of housing, particularly for low-income families—the local authorities. The homeless and the badly housed are the innocent victims of that unilaterally waged war.

Local authority housing investment programme spending has fallen consistently over the past decade. In 1980-81, it was £3·37 billion, in 1982-83 it was down to £2·84 billion, and by 1988-89 it had decreased to £1·12 billion in total. The most lunatic expression of the Government's vendetta against local authorities and their role in the provision of housing concerned the spending of capital receipts. The councils have £ 8·5 billion of capital receipts which they want to spend on improving housing stock and housing provision. Incredibly, they are prevented from doing precisely that by central Government diktat.

I hold a regular surgery in my constituency, as I am sure most hon. Members do. Perhaps 80 per cent. of all those who come to see me have housing problems. The inability of hon. Members to deal with those problems is one of the most worrying aspects of our job. I rarely conclude my surgery, which can go on for many hours, without a feeling of desperation and sadness that I can do so little to help. When people come to me and say, "Why can't the local authority spend a little more on putting my house into proper repair; why can't they build a few more flats for young married couples; why can't they spend some of the money that they must have received from the sale of council houses and council property?", I tell them that local authorities are not allowed to do that, as the Government have consistently prevented them from spending more than 20 per cent. of their receipts on those obvious and worthwhile purposes.

Almost invariably, my constituents look at me pityingly. One can see the disbelief spread across their faces. They think, "Here is yet another politician flannelling on about absolute nonsense." They cannot believe that any Government could be so misguided and illogical as to impose such a stupid and damaging restriction.

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): Most of my constituents who come to see me also have housing problems. What they have in common with the hon. Gentleman's constituents is that they are tenants of Labour authorities. Can he explain why the vast majority of empty houses, outstanding repairs and uncollected rents are in Labour-controlled areas?

Mr. Gould: That is a familiar canard. The rate of empty property in local authorities is lower than it is in housing associations and in the private sector, and substantially lower than it is in the rest of the public sector, where Government Departments predominate.

A housing crisis is building in Britain. Any conscientious Member of Parliament who carries out regular constituency surgeries will have seen the evidence. Those hon. Members who profess to be unaware of the growing housing crisis, the housing time bomb that is ticking away, must be uniquely advantaged and live in the most prosperous parts of the country, because elsewhere a growing tide of humanity is condemned to a miserable, depleted and distorted existence because people do not have proper housing.

Undoubtedly the most tragic victims of the housing crisis are the homeless. Let no one say that there is no homelessness crisis in Britain. Last year, 117,550 families were accepted on to homelessness lists. That means that 337,369 people are homeless. Even that figure is dwarfed by the 242,000 families that applied for the status of being homeless. Homelessness is not a problem only in London. It is a problem in Gateshead, where homelessness has risen by 27 per cent. in the past year. In Colchester, it has risen by 48 per cent. and in leafy Salisbury by 52 per cent.

Those appalling figures do not include the most distressing manifestation of homelessness. The young people who are forced to beg by day and to sleep on our streets by night are not included in the figures, yet they are part of the daily experience of everyone who walks the streets of our major cities, particularly our great capital city. They are a blot on the face of this country and in particular on the Government's record. It is a sight that we had assumed had been pushed unmourned into the less salubrious pages of our history. Faced with that problem, the £250 million spread over two years which was announced in the Autumn Statement is no more than a drop in the ocean. It is totally inadequate to deal with the size and the seriousness of the problem of homelessness.

[Mr. Gould]

This problem has not arisen by accident. Homelessness is simply the most visible sign of a wider, deeper housing failure. A housing failure is not just an ordinary failure of Government policy; it is a failure by the Government to fulfil one of their basic duties to the people. There is something peculiarly shocking about the failure of a rich, self-proclaimedly civilised country that fails to provide a decent roof over the head of each of its citizens.

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow) *rose*——

Mr. Gould: I am about to finish.

There is nothing more fundamental to human dignity than a house of reasonable comfort and security.

Sir George Young (Ealing, Acton) *rose*——

Mr. Gould: I am about to wind up.

There is nothing more destructive of family cohesion or individual self-respect than condemning people to unacceptable housing conditions.

The solution clearly requires a fundamental reappraisal of many aspects of policy—the growing regional imbalance, the failure to use planning law to establish adequate new provision of housing, particularly in the south-east, the allocation of resources both between housing and other services and within the housing budget between owner-occupiers and others. Of course the solutions require fundamental reappraisal, but much more immediate steps can be taken—the reversal of the serious and avoidable mistakes in housing policy which have been made by the Government and which have made our housing conditions in modern Britain not just a crisis but a scandal.

4.1 pm

The Minister for Housing and Planning (Mr. Michael Howard): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question, and to add instead thereof,

> "welcomes Her Majesty's Government's commitment to home ownership throughout the last ten years which has enabled many more people to own their homes; recognises the benefits which have resulted from the introduction of the Right to Buy for council tenants; further recognises that the Government's sound economic policies have played an important part in facilitating the growth in owner-occupation; and urges the Government to maintain those policies in the interests of home owners, first-time buyers and the nation as a whole."

In common with speeches that we are accustomed to hearing from the Labour Front Bench, that of the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) was long on a description of problems, much of it inaccurate, and short, almost to the point of non-existence, of any suggestion as to how he and his party would set about tackling those problems. It was so lacking in any substance that, as a serious contribution to debate on housing policy, it was little short of a disgrace.

We should not be too hard on the hon. Gentleman, because we know what trouble he gets into when he embarks upon the task of suggesting what policies might be used to deal with these problems. We know of his contributions to clarifying the Labour party's policies on housing, even before he was given his present responsibilities. His television appearances on these and other matters have become collectors' items, and we greatly look forward to more.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): What about our homeless?

Mr. Howard: I am coming to that. I am interested in dealing with policies. Thanks to Brian Walden's revealing interview with the hon. Member for Dagenham, we know what the hon. Gentleman's policy would be—to target and penalise all those who seek to move to a larger house. People with growing families would bear the brunt of the policies which the hon. Gentleman did not dare mention during his long speech this afternoon.

The hon. Gentleman even had the good grace during the interview to tell these growing families that, although they would be "hit", they would be "fully warned", and, in any event, his proposal was "in their interests". He finally assured them that their inability to house a growing family would be simply a "fairly marginal impact" of Labour's policies. The hon. Member for Dagenham was advocating direct controls on mortgages.

None of us should be surprised by such an approach, because it is the approach of the Socialist down the ages. Socialists believe that, if one sees a problem, one should slap on a control and form a queue. The Labour party is never happy without a queue or two, or preferably three or four. It satisfies its natural predilection for the hair-shirt. Its approach has always been that if everyone cannot have something, it should ensure that getting it becomes as painful as possible for those who can.

Mr. Gould: The Minister mentioned hair-shirts. Has he bothered to ask himself how many of his own constituents are obliged to wear the hair-shirt because of the Government's policy of high interest rates? How many repossessions have occurred in his constituency, or has he not bothered to find out?

Mr. Howard: I am well aware of the problems. I shall deal with them in my speech, and I shall deal with high interest rates as well. The hon. Member for Dagenham has clearly advocated the imposition of physical controls on those who wish to move into a larger house because they have a growing family. That is his policy, which was announced clearly in the interview to which I referred. It is right that we should all know about it, and that none of us should be under any misapprehension.

Mr. Gould: I had hoped that the Minister would not pursue this futile course for much longer, but as he insists on misdescribing what I have said—and what many others beyond the Labour party have said, including many Conservative Members—I must make it clear that we have always sought not to prescribe policies for 1991 or 1992, when a Labour Government will at last come to the rescue of the British people, but to rebut the suggestion that is constantly put from the Dispatch Box that there is no alternative to high interest rates.

There is a huge consensus across the board, embracing hon. Members of all parties, including some of the Minister's hon. Friends, that the Government are wrong to impose mortgage misery on so many people on the pretext that there is no alternative but high interest rates. The last thing that I—or anyone else—has done is to prescribe policies in this respect for the next Labour Government. We are saying that at present, in the dilemma and mess that have been created by this Government, it is simply not the case that there is no alternative to high interest rates.

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman has a short memory. I have here the full transcript of his interview with Brian Walden, in which he clearly and specifically set out his alternative to higher interest rates. His alternative was the imposition of direct controls on the amount that a person could borrow if he wanted to move into a larger house. I want to pay tribute to the hon. Gentleman. His great merit —although I am sorry to see him resile from it somewhat this afternoon—is candour. He is very open about these matters.

Some Labour Members find the hon. Gentleman's approach uncomfortable. The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) could not wait to slap down the hon. Member for Dagenham. He went on to the Walden programme the next week—the earliest possible opportunity—to disown his hon. Friend. He said:

> "there is no way in which we are going to penalise a family which wishes to buy a larger house".

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), the shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer was equally unhappy. He put forward his own remedies. He has it in mind to solve the difficulties by entering into a social contract with the clearing banks. He would not come forward with straightforward controls, as the hon. Member for Dagenham did. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East believes that he could achieve the same objective by nudges and winks, and by backdoor deals with the bankers. I congratulate the hon. Member for Dagenham on his straightforward approach. It was no doubt his remarks that the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) had in mind when he wrote a letter to *Roof*, the magazine of Shelter, in which he said:

> "Our plans for owner-occupiers are not for the fainthearted."

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): If the Minister proposes to speak for the same length of time as my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), he must now be more than halfway through his speech, yet he has not touched on the greatest problem of all in our society, which is the large number of homeless people. What attempt has he made to count the number of homeless people, especially in London, and what measures does he propose to take to do something about it? Is he aware that one telling manifestation of this great sickness in the Government's policy is that nearly every evening someone sleeps right outside the Palace gates? Is not that a disgrace, and is it not time that the Minister reached the part of his speech dealing with the subject about which people want to hear?

Mr. Howard: Homelessness is an aspect of the problem which we must take very seriously indeed and with which I shall certainly deal during my speech. But we do not get anywhere by describing problems without advancing solutions to them. The hon. Member for Dagenham spent his whole speech in an inaccurate description of the problems without giving us so much as a paragaph of solutions.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): You have already said that.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cryer: The Minister has said that.

Mr. Howard: That is why——

Mr. Cryer *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the Minister does not wish to give way, hon. Members must restrain themselves.

Mr. Cryer: It is on a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Oh, it is, is it?

Mr. Cryer: Mr. Speaker, we have a Standing Order that requires hon. Members to desist from persistent repetition. We have already heard, on four occasions, the Minister's attack on the Labour party, and we are anxious to hear what the Government propose to do. I invoke your support, Mr. Speaker, because tedious repetition is out of order.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am a little confused. Although I have been in the House for six years, I do not seem to have caught up with things. I thought that today was an Opposition Supply day and I thought that those were the days on which the Opposition, in addition to attacking the Government, helped the House towards a better understanding of their policies. I came here this afternoon in the hope that I would be educated about the Labour party's housing proposals. So far, I have not heard one scintilla of a positive suggestion of what the Labour party intends to do in its housing policy or of how it would cost its proposals.

Mr. Speaker: That is more a debating point than a point of order.

A propos tedious repetition, if I had judged that there was tedious repetition, I would have intervened, but I did not judge it. We should get on with the debate. A great many hon. Members wish to participate, and if the Front Bench spokesmen are constantly interrupted, other hon. Members may be disappointed.

Mr. Howard: It is precisely because of the omissions of the hon. Member for Dagenham that it falls to me to tell the House what the Labour party's policy would be, and that is what I have been trying to do.

Our policies for owner-occupiers could not represent more of a contrast with those of the Labour party, and our approach has been proved effective by 10 years of success. Since 1979, the proportion of owner-occupied households has increased from 57 to 68 per cent. We have one of the highest rates of owner-occupation in the world—higher than that in the United States—and the number of first-time buyers in 1988 was about double the number in 1979.

About 6 million people have bought their own homes for the first time over the past 10 years—more than 1 million of them under the right-to-buy provisions against which the Opposition fought so bitterly. The Labour party would still interfere with the unrestricted right to buy. The housing resolution passed by the Labour party conference in October supported the right to buy,

> "providing that the local authority replaces the stock sold, and those wishing to resell allow the Council first option to buy."

The Labour party has still to come to terms with the undoubted aspiration of the vast majority of people in Britain to own their own homes. That is an aspiration which the Government unequivocally welcome and will do their utmost to assist.

[Mr. Howard]

I acknowledge that many home owners find the present level of interest rates very difficult indeed, but that difficulty must be seen in perspective. It would be wrong to make any simplistic links between mortgage interest rates and homelessness. There are many causes of mortgage arrears other than high interest rates. One of the most significant of them is unemployment, and the reduction in unemployment by 1·5 million since 1986 has significantly helped the overall picture on mortgage arrears, as it has helped in so many other ways.

Clearly, we have nothing to learn from the Opposition about owner-occupation. We promote it, and they obstruct it, and the sooner that people understand that difference, the better.

When we last discussed housing, the hon. Member for Hammersmith alleged that the right to buy was the Government's sole housing policy. That is also a travesty. During the next three years, total central Government spending on housing and their grants and credit approvals to local authorities for housing will add up to almost £20 billion. That sum of money will largely benefit the minority of the population who are not owner-occupiers. I hope that even Opposition Members will acknowledge that £20 billion is a large sum by any standards. It is worth noting that no sums are mentioned in the Opposition's policy review.

Opposition Members come to the House day after day, promising to spend more on houses, as well as everything else under the sun, but the shadow Chancellor constantly says that any extra spending would have to await the creation of additional resources. The promises of the Opposition are not worth a row of beans. We do not rely on promises, we rely on action—£20 billion worth of action.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): My hon. and learned Friend is talking about resources. Will he bear in mind the need for a balance between new housing and the environment? If my constituents are successful in their High Court battle with Barratt's today, will he remind Bolton's Labour council of its duty to defend covenants and to ensure that Birtenshaw farm remains free from development?

Mr. Howard: I will not be drawn into making comments about a case that is before the High Court today, but I know how hard my hon. Friend has fought for the cause of his constituents.

We acknowledge that owner-occupation is not the answer for a minority. Some people do not want, or cannot afford, the responsibility of home ownership. That is why we are working to restore quality, diversity and choice to the residential sector. The deregulation of new lettings in the Housing Act 1988 will help to revive the private rented sector, which was almost entirely killed off by the rent controls introduced by successive Labour Governments.

Already, some £350 million has been invested in business expansion schemes to provide private sector tenancy lettings. Private sector finance is now being attracted to support housing association projects.

The Opposition want to destroy that revival. The hon. Member for Hammersmith conceded in the *Financial Times* last year that some private investors may be frightened of investing in rented houses when they realise that a Labour Government would impose rent controls. Some? All private investors would be frightened, and the revival would be utterly destroyed. Not only would the Labour Government reimpose rent controls, but tenants of non-residential private landlords would be given the right to buy, or to transfer to a council landlord.

Do Opposition Members believe that any of Labour's policies to penalise the private rented sector would encourage investment in it? How can they endlessly bang on about housing shortages, but at the same time make proposals that by their own admission would scare away much-needed investment in housing? If people who can afford market rents choose to rent privately and withdraw from the market, they will release more subsidised rented homes for those people who are most in need. That is an objective which should be encouraged by hon. Members on both sides of the House.

Mr. Tony Banks: In the private rented sector, there has been an increase in the number of houses available for rent, because people have had to move out when they cannot afford to keep up with the mortgage payments. Estate agents have put houses that are up for sale in to the rented market. That increase has happened by default.

Can the Minister explain another statistic? Ten years ago, nine families were in bed-and-breakfast accommodation in Newham; now, the number is 1,151, yet only 3·5 per cent. of our own housing stock is vacant.

Mr. Howard: If the hon. Gentleman examines the statistics on repossessions and the causes for them, he will see that the assumption that lay beneath the first part of his question is without any foundation whatever. The facts simply do not support it. It is typical of Labour's approach that its one and only solution to the problem of housing shortage is to increase our municipal housing stock, although we already have the largest in western Europe.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): What about bed-and-breakfast accommodation?

Mr. Howard: I am coming to that.

Our approach is to encourage choice in the social rented housing market. We do not want to increase the number of monolithic council housing estates or to strengthen local authorities as the monopoly suppliers of rented housing. That is why we want new provision to come primarily from housing associations.

In the next four years, we shall more than double the Housing Corporation's main programme, from £815 million this year to more than £1·7 billion by 1992-93. That should permit a doubling of output to about 35,000 dwellings in that year alone. Such steps to increase the supply and diversity of rented accommodation will help to tackle the imbalance between supply and demand, which is one of the causes of homelessness.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): Will my hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Howard: I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me, but I must press on.

In the meantime, we fully acknowledge that further immediate action is required to help the homeless. That is why we are providing an extra £250 million over the next two years for local authorities and housing associations in stress areas. Those additional resources should provide approaching 15,000 extra lettings. That should be compared with the total number of families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation, who number about 12,000. That is our response to this problem. It is a serious response and on a considerable scale. It will have a considerable impact.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central) *rose——*

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax) *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Minister is not giving way.

Mr. Howard: The motion refers to the Government's alleged failure to maintain the condition of the housing stock. The hon. Member for Dagenham said that its condition was getting worse, but he failed to support that assertion with one piece of evidence. He is wrong: nothing could be further from the truth.

There are 2 million more houses in England today than there were in 1979, and the English house condition survey shows that, between 1981 and 1986, the number of dwellings that lacked basic amenities fell by no less than 41 per cent. That gives the lie to the hon. Gentleman's assertion. Moreover, there has been continued improvement since 1986, so there is not a shred of evidence to support the assertion in the Opposition's motion. It is a typical piece of undiluted scaremongering, and I hope that, on reflection, the hon. Member will have the decency to recognise that and to withdraw it. I give him the opportunity to do that now.

Mr. Gould: Will the Minister enlighten us by telling us the number of houses that are in serious disrepair?

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman's argument was that matters are getting worse. *[Interruption.]* I challenge him to produce one piece of evidence in support of his assertion that matters are getting worse. *[Interruption.]* He cannot do so. His silence speaks volumes. *[Interruption.]*

We suggest that more should be done to improve things. Unlike the Opposition we make no apology for concentrating assistance on people in greatest need. *[Interruption.]* We have acted— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us have an end to this running commentary. It does not help the debate at all.

Mr. Howard: We have targeted home improvement grants on people on the lowest incomes. We have almost doubled the amount of money available for home improvement grants, and now we are ensuring that the increased resources go to those who need them. Labour's policy review says:

> "We will review the renovation grant system so that it relates less to people's means."

That is a typically cockeyed approach.

We have established programmes for Estate Action and housing action trusts that will provide huge additional resources for the most rundown inner-city council estates. Yesterday in Sunderland I announced the appointment by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State of the first shadow chairman of a housing action trust. I also visited Hartlepool, which I understand is a town of particular interest at the moment to those in powerful places in the ranks of the Labour party. On one estate alone in Hartlepool, we have made available £3·5 million over three years to improve the conditions of the people living there. Those improvements are dramatic and have transformed the lives of those people. While the Opposition table carping, whingeing motions, we are getting on with the business of improving people's housing standards.

Mr. Gould: The Minister challenged me to produce figures to support my contention that the condition of the housing stock has got worse. If he will look at the figures for dwellings in serious disrepair, he will see that in 1976 there were 859,000 such houses, representing 5 per cent. of the total; that in 1981 there were 1,178,000 such houses, representing 6 per cent. of the total; and that in 1986 there were 2,400,000 such houses, representing 13 per cent. of the total.

Mr. Howard: I do not accept those statistics. A much more accurate way of looking at this matter is to consider the proportion of houses lacking basic amenities. If the hon. Gentleman looks at those statistics, he will find that there has been a considerable—indeed, a dramatic—improvement in the condition of the housing stock during the lifetime of this Government.

At the centre of the debate is the issue of high interest rates and the problems that they cause homeowners. I readily acknowledge the hardships that such a level of interest rates causes. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has often made it clear that high levels of interest cause difficulties but that interest rates must and will remain high until inflation has been brought back down. Persistently high levels of inflation, such as those that we experienced under the last Labour Government, would hurt everyone in the country, and homeowners would certainly not be exempt. It is wholly in their interests for a tight rein to be kept on inflation, and that we are determined to do.

As we have seen, the Labour party has no coherent policy to deal with inflation. However, apparently one of its few clear policies on housing, which has been referred to by the hon. Member for Dagenham and was set out in a letter written to me last week by the hon. Member for Hammersmith, is to allow local authorities to spend all their capital receipts on housing.

It is an interesting reflection of Labour's long-trumpeted commitment to a regional policy that this commitment would unleash about £8 billion of spending power, which would be concentrated largely in the south-east of England. Indeed, the hon. Member for Hammersmith had the grace to admit at a press conference last week that removing restrictions on the expenditure of capital receipts would produce clear inflationary pressures. It is not surprising, therefore, that that policy is not even mentioned in Labour's policy review. Indeed, *Roof* magazine noted:

> "Labour's review sadly does little more than express worthy sentiments in a bubble bath of irrelevant platitudes."

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith) *rose——*

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman will have his opportunity later——

Hon. Members: Give way.

Mr. Soley *rose——*

Mr. Howard: No, I shall not give way. The hon. Gentleman will have his opportunity later.

Mr. Soley *rose——*

Mr. Howard: I am nearly at the end of my speech, and I am not giving way.

Mr. Soley *rose*——

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman will have his opportunity to make his speech in due course—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Soley: If the Minister will not give way, I shall have to raise the matter on a point of order——

Mr. Howard *rose*——

Mr. Soley: I regret having to raise this on a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not mind being quoted, but I object to not being quoted anywhere near accurately. I said that the £8 billion would not and could not possibly be used in one year. If it was, it would be inflationary, but I said that there was no possibility of that. That is the accurate quote.

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman's policy is to allow the money to be spent as fast as it can be. That would lead to inflation. It is absolutely clear from what the hon. Gentleman said that the policy would lead to inflation, and that he recognises that.

It is clear that the Labour party will pursue policies on housing, as on other matters, that will inevitably fuel inflation, and it knows that. The Government will continue to pursue sensible housing policies to improve people's housing conditions. I invite the House to support the amendment.

4.30 pm

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): It would be interesting for my hon. Friends to read the terms of the amendment, which refers to just one aspect of Government policy—owner-occupation, or the right to buy. That is fairly revealing. The failure of the Government's policy on housing is that until comparatively recently they felt it necessary to have a policy on only one aspect—owner-occupation. That policy started to come unglued in about 1985.

The housing portfolio changes hands so often in this Government that it is difficult for any Minister to get his feet under the table and become properly briefed before being sent off to do something else. The Minister can therefore be forgiven for not understanding all the statistics because he has not been in his post long and, no doubt, he will not remain there for long. The reason why the Government decided to extend their interest in housing policy beyond owner-occupation was purely economic. Some economists started to advise them that one of the problems that people moving particularly to the south-east, following the advice of the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) to get on their bikes, was that there was simply not enough rented accommodation available. That was the origin of the Housing Act 1988, and I and many of my hon. Friends served in Committee on that measure. That was the only reason why the Government decided to take any interest in rented housing.

Several of my colleagues want to speak, so time prevents me from detailing all the objects of the 1988 Act, but the main thrust of the Government's policy was to expand the supply of rented housing outside the public sector as it was then defined. In addition, in relation to local authorities, they wanted to deregulate the housing market and create various devices to break down what they regarded as local monopolies of council housing.

However, none of that adds up to a housing policy. The Government have not addressed the real problems in housing, which we shall describe in the debate. Even in their approach to the 1988 Act and the more recent Local Government and Housing Act 1989, the Government have not succeeded in achieving any constructive progress towards building up a coherent housing policy. The policies that they have implemented, piecemeal as they are, have not and will not succeed in solving any of the serious housing problems.

In this debate, my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) has described some of the problems within the local authority sector and the growing problems of disrepair across the range of tenures. The Minister challenged my hon. Friend to produce figures, which he ably and quickly did, disproving the Government's argument—whether or not the Minister accepts the figures.

I have the December edition of the Institute of Housing's excellent magazine "Housing". I hope that the Minister will accept that, by and large, the institute is an impartial organisation which looks at the facts and tries to inform professionals and others interested in housing issues. The magazine contained a supplement dealing with the Autumn Statement and the Government's approach to housing, and to some extent I shall rely on that information. The Autumn Statement contains all the Government's proposals for spending on housing, which are set out in great detail. The supplement says:

> "Some £3 billion per annum is needed to deal simply with the backlog of disrepair, defects and modernisation of local authority housing stock, let alone to deal with homelessness, housing needs and the condition of private housing."

That is an unbiased conclusion about the Government's proposals. The Minister spoke about some of the initiatives that the Government have taken. On occasion I have supported them and praised Ministers and Departments when the initiatives have been usefully applied.

I mention a constituency matter to illustrate one of the difficulties arising from a piecemeal policy and no coherent approach. Some of the programmes start off well and with good intentions, but changes in priorities are often applied in a state of panic because something has gone wrong and the good intention of the new programme drifts into the sand.

On the Tower Hill estate in my constituency an effective Estates Action programme supported by the residents, the local authority and the Minister's Department has been running for three or four years. In connection with that there was probably the most detailed consultation exercise ever undertaken there. The consultation revealed that residents wanted improvements in the way that the estate was laid out and wanted some of the design problems put right. However, there are more problems than that on the estate. There is a lack of leisure facilities and economic opportunities for residents.

The action programme is about 50 per cent. of the way through and many improvements have been carried out. In response to such residents the Government extended the guidelines and I am sure that an application will soon reach the Minister's desk because the residents are looking for what they describe as multi-faceted schemes which involve an economic development initiative and an increase in leisure facilities. We are now told that, because the guidelines have been extended precisely to cater for schemes such as the one at Tower Hill, we will have to compete with other authorities which have applied for similar schemes.

I repeat that the Tower Hill scheme is 50 per cent. completed but all the pioneering work carried out in my constituency will come to nothing because the rules have been changed and the goalposts moved, so all the benefits of the scheme will be lost. I hope that when the application reaches the Minister he will look at it in that light and decide that the pioneers of such schemes should be supported until the job is finished.

The Minister may be aware that the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), who is in the Chamber, and I have taken an active interest in housing co-operatives. Last year the Government produced an excellent document when the Minister's noble predecessor was in post. That document set out in some detail what should happen to housing co-operatives. My latest information is that because of the use of private finance, on which I have recently tabled questions, and especially in view of the guidelines that the Housing Corporation has recently sent out about how private finance should be tackled by housing co-operatives and associations, housing co-operatives will encounter grave difficulties in securing the private funding that they need to get their schemes off the ground. That is because they have no asset base.

There is all-party support for housing co-operatives and there is an all-party parliamentary group on the subject. If the amount of private money that the co-operatives can raise is restricted and the grant is insufficient to meet the deficiency, the co-operatives will have to move towards design-build packages. That means that one of the great benefits of new-build and rehabilitation co-operatives—control of the design process—will be lost. I understand that there has been toing and froing and that disputes have occurred within the Housing Corporation board about how to handle the matter. I hope that the Minister will deal with it at some point. All the benefits and experience built up in the housing co-operative movement over the years could be lost if someone does not take the problem by the scruff of the neck and sort it out so that housing co-operatives can continue to produce the goods and important urban renewal initiatives in inner cities and outer estates. That is what they are good at and what they have achieved.

We all accept that a high level of homelessness is unacceptable in a civilised society. If one moves around London and other major provincial cities on any night of the week, one sees young people sleeping on the streets. Some may have drug and alcohol problems, which we all accept are difficult to resolve because they fall outside the scope of the main agencies, but many young people from my constituency and from those of my hon. Friends and of Conservative Members come to London because they are unable to secure employment in the north of England in some of the real economic black spots. When they arrive they find themselves in a double blind. If they do not have an address they are not taken seriously when they apply for jobs, and if they do not have a job they have difficulty securing accommodation, so they end up sleeping in cardboard boxes on the Embankment or in other places both in summer and on cold winter nights. It is an appalling condemnation of society that that should happen in this decade.

What are the Government's proposals on housing the homeless? What do they mean? What will they produce in terms of initiatives? I draw the attention of the House to a submission in the Institute of Housing magazine, "*Housing*", which says that the Government's proposals do not add up to much. They do not make up for shortfalls in the housing investment that would have been necessary to head off the problem of homelessness in the past decade, so they will not resolve the problem of homelessness. That is the opinion of experts in housing whom the Government should heed and respect.

I wish to refer to some of the other issues raised in the Housing Act 1988. Much play was made of the fact that problems on housing estates and in inner city areas would be resolved by housing action trusts. The Minister announced such a trust for Sunderland today. Much play was also made of other proposals in part IV of the Act. Yet week by week we read in the housing press headlines such as:

> "Essex tenants vote to stay".

That article says:

> "Redbridge LBC tenants in Ilford voted by 5,418 to 2,780 against the plans to transfer the housing stock to Oakbridge Housing Association . . ."

Brentwood district council also rejected transfer plans, by 2,953 to 708.

The Government have not realised that although people may quibble and criticise their local authorities they know, as we constantly said in the debates on the 1988 Act, that if they want to change the way in which the local authority housing department is managed they at least have recourse to the ballot box at local elections. They can say, "You have failed, so we shall put in another party." That right of council tenants who opted not to exercise the right to buy is of more worth to them than their trust in any other organisation, no matter how worthy.

The Government have clearly failed. They have not been inundated with requests from local authority tenants to transfer to housing associations or other organisations. They have not even been inundated by requests from landlords to register as approved landlords under the scheme provided for by the Act and run by the Housing Corporation. That part of the Act, which was almost the flagship of the Government's privatisation plans for housing, has been a complete and utter flop.

It is about time that Ministers and those who support them accepted that the measures introduced do not add up to a housing policy. There is no strategy. They are just playing politics with housing. They have very little to show for their efforts and that will continue to be so.

The Government set great store by their dealings with housing associations, but what is likely to happen to those bodies? The Autumn Statement contained some good news. I acknowledge that additional resources were put into the pot, but there are still problems. The Minister must be aware that many small housing associations are suffering the same difficulties as housing co-operatives in that they do not have the asset base to make proper use of the present scheme. The Government's attempts at a de facto privatisation of the housing association movement is likely to drift into the sand. The Government will probably have to increase the proportion of housing association grant, thereby undermining their own strategy to put the movement into the private sector. Their plan does not work for the smaller housing associations. If the Government do not do something to resolve the problems of small associations, they will end up with a series of local monopolies by large associations.

[Mr. George Howarth]

The Minister's last but one predecessor heralded small community-based housing associations as a wonderful innovation in inner cities, but if something is not done they will disappear completely. The Government must take action to increase the housing association grants to a level at which the private finance involved is negligible. The Institute of Housing says:

> "Even with such a grant rate increase, however"—

the institute believes that it should be increased to 80 per cent.—

> "new housing association lettings are likely to be at rents well above the National Federation of Housing Associations 'affordability' guidelines."

Even if the Government increase the level of housing association grants, the amount of rent charged will be too great. The Government have failed across a whole range of policies because they have no policies. Their failure in housing is one of the most important among many failures which, in the near future, will ensure that my hon. Friends are on the Government Benches and the Conservatives on the Opposition Benches.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): This is a short debate. Unless speeches are short, I am afraid that some hon. Members will be disappointed.

4.48 pm

Mr. John Heddle (Mid-Staffordshire): The title of this brief debate is, "Mortgage costs and housing." I shall address my remarks particularly to mortgage costs and the plight of home owners who have borrowed more money than they prudently might have done. Perhaps I should declare a non-pecuniary interest as vice-president of the Building Societies Association.

Before you came to the Chair, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there was an exchange of views between myself and the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) on the imposition of VAT on non-domestic construction work. I take this opportunity to say that it is the duty of all hon. Members who take an interest in the construction industry and the provision of housing to anticipate events. It was in that context that I raised the matter in Question Time today.

Only six or seven brief years ago, as my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) will recall and confirm, the Government's view was that there would be no question of VAT being imposed on non-domestic construction work. Because of the rules of the European Court that have been passed down to us, we must impose VAT on non-domestic construction work. Post-1992 there is a strong possibility that the European Court will force the United Kingdom Government to impose VAT on domestic construction—whether on non-social housing, such as private sector housing, or across the board, I do not know, but it is our duty to anticipate the possibility of such events. I was encouraged today by the assurances of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that together with our right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer all possible resistance would be presented to our European friends to ensure that that does not happen in the United Kingdom.

I was encouraged by the comments of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he appeared before the Treasury Select Committee recently and admitted, with the benefit of that great gift of hindsight, that certain actions of the recent past should perhaps not have been taken. One of them was the delay between the announcement and the implementation of the abolition of double mortgage tax relief. The three-month delay in the implementation of that decision by the then Chancellor of the Exchequer undoubtedly increased house price inflation and encouraged people to borrow more than they should. If that had not occurred, the subsequent slump in the housing market, which we are witnessing now, particularly in London and the south-east and to a lesser extent elsewhere, would not have happened. It is incumbent on all hon. Members to learn from those lessons.

I am worried about the plight of the housing market and those involved in the construction industry. Companies, large and small, are being forced into liquidation. In particular, small companies are having to lay off gangs of bricklayers whom they have employed for years. Homes for tomorrow are not being built today, and I fear that that will cause an increase in house price inflation in two or three years' time. I ask Ministers to consider the matter not simply in the context of the defeat of inflation—I wholeheartedly agree with and support that policy—but in the context of young people who leave school today and look to buy their first home tomorrow. The housing market is in a state of stop-go. When the Government came to power I hoped that we would see the end of stop-go policies.

Young people and not so young people who are suffering from high interest rates on their mortgages were perhaps encouraged to borrow more than they should from the lending institutions, which include not just building societies but banks which entered the housing finance market. I hope that they will not be tempted to remortgage through some other institution, such as a foreign bank with some so-called product linked to the value of the deutschmark, the yen or the franc. I hope that they will be sensible and will return to their lending institution, lay their cards on the table and say, "We cannot afford to repay what we previously committed ourselves to." I am sure that if they do, they will receive a sympathetic hearing and that their lending institution will try to reschedule their borrowing, whether by extending the loan, freezing the interest or a combination of several levers, to ensure that their hardship is relieved.

In the Housing Act 1980 the Government introduced a tenants' charter—something which the Labour Government talked about and the Conservative Government have implemented. In particular, the charter sought to impose on local authorities a duty to compile a list of their tenants who would be prepared to sublet part of their accommodation that was surplus to requirements. The hon. Member for Dagenham told us that the majority of cases that he deals with at his advice bureau are about housing matters. I can confirm that from my constituency experience. A large proportion of those who come to my advice bureau are single and for one reason or another cannot or do not want to live with their parents. For them the answer must surely be to find short-term accommodation, perhaps lodgings in the town where they grew up and seek employment. The best way to find short-term accommodation is to search the local authority list to find the houses that are larger than the tenant's requirements.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): I am listening with great interest to the hon. Gentleman and two points arise on subletting. First, the young single people who come to my surgery want a place of their own. Unfortunately, there is a shortage of suitable accommodation. Secondly, does not subletting interfere with a person's housing benefit? That acts as a disincentive to subletting.

Mr. Heddle: All of us, from the moment we leave school, want accommodation of our own, but we cannot always have what we want when we want it. Sometimes it is necessary to take what may be second best, but possibly better than the homelessness to which hon. Gentlemen have referred. The hon. Gentleman also mentioned housing benefit. Surely, for a widow or widower in a three-bedroomed house, to sublet a room that is no longer used except for the storage of trunks and other memorabilia will produce an income supplement which could be substantially in excess of what they might lose in housing benefit.

I wholly reject the motion in the name of the Leader of the Opposition and wholly support the amendment tabled by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

4.57 pm

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): Tory Members have tried hard to put a brave face on the housing problem that the country faces. They have found excuses and ingenious ways of, shall we say, putting the problem into context.

I agree with many points made by the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle), but people's everyday experience is so different. People know that things are wrong as they cancel their Christmas. They know that housing policy has failed as they see the pictures of cardboard city. After 10 years of Tory government they see housing policy in a shambles. They have begun to wonder whether the Government have any answers to the housing crisis.

Perhaps the most prominent issue is the rise in mortgage rates and repayments, which has been dubbed the Tory tax. The cost of Conservative mismanagement of the economy has been huge: the rise in interest rates from 9·8 per cent. in July 1988 to the present 14·5 per cent.; the increase in the monthly repayments on the average £30,000 mortgage of £75; and the increase in the monthly repayments on the average £60,000 endowment mortgage of more than £200. Those rises dwarf the tax cuts of previous years.

The Government used to talk about creating a stable financial climate—an environment where businesses and individuals could plan their investments. We presumed that they realised that people do not always plan ahead. We thought that they realised that people cannot always see what is round the corner. When people do not see what is coming, that does not make them imprudent. I invite the House to look at the most sophisticated economic forecasters, whose job it is to guess what interest rates will be in a year's time. In July 1988, when the mortgage rate was 9·8 per cent., none of them predicted rates of 14·8 per cent. at Christmas 1989, and they are the specialists. This Government do not apologise for their mistakes; they simply shrug their shoulders as if to say, "You should not have borrowed so much." So much for providing a stable financial climate.

The home owners have been hit and they are bearing the brunt of the Government's interest rate policy. They are being punished for this Government's mistakes. The price for house owners is only too real. The number in arrears is beginning to grow. In December 1988, a total of 326,000 individuals were more than two months in arrears.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): The hon. Gentleman and I represent opposite ends of the same local authority area. Is he aware that there has been a fourfold increase in homelessness in the Sefton local authority area, mainly caused by people having to default on mortgage payments? That is putting pressure on the supply of homes in Southport, where Sefton council houses the homeless. It is also creating tremendous problems at the other end of the borough, in my constituency, where housing problems and homelessness are increasing dramatically.

Mr. Fearn: The hon. Gentleman is right. We thought Southport was the affluent end of the borough, and that Bootle would be the area to suffer most from homelessness. However, it is the reverse. Indeed, the whole of the Sefton borough has homeless people, including Crosby, Formby and the rural areas.

In December 1988, a total of 326,000 individuals were more than two months in arrears with their mortgage payments. By July this year, the number had shot up to 400,000, and that was before the recent rise in mortgage rates, before the poll tax demands arrive and before the rise in unemployment that the Chancellor mentioned yesterday. Independent housing experts expect the number in arrears to rise to more than 450,000 towards the middle of next year. That is almost half a million households, many of them families, that have to cut back drastically. That is half a million people living with the fear that they might lose their homes.

People say that building societies are being understanding and lenient and that few people are threatened with losing their homes. I am pleased to say that, in many instances, that is true and people are being allowed to extend their mortgages, capitalise their debts and take "repayment respite". Such flexibility is welcome, but it is not the whole story. Many of the new lenders are not friendly building societies. Even the high street banks—where I used to work—are not generally thought to be as understanding as the building societies and some of the new financial institutions can be described only as loan sharks. One firm advertised its mortgages:

> "Good news! Up to 35 per cent. saving on interest payments."

Such a firm will hardly have the decency to think twice about putting pressure on those in arrears, scaring them and then repossessing.

There is a lack of advice and information. Many lenders either do not give advice or are too busy to give the personal advice that is really needed. The voluntary and local authority finance groups that offer debt counselling are overworked and underfunded. Comments from a debt counsellor, as reported in a recent newspaper article, say it all:

> "Assistance can only now be given in dire emergencies . . . If we take on any more people we won't be able to fulfil our role as an advisory service properly."

As the number in arrears mounts, the pressure to repossess increases. It is already clear that the number of repossessions in the south is rising, and that it is likely to become an explosion in the new year. First, many people will not feel the pressure from the recent rise in rates until the new year. Secondly, next year there will be a rise in unemployment—that is forecast. Thirdly, there will be an

[Mr. Fearn]

increase in the number of bad loans sold to professional debt collectors. It puts the fear of God into many people when they realise that debt collectors have hold of their mortgages.

Many people fear that the housing market may pick up just sufficiently to persuade lenders that it may be worthwhile to repossess. Any leniency by lenders until now may have sprung simply from self-interest. It costs to repossess, and the lender may not be able to sell the house, even at a knock-down price. A slight upturn in the housing market might be good news for estate agents, but for the indebted—those really suffering under present policies who can sell their houses only at prices lower than they paid—it might mean the bailiffs.

Hon. Members who do not know what repossession means should read last week's *The Sunday Correspondent*, which gave a description of one family's experience. A brief extract gives the flavour. It said:

> "It took 45 seconds for the man to go from homeowner to homeless. He owed £5,455·31 in mortgage arrears: 'This order means the building society can take possession in 28 days. Have you anything to say?' said the registrar . . . 'I lost my job, but I got a new one, but I'm waiting for the first month's wages and then I'll start to . . . 'But the man did not stand a chance.
>
> 'Can you pay £500 every month on top of the usual payments? . . . No? Well they'll have to repossess. Next.'"

Some hon. Members might be pleased that our judicial system is so efficient that it can deal with an N29 order for repossession in 45 seconds. They might care to reflect on the shame people feel, on their despair and on their futures. We are not unrealistic on these Benches. We do not think that there is a policy that can correct the failure of this Government's economic mismanagement without pain. The problem with the Government's policy is that it does not give anyone hope. People envisage higher mortgage costs carrying on into the distant future. They realise that the Government are divided about what to do.

People should be aware that there are alternatives that would bring hope to home owners, and the House should be aware that there are alternatives that would restore credibility to economic policy. Early membership of the exchange rate mechanism would allow interest rates to fall relatively quickly. If demand began to get out of control, sensible tax reforms would tighten fiscal policy, preventing the need always to resort to high interest rates. The policy would still be painful in the short term, but there would be hope. People would know that the policy was credible and that it would help to bring down interest rates.

While economic policy is put right, the Government could alleviate the problems of the home owner in arrears, whose house is about to be repossessed, through other measures. For example, assistance in debt counselling would not cost a great deal. As the Government's economic mismanagement has caused the crisis, the least that they can do is to help in the provision of advice.

The Government could also tighten control on the misleading advertising of credit. For example, they could extend the Financial Services Act 1986 so that organisations such as FIMBRA could control the actions of its members advertising mortgages in a misleading manner. In that way, investor protection could be extended from the investor in insurance to the investor in property. Surely it is the Government's job to promote consumer protection, especially in an area as important as the housing market.

The home owners of Britain are not asking for much. Indeed, many of them probably realise that there are many others with far more serious housing difficulties. I do not have time to go into the detail of the many other housing problems facing people in Britain. That is not because the problems are not acute. Other hon. Members have referred to the depth of failure of the Government's housing policy, the consequent rise in homelessness and the poor state of the housing stock.

The warning that I am giving the Government is that the home owner in arrears today could be the homeless person of tomorrow. They must not make the housing problems of everyone else worse by ignoring the plight of the home owner. The crisis is not only at Christmas; it is with us for many years to come.

5.9 pm

Sir George Young (Ealing, Acton): Like the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn), I read the moving article in *The Sunday Correspondent* last week. In my brief remarks I want to take up the theme of homelessness on which the hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members have touched.

Last week, a number of Members on both sides of the House and in both Houses who feel strongly about homelessness formed the all-party parliamentary group on homelessness. We look forward to working with the many organisations whose work in that area we applaud and who have some exciting and fresh ideas to help tackle the problems of homelessness. We also look forward to talking to Ministers and obtaining further details of the £250 million package, an announcement which I greatly welcome.

As joint chairman of that newly formed group, I am interested in solutions and practical help for the people who find themselves homeless, rather than in propaganda. Any strategy for dealing with homelessness must start by sending a clear signal to young people who now have somewhere to live but who are thinking of coming to London, or another city, in search of their fortune but who have no clear idea of where they would stay. I hate to cross swords with my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) but the message for them must be, "Don't get on your bike. Don't come to London in search of work unless you have somewhere to live, because if you find a job you will not be able to hold it down unless you have somewhere permanent to stay."

I welcome all the initiatives that are being taken, but we must not weaken the strong signal to young people that the situation in the capital is desperate and that they should not chance their arm and come here on the offchance of finding somewhere because the chances are that they will not.

I want to make two points on the theme of homelessness. The first concerns the tenants incentive scheme. Part of the solution for homelessness in London must be to look at those who are now living in London who neither have to nor want to do so, but who cannot afford to move out—people who may have retired or have children living in other parts of the country and who are local authority tenants. The tenants incentive scheme gives them the opportunity to own their own homes, to move out of the capital and to be near their families.

The advantages of the tenants incentive scheme is that it is quick; it provides relets without having to build fresh accommodation which can take two years. Not only is it quick, but it is a cost-effective way of getting relets without spending the £80,000 or £100,000 that it would cost to build a new flat. If one gave a dramatic and enthusiastic push to the tenants incentive scheme in London, every family now in bed and breakfast could be out within 12 months. Therefore, I ask Ministers to look again at that scheme to see whether its full potential is being achieved and whether one could put fresh steam behind it to free accommodation and get families out of bed and breakfast accommodation.

My second point relates to planning, but it impinges directly on the problems of homelessness. There is a shortage of houses in the south-east and that is why we have a problem of homelessness. Even if we do all that we can to encourage local authorities to let property that is empty, to encourage the private rented sector to bring back into use property that is unlet and make full use of derelict land, there will still be a shortage of homes in the south-east for those who are already living here. It is nonsense to say that we should let the market work and let prices in the south-east rise so that people find accommodation in the north-east or elsewhere. That is not a practical solution. It means that nurses, teachers, postmen or bus drivers could not afford to live in the south-east, and that would lead to unbalanced communities. Part of any strategy for dealing with the housing shortage and homelessness is to increase the supply of homes in the south-east.

I welcome the solution of new villages or new settlements which provide the opportunity to build new balanced communities with accommodation for rent and for sale, but I am slightly disappointed at the lack of progress that has been made by new settlements or new villages in the past few months. There have been some disappointing decisions on appeal and I hope that next year the Government will look again at the new settlement approach to the housing shortage in the south-east to see whether that should form part of the solution.

The Government need not be ashamed of their housing record. If the Labour party had achieved what the Government have achieved over the past 10 years, bearing in mind the disappointing last three years of the Labour Government, it would be well satisfied.

The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) rightly referred to the number of people with housing problems who present themselves at Members' advice bureaux, particularly those of London Members. But a variety of solutions are now available that simply were not on offer 10 years ago—solutions such as shared ownership; low-cost home ownership; the revival of the private rented sector, which was dying on its feet 10 years ago; the priority estates project, bringing back into use council estates that were impossible to let; the housing association movement borrowing fresh funds from the City, adding to the resources made available to it by the Government. The picture painted by the hon. Member for Dagenham was incomplete. I commend the Government on their ingenuity, initiative and determination in improving the housing conditions of people in Britain.

5.15 pm

Ms. Kate Hoey (*Vauxhall*): I am pleased that this debate is taking place today. As a new Member, I may not yet understand the nuances of the House, but it is rather disturbing that the Benches of the House were filled for yesterday's emotional and important debate and yet they are relatively empty today when we are discussing a matter of major importance to the British people. Perhaps we all share some blame for the fact that housing has not become a crusade in Britain.

I want to talk a little about the impact of high mortgage rates on London in particular. If anything good can come out of high mortgage rate, it is that it has at least brought the shortage of housing and the importance of that to the attention of many of thousands of people who until now may not have seen that as a problem.

Londoners are particularly affected by the increase in mortgage rates, because London has the highest house prices in the country. The average home in the capital costs just below £100,000, while the national average is a little above £60,000. Average incomes in London are above the national average, but they do not exceed them to that extent. The size of London's economy and its continuing buoyancy compared with other areas mean that demand for housing remains high and prices are determined by what a small section of the population can afford, leaving the rest to struggle with high bills.

Therefore, it is not surprising that, although some 600 home owners in London have become homeless during the past year, the increase has not been so great in the rest of the country. Until now, the relatively low rate in London has been due to the booming housing market. Many people who have got into trouble with repayments could still sell at a profit and buy elsewhere. With the collapse of the housing market many people will not now be able to do that. Therefore, we are seeing only the tip of the iceberg in terms of homelessness which has resulted from people not being able to afford their mortgages.

It is worth pointing out what a daunting task now faces the first-time buyer in London trying to get on the first rung of the housing ladder. The average mortgage advance for first-time buyers in London is now £70,000. With present interest rates, that means repayments of approximately £850 a month. The Government have told us that high interest rates will continue until such time as they can be cut. Therefore, we may be facing high increases in mortgage rates, and that will mean that more people in London face having to get rid of their homes. As we heard in the moving account in *The Sunday Correspondent*, they will be forced to go through the stigmatising process of having to sell their home or having it taken from them.

I share the sentiments expressed earlier about the availability of tax relief for people who wish to buy homes together. The change in August 1988 cut off a further avenue for young people and is to be regretted. There are alternatives to buying in London, but renting from private landlords is expensive, the accommodation is hard to find, and the security is poor. Due to the complete collapse of local authority new home building and the sale of over 120,000 London council homes since 1979, councils now have far fewer lettings. We have already heard that housing associations are currently starting fewer homes in London than in the 1970s, so councils and local housing associations are overwhelmed with meeting the needs of the homeless.

[Ms. Kate Hoey]

Despite an average of over 60 per cent. of council lettings going to the homeless in London—over half as many again as in the rest of the country—there are now 25,000 homeless households in temporary accommodation in London. That would be the equivalent of a sizeable town such as Stevenage.

Some hon. Members may have seen in a newspaper this week an article on a person in my constituency who was homeless and begging. Attempts were made to prove that he had money and to show that he was not genuinely homeless. The attack was particularly sad. If those reporters had walked through the Bull Ring and spoken to people—although I doubt if many from the newspaper involved would dare to—they would have discovered the type of people who are homeless. It is important to point out that one cannot classify "homeless people" as just one category. Every homeless person is an individual with particular needs, problems and reasons for becoming homeless.

The "*Skipper*" is one of the projects from the north Lambeth day centre which is involved with homeless people. The centre is an education project where many young people can go to obtain advice and to practise, learn and improve their writing skills to help them obtain a job. An average young person who visited the north Lambeth day centre said:

> "From June 1989 to September 1989 I had no money because I'd lost my YTS place and my bridging loan had run out. I went to the DSS in September because I had nowhere to live and was under 18, they wouldn't give me any money. I felt like they didn't want to know and didn't care. I tried to get work and told them this but they made me feel as if I was lying. Eventually I went to the Council who found me a room in a hostel. I had somewhere to live so I went to the DSS expecting money. I was given a £6 crisis loan which was to last two weeks. I was only given this because I was in 'Severe Hardship' and would eventually get Income Support because of this. This meant I had to live for 14 days on £6. I went again three days later and was told I wasn't entitled to anything else. Luckily the hostel lent me £4 for food and a social services worker obtained £20 from the Salvation Army for me."

In this edition of "*Skipper*" there are other letters from homeless people who are lucky enough to have the benefit of the people working at the centre. That example shows how false it is for anyone to try to say that all the homeless —or a substantial number—are simply people who have left home and could return.

If I look around my constituency I see people who are living in inadequate housing, perhaps on the seventh floor of a tower block, in great overcrowding and in conditions with an enormous amount of damp or where the flat is obviously in disrepair. Are we saying to those people that they are adequately housed and that they have a home and there is no problem?

The definition of "homelessness" should be widened to include people who do not live in decent surroundings or an environment likely to improve their well-being and health. Such places cannot be called a home. In some ways, our narrow definition of homelessness excludes the many thousands of people who are living in appalling conditions and who have little chance—in my constituency—of being rehoused. One in 10 households in my borough suffers from extreme overcrowding. They have no chance of finding anywhere decent to live. There is no point saying to them, as the Government would, "Why don't you try to buy?" First, they would not want to buy the flat in which they are living because it usually needs an enormous amount of work and money spent on it. Secondly, they would have no chance of obtaining a mortgage.

There are many myths about homelessness and housing, and one of the saddest things is that it has not become a crusading issue. All hon. Members rightly feel passionately about the National Health Service, but unless one is suffering directly from a housing problem, it does not reach the top of the agenda. However, at Christmas it does and over the next couple of weeks we will probably see many sad articles in the press about homelessness. But as the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn) rightly pointed out, after Christmas the problem will still exist.

I hope that this Opposition day debate will mark the beginning of an increase in awareness—not just in the House but in the country—of the state of housing and how dire it is. There must be choice of housing but, under Government policies, only a tiny percentage of the population have real choice. I hope that today we will show that everyone has a responsibility. People in the country who are well housed and have no problems have a responsibility to raise the issue of homelessness with their Members of Parliament. They should bring it to the forefront, so that, by the end of next year, we will be able to say that something has been done about housing. In London, the position is already dire as we cannot get nurses, teachers, or people to staff buses or transport. The basic reason for that is that people can no longer obtain housing in London or live in a safe environment where they are happy and contented.

We must see the problem of homelessness as crucial, and we must develop housing throughout the country but particularly in London. We must see it as a major problem that will engulf us in a year or two if something is not done quickly.

5.28 pm

Mr. Douglas French (Gloucester): The motion moved by the Opposition "condemns", "deplores", "warns" and "deplores" again. However, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister made clear, it does not propose any sound solutions.

The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) called for a "fundamental reappraisal" and "reversal of mistakes", but when pressed to come up with details of Opposition policies he made a feature of not presenting any for fear that they might be scrutinised.

The hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms. Hoey) called for more choice. In the last 10 years, the Conservative Government, to a greater extent than any previous Administration, have endeavoured to provide genuine housing choice.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: Will my hon. Friend defend that statement in the light of the Government amendment to the motion, which does not even mention choice?

Mr. French: It mentions the right-to-buy, which provides choice for people who might not otherwise have it.

It is a pity that Opposition Members have not acknowledged the extent to which the Government have sought to provide additional opportunities for people to purchase their own homes, in particular for council tenants through the right-to-buy legislation. That has brought within the grasp of many who otherwise would have been unable to contemplate it both the possibility and the reality of owning the house or flat in which they live. From time to time the Labour party has been slightly more enthusiastic about that policy, but is has never been very keen to endorse it.

Those who have exercised their right-to-buy have, in my experience, almost always been pleased to have done so. In recent years the scheme has been improved. There are better discounts and the range of properties within the ambit of the scheme has been extended. Since 1979, more than 1 million houses and flats have been sold through the right-to-buy scheme. That is an impressive figure, but it still means that the scheme has been only a qualified success. Only one fifth of the properties which might have been purchased in this way have been bought. Since it represents the bargain of a lifetime for those who decide to take up the option, it is worth asking why it is that approximately 14 local authorities have sold only about 10 per cent. of their local authority housing stock. In contrast, those who have done well have sold about 35 per cent., but even that does not represent a very impressive percentage.

It is absolutely clear that the success or failure of the right-to-buy scheme in particular areas and at particular times has no connection whatever with interest rate levels. In the last year, the number of flats purchased through the right-to-buy scheme—just under 27,000—has been the highest ever. That coincided with a period of admittedly high interest rates, but they have not deterred people from exercising their right to buy.

Even at times of high interest rates, it is both desirable and possible that people should still wish to become home owners. For some of them, the arithmetic may look daunting, but even within normal or very low household budgets it is still perfectly possible for people to exercise their right to buy. Nevertheless, the time has come when the scheme should be boosted. I therefore welcome the Government experiment known as the rents into mortgages scheme, which provides an important alternative means of purchasing one's home and additional choice for prospective purchasers.

There have been two experiments. The first was announced on 30 October by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and applies to houses and flats owned by Scottish Homes. The second experiment, known as flexi-ownership, was announced in September by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and applies to the 1,350 houses and flats owned by the Development Board for Rural Wales. In both cases, the system enables tenants to buy their homes for broadly the same weekly outlay as they currently pay in rent.

The system combines a discount entitlement with a mortgage and a deferred loan but, unlike many low-start schemes, it does not depend on an increasing burden of accumulating interest. It satisfies the deferred loan from the proceeds of the eventual sale of the property, but the cost of the deferred loan facility is calculated by reference to a proportion of the capital gain which has accrued in the intervening period. To that extent it has the characteristics of a shared ownership scheme, but there is no proper shared ownership.

It is worth examining the arithmetic of such a scheme, since it is not widely understood. In both cases, the starting point is the rent currently being paid by the tenant. To that rent, for calculation purposes, 10 per cent. is added. Then £5 in the case of a house, or £7·50 in the case of a flat, is deducted from it as a notional allowance for the insurance and maintenance costs that the new owner will have to bear. Taking the average rent in Wales, which is £21·84, if one adds 10 per cent. and deducts £5, that leaves £19·02. That is the amount which the prospective purchaser would have to pay each week under the rents into morgages scheme. The amount of low-start mortgage that £19·02 will buy is the figure that the tenant pays for his purchase. But that is not enough to cover the entire cost: the difference between that amount and the market value of the house is met, first, by the discount and, secondly, by a deferred loan.

An important feature of the scheme is that the discount is 15 per centage points less than the discount that is applied in the right-to-buy scheme. If it were otherwise, the introduction of such a scheme might be less than welcomed by those who have already exercised their right-to-buy under the existing scheme. Discounts under the rents into mortgages scheme start at 17 per cent. for houses and 29 per cent. for flats. They rise to 45 per cent. for houses and 55 per cent. for flats, which is 15 per cent. lower than the maximum that is available under the right-to-buy scheme.

The important distinction, apart from the discount differential, is that even after the purchase has been made, eligibility for discount continues to accrue at 1 per cent. per year in respect of the calculation of the deferred loan that later has to be repaid, subject to the maximum percentages. When the time comes to sell the property, the deferred loan is the amount represented by the original percentage, as applied to the sale price, less the additional discount which has accrued at 1 per cent. per year.

By means of that ingenious formula, the loan is repaid, the mortgage is repaid and the purchaser—who now becomes the seller—is left with a significant capital gain, the amount of which will depend on house price inflation in the intervening period. It is not a dream or a nightmare, as the hon. Member for Dagenham suggests; it is a painless way of achieving home ownership.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment wrote to me on 2 November 1989. In his letter he said that the Government had no plans at present to extend the rents into mortgages scheme beyond the two experiments in Wales and Scotland. He confirmed that they are trial experiments for three years and that they will be monitored and evaluated. However, in the 30 days from 30 October to 30 November, at a time of high interest rates, the number of inquiries in Scotland about the scheme amounted to 360. That is a sign that it will be enormously successful—and so it should be because it is extremely attractive. It would be even more successful if it were heavily promoted. Once the early part of the experiment is concluded, I see no reason why it should be necessary to wait three years before the scheme is promoted nationally. It should be promoted for the excellent scheme that it is, and should apply to all local authority tenants in all parts of the country—or, if that is not possible, particularly where there are housing pressures. I should like it to apply in my own constituency of Gloucester. It is an ingenious and a winning formula and I very much hope that the Government will decide to extend it nationally.

5.40 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): As my hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) pointed out, it is not surprising that the Government amendment makes no mention of rented accommodation. Basically, it is a problem or a crisis in which the Government take no interest. It is also not surprising that the Government amendment does not boast about the provision of private sector rented accommodation. Had the Housing Act worked in the way in which the Government predicted, they would now be telling us about all the private sector rented accommodation that had been provided through shorthold and shorthold assured tenancies.

In the past few days, I have tried to find out what the position is. I have tabled questions to the Department of the Environment and I have been to the Library where they were good enough to ring up a number of organisations concerned with housing, but hardly any information is available. The general consensus among organisations concerned with housing is that the number of new dwellings available in the private sector as a result of the Housing Act 1988 has been derisory, as Labour Members constantly warned when the legislation was going through the House. The new accommodation that has been provided here and there has been mainly in the high rented sector, and of course that is of no use to the vast majority of our constituents.

I listened carefully to the hon. Member for Gloucester (Mr. French). When people go to his surgery, as they come to mine, and tell him about their acute housing plight I wonder whether he gives them the lecture that he has just given the House.

At present, this country has the largest number of homeless people since the end of the war. Tonight only five minutes from here people will make their homes in cardboard boxes as they have on previous nights, and will in future. A few nights ago, I went to see what was happening outside Embankment station. Any hon. Member who thinks that I am exaggerating should go along there. It is a disgrace that so many people should be living in those conditions in an advanced industrialised country, whatever our economic problems. Many of them do not have drink or drugs problems. Many are perfectly law-abiding citizens who have come to London and simply cannot find accommodation. The *Evening Standard* provides information about rented accommodation at £150, £200 and £250 per week. What use is that to people coming to London who may find a job paying a modest wage? They will not be able to afford to buy, and nor will they be able to afford rented accommodation. The lectures from the hon. Member for Gloucester are no help to the people who will sleep outside Embankment station tonight. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would like to go there tonight after the 10 pm vote and lecture those people about the schemes he has mentioned. I am willing to accompany him.

The crisis is not just among the homeless. My hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) said that most people who come to see him have housing problems. Surely that is true for most of us. At least 65 or 70 per cent. of those who come to my regular constituency surgeries or write to me are concerned about housing problems. Because of deliberate Government policy, and not because of the failure by the local authority, my own council has been able to undertake no housebuilding at all in the past 10 years. Of course, as the Government constantly boast, the public rented sector has been substantially reduced. But what should I say to a couple with two children who could wait for years in a small flat? One can imagine what it is like for a mother with two small children in a small flat in a multi-storey block who goes almost daily to the local housing office trying to find a house. People with no children have hardly any chance of finding accommodation; if they have one child they wait a long time to be rehoused from a flat to a house and more recently even families with two children can wait literally for years. All they want is a house. They cannot afford to buy and they certainly cannot afford any of the schemes mentioned by the hon. Member for Gloucester. What is their crime? Why should they be penalised day in and day out because their income is low?

I accept entirely that the majority of people in Britain want to own their own homes. I do not deplore that; I own my own home, or at least I am buying it through a building society. If it is good enough for us, of course other people should have the same opportunity. I do not deplore the fact that the majority of people want to own their own homes. If Tory Members really believe their propaganda that Labour Members are against owner-occupation, so be it. But we have never been against owner-occupation and in many ways we have tried to encourage it through various schemes when we have been in office. But what happens to the people who simply cannot buy? That is the divide between the two sides of the House. We are not divided about whether owner-occupation is good. We accept that and we believe that it should be encouraged. We know, however, only too well the mortgage difficulties faced by so many people who have bought their own homes in the past couple of years as a result of Government policy. We are not divided over the wish that people should buy their own homes if they can. But there is certainly a very big divide about what we should do about more than a quarter of the people in this country —those who need rented accommodation.

The case against the Government is that through sheer dogma and political calculation, which also comes into the picture, they will not allow local authorities to undertake the work that local councils have been doing for most of the century. Even under previous Tory Governments, council dwellings were built in virtually all parts of the country. Now it is virtually impossible. If it is Government policy that local authority dwellings should not be built, they should provide alternatives. But, as I said, the private rented sector does not provide the accommodation which is so necessary, despite the promises made by Ministers when the Housing Act was going through. What should we do when people who could not possibly afford market rents come to see us? Housing benefit, which has been cut so drastically, does not help. Ministers know that. No matter what fine words they may say at the Dispatch Box, Ministers are callously indifferent to the plight of people who are punished and penalised because they are not in a position to buy.

Council rents are also a form of punishment for tenants. In the past 10 years, council rents nationally have been forced up by 234 per cent. compared with an inflation figure of 110 per cent. over the same period. So in effect the Government have told council tenants that if they wish to continue as tenants they will be penalised. There is certainly no justification for the exorbitant rent increases that have been imposed in the past few years.

It is not surprising that the number of people with rent arrears is increasing. For example, the total income of one widower in my constituency who came to see me is £54 a week. Imagine what it must be like to live on that amount. He pays more than £10 a week in rent. I know that rents have increased and housing benefit has been dramatically reduced, but I could not believe that that man should be paying more than £10 a week in rent out of an income of £54 a week. I checked the amount with my local authority, which is not to blame for it. How could it be to blame? The Government's policy has been to force up council rents while drastically reducing housing benefit.

This country needs a substantial council house building programme. Only local authorities, together with genuine housing associations, can provide the rented accommodation which is so desperately needed. My hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Ms. Hoey) said that there were not many Members in the Chamber, unlike last night. The difference is that last night we were not sure which way the vote would go. As with debates on the death penalty and similar issues, one was not even certain what one's own colleagues would say. Ironically, then, though most constituents write to us about housing problems, there are few Members in the Chamber, whether Tory or Labour. The explanation is quite simple: we know that the Government will not listen. Because of dogma and political calculation, they are not interested in the plight of the people to whom my hon. Friends and I have referred.

When historians look back at these times they will find it difficult to believe that there could be so many people without accommodation, so many people sleeping in the open and countless families in flats who cannot get a house, and a Government and their supporters who are indifferent—there will be no abstentions in the vote tonight—to the plight of the many people who want accommodation but cannot afford to buy a house.

5.52 pm

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) accuses the Government of callousness. The Government will spend £250 million in the next two years on tackling the problem of homelessness in London and the south-east. I do not call that the action of a callous Government. They will spend £20 billion over the next three years in grants and expenditure on housing. I do not call that the action of a callous Government. We do not improve the debate by making such simplistic party political attacks.

To have a serious debate on these issues, we must at least compare alternative strategies. Much of the debate has been artificial. The Government have put forward their view which some may think is wrong headed. The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) was not prepared to say what the Government-in-waiting—as presumably he considers the Labour party to be—would do about the problem.

Mr. Soley: He did.

Mr. Leigh: I deny that, and *Hansard* will prove that he did not. I invite the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) to explain what the Labour party would do in the current circumstances. I suspect that he will not.

Two years ago, there was a potential world recession and a stock market crash and it was necessary to have reflation through supply side measures, which inevitably resulted in inflation. The only way to curb inflation is to encourage saving and curb borrowing, which can be done only by increasing interest rates. A Labour Government would have done that, just as this Government have.

Mr. Boyes: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Leigh: I shall not give way. I shall speak briefly so that other hon. Members can participate.

Bringing up a young family and having to pay for property with a mortgage, I suffer as much as anyone from high interest rates. Like all people in my age group who are bringing up young families, I urge the Government to bring down interest rates as soon as possible, but not so soon that it would limit the battle against inflation. Some of us suffer from high interest rates, but everyone suffers from inflation.

We should put the matter into context. Average incomes have increased by £67 a year over the past two years, while the average amount paid on an average mortgage of £22,000 has increased by £58 a year, despite the increase in interest rates. The Building Societies Association has proved that there is little evidential link between high interest rates and the number of repossessions. In the latter part of 1988, the number of repossessions fell to 0·01 per cent. of home loans. Repossessions have more to do with personal financial mismanagement, matrimonial problems or unemployment than with high interest rates. High interest rates are necessary if we are to curb inflation and get the economy running along the right lines.

We must address the problem of housing for young people. I do not believe that the solution advocated by the hon. Member for Walsall, North was right. We must consider the kind of shared purchase schemes which were advocated by my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Mr. French). I represent a rural area which traditionally has had low house prices. Young people in the villages in my constituency are finding it increasingly difficult to buy cottages and houses. Such housing is no longer within their price range because of the movement to the area of retired people from the south of England. I do not believe that the solution to the problem is to build more council housing in villages and trap people in rural areas subsidised housing from which they will find it difficult to escape in future years. The solution is to develop shared purchase schemes which will capture the imagination of young people. We may have to require local authorities to enter into such schemes.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I appreciate the fact that my hon. Friend, like all of us, is worried about high interest rates. He touched on the prices of houses. Are not higher house prices the down side of lower interest rates? Sometimes a person may be in a Catch-22 situation—as interest rates come down, he still finds it difficult to get on to the housing ladder because house prices have increased as a result of low interest rates. That was the position in 1987.

Mr. Leigh: My hon. Friend makes his point. Our economic policies are right and necessary. Much of what must be done in Government is as painful as it is inevitable, but it must be done.

In our next legislative programme, we must look much more closely at shared purchase schemes and the private rented sector. We have been successful with assured tenancies and shorthold tenancies. Although I am sure that we will not get the Opposition's agreement, we must look at freeing the private rented sector for all future tenancies. The only way to address the problem of homelessness and to help young people, especially in inner-city areas, is to free the enormous supply of private rented accommodation. Such accommodation exists in under-occupied buildings, yet people do not have the confidence, ability or determination to put rooms in their houses on the market and may not be encouraged to do so. With shared purchase schemes, we can start to address the problem of homelessness among the young people in our great cities.

5.58 pm

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): I cannot express how much I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) about the necessity to provide more homes for rent through building by local authorities and—I think that my hon. Friend would agree —housing associations. I listened carefully to the hon. Members for Gloucester (Mr. French) and for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh). It does not seem to occur to Conservative Members that the great transition which has occurred as many tenants have moved to owner-occupation, because of the opportunity to buy on favourable terms and at discounts, was made possible only because of the efforts over the century of local authorities to build homes which were initially for rent. It is only the investment that took place year after year which has now made possible the transition from tenancy to owner-occupation, which most of us welcome. We should welcome it in the inner cities if only houses were replaced or there was an alternative, such as a transferable discount scheme. There is no contradiction between large-scale building for renting and owner-occupation on favourable terms at a later stage. The two are not incompatible.

I represent Lambeth, an inner-city area, which has considerable problems. It is fair to say that, when I was first elected, the single outstanding domestic problem—because unemployment was virtually unknown and unmeasurable in Lambeth then—was housing. Sadly, that problem has not gone away, although it has been joined by the problems of major unemployment and inner-city deprivation. It is to my deep regret and to the deep shame of the present Government that the housing problem, which was showing signs of improvement in terms of tenure, space standards and repairs, has been getting worse, not as a result of some act of fate, but as a direct consequence of Government policy.

What has happened in the past few years, and especially in the past year, has been critical for the more recent home buyers, who must now despair about where the money will come from after each interest rate rise. The position is also critical for thousands of people for whom the idea of buying a home is either an unattainable dream or a sick joke. The present cost of buying property will rule them out of the market in places such as Lambeth.

I shall give an illustration of my local prices. This morning, I went through every housing advertisement in the local paper, which is a south London newspaper covering Wandsworth and Lambeth. I tried to find out what was the cheapest property available for purchase in the area. The cheapest price for a one-bedroom conversion was £54,500, which was not the typical price. The usual price for one-bedroomed accommodation in the area, which is not the most salubrious part of London, is £60,000 to £65,000.

Let us consider the cheapest cost, of about £55,000. If one obtains a mortgage at 13·5 per cent., which is under the Government's present base rate, and excludes all policy costs, service charges and ground rent, the interest repayments alone for the cheapest south London house in the newspaper today would be £534 a month, or £6,408 a year. In addition, of course, there would be the costs of fares to work, of the repayment of capital and of insurance.

Nobody who is earning less than about £18,000 a year net would be able to afford, with any prudence, such a mortgage. Who would enter into a commitment in which the outgoings on the mortgage would be more than one third of net income? I know that some people exceed one third of net income, but it is not prudent when one thinks of the other commitments and other expenditure that are associated with a house, such as repairs and insurance.

I represent a constituency where the wages for the middle income group are relatively low. People may be doing useful jobs in London, but they are not highly paid jobs and, for most people, the purchase of the cheapest possible one-bedroom flat, which would not be suitable for somebody who had children, is simply out of the question. For a family with children, the price of a home would not be the minimum of £55,000, but about £75,000 or £80,000. For a first-time buyer in my area, mortgage repayments for such a property would be proportionately higher, running to perhaps £8,000, £9,000 or £10,000 a year. The idea that the people who come to see my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Ms. Hoey) or me at our advice bureaux will be able to buy a home on the figures that I have quoted is unrealistic, especially as another mortgage rate rise is still in the pipeline.

What is the next choice for people which is urged on us? It is to go into the private rented sector. I looked in the *South London Press*, which has a good list of properties available to let under the new regime, to see whether renting might be possible. In Streatham, there was accommodation that would be suitable for a family with children:

> "3-bedroom flat . . . can suit 3/4 people. £140 p.w."

That is a rental of £7,000 a year. Yet I am talking about people who will go home with a net disposable income in some cases of only about £8,000 to £10,000 a year.

I think of a nursery nurse, who works with a member of my family, and who comes regularly to my advice bureau. She has a child to look after and, although she has worked all her life, her income is only about £800 a month net, which is about £10,000 a year. She dearly wants to move out of the one-bedroom flat in which she has to share a bedroom with her child into a two-bedroom property, which would give a bit more privacy. In Lambeth, she would have to pay £7,000 a year in rent according to the example that I have given.

To show that that is not an exaggerated figure, I can give plenty of others. For a one-bedroom flat—which would be no good for my constituent because she has a child—in Mitcham, which is some way out of the centre, the cost would be £4,500 a year. If she wanted to rent a two-bedroom flat in Brockley, which is not all that posh, she would have to pay £6,000 a year, and on top of that there would be rates, repairs and service charges. I could go through the figures of the premises that are available to rent in south London. The typical figure for a room is between £45 and £60 a week. Another advertisement says:

"SE15, Double & Single Rooms . . . From £40 p.w."

There is no choice for someone with the typical net income of people doing public service work—even relatively highly paid public service work—in constituencies such as mine.

The third theoretical choice—and this is slightly to bend the meaning of the word "choice"—for someone in housing need who wants better or larger accommodation is to go to the local authority or to a housing association, bearing in mind that most housing association vacancies are nominated by the local authority. However, the depth of the cuts over the past 10 years in the housing investment programmes and the extent of homelessness in London mean that virtually no families without children and virtually no families who are not in priority need of housing will be able to be housed by the local authority.

Housing investment has declined. Let us consider the forecast completions for Lambeth over the next three years. In the current year, Lambeth expects to complete 165 homes. It expects to complete 120 homes in the following year and 87 homes in 1991-92. That is the consequence of the catastrophic investment programme which has been imposed by the present Government.

High mortgage costs, high house prices, high rents and the almost total inability to obtain a house by normal means through the local authority mean that in Lambeth we face a devastating problem of homelessness. In 1987, just after the general election, there were 430 families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation in Lambeth borough. On 10 December this year there were 1,177 families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation—almost three times as many as there were two years ago—and that is in spite of all the efforts that have been made to solve the problem of homelessness by other means.

In addition to the trebling of the number of homeless families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation, the number of private sector leasing arrangements—one way in which Lambeth borough council has responded—has increased to 493. We now have more people housed under private sector leasing arrangements than we had homeless people three years ago. We have 137 people in reception centres, 89 people in short-life accommodation and five people in furnished voids, giving a total figure of 1,918 homeless families. I am told that the cost to public funds of keeping one mother and child in bed-and-breakfast accommodation in London is now £10,000 a year. It is easy to calculate the enormous costs incurred in boroughs such as mine.

It is not getting any easier. As the pressure of interest rates builds, and as rents in the public and private sectors continue to rise, the problem worsens. Between 70 and 80 families a week present themselves as homeless, and 600 cases are being considered at the moment.

Hyperbole begins to lose its meaning. I begin to despair as to how anyone is ever housed. I am deeply angry, because it is not as though the predicament in which the homeless find themselves is an accident, as though their needs are unavoidable or their deprivation inevitable. Their homelessness is the direct consequence of Government policies and Government lack of investment.

The tragedy is that the problem could be solved. People in London—especially developers—are finding it difficult to sell houses at the moment. In the docklands area, for example, many houses remain unsold when they are completed or in the course of construction. In the docklands area, land prices are higher than construction costs as a result of Government policy. It would be possible to release the massive amounts of money that are available to buy those properties for rent and eventually to facilitate the transition from renting to owner-occupation of which we have spoken tonight.

6.12 pm

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): I should like to begin with two anecdotes. The other day, I was cycling along Knightsbridge and a man at a bus stop stopped me. I thought for a moment that he was going to ask for a lift. In fact, what he asked for was money. He said that he had been robbed and did not have any money left for his train fare home. Being of a naturally soft-hearted disposition, and perhaps in this case rather foolish, I gave him some money, whereupon honesty broke out across his face and he told me, "Actually, I'm going to take it to the nearest pub and drink it."

The second story is the one that we saw in the *Evening Standard* the other day. It concerns a young man who makes an extremely good living standing outside a tube station with one of those notices round his neck saying, "Homeless and starving". He makes about £600 a week, tax free.

I tell those stories not to trivialise the subject—because homelessness is a very serious problem in London—but because I believe that we must regard it with extreme care. We have to sort the wheat from the chaff. The wheat can look after itself perfectly well, but the chaff obviously needs help and that is why the Government are making £250 million available to attempt to solve the problem.

Before I was elected to this place, I used to practise as a fellow of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, and as part of my job I used to look in auction catalogues to see what sort of property was coming on to the market. In all the catalogues, there were hundreds of tenanted houses and flats coming up for sale. The reason why they were being sold was that over the years the private rented market has been destroyed by legislation, largely passed by the Labour party. Bearing in mind that Labour legislation, no landlord would take the risk of letting an empty property when he knew perfectly well, first, that the rent would be controlled to the extent that he could not even maintain the property out of it and, secondly, that the sitting tenant and the tenant's successors to two or three generations might have security of tenure. I hope that the Government's policies will put that right, but I am afraid that it will take a long time.

Should the ratepayers subsidise council rents? I do not believe that they should. I believe that council tenants who cannot pay their rent should be helped, but if one asked the average ratepayer in my constituency—not exactly the richest part of London—whether he thinks that he should give a blanket subsidy to all council tenants, one would get a dusty answer.

[Mr. Hugo Summerson]

What about the right to buy? My council, the London borough of Waltham Forest, complains, like many Labour councils, about the controls on spending capital receipts. Yet my council will not push through sales under the right-to-buy provisions. The council cannot have it both ways. If it will not push through the sales, why on earth should it complain that it is allowed to spend only 25 per cent. of its capital receipts? Moreover, it takes some time to build houses. One cannot put up a house overnight. It takes months to get planning permission and months to do the building work.

Many councils have great assets in the shape of commercial properties. My own council has a rent roll of about £1 million a year from commercial properties. But when I asked, "What exactly are these properties valued at?" I discovered that the council has not a clue what the capital values of the properties are. Surely the council could sell some of those properties and apply the proceeds elsewhere, but that is a point that many councils simply have not taken on board. Look at the GLC, which owned thousands of commercial properties and did not bother to review the rents for years and years. The London residuary body has been selling some of the properties and it has become clear that some rents have not been reviewed for 20 years. Some authorities have had no idea of how to look after their properties.

I come now to housing action trusts. It is proposed that there should be a housing action trust in my constituency. I know that some Labour Members are not in favour of housing action trusts. I hope that they will make the journey out to Walthamstow to the Boundary road estate and say to the tenants there, "We do not approve of housing action trusts. We do not like the idea that the Government might actually pay to knock down these three horrendous tower blocks and replace them with decent housing." They might also say, "We approved of the scheme of the London borough of Waltham Forest to replace those blocks which would have meant an increase of £15 a week in the rents of all council tenants in the borough."

I see that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) is shifting anxiously in his place, so let me finish by asking exactly where all the new houses of which the Labour party speaks so grandly are to be built. London is a mature city and has been a mature city for hundreds of years, so where are the houses to be built? Are they to be built, perhaps, in Old Dagenham park? I am sure that the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) would be only too keen to assure his constituents that Ravenscourt park will not be built on, and that we do not want to build in Hyde park or in the green belt.

I hope that Opposition Members would not advocate a return to the building of tower blocks, which to my mind represent one of the most horrendous forms of housing ever devised. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) is laughing. Perhaps he would like to tell his constituents that he is all in favour of building tower blocks. To my mind, they breed hopelessness and despair. I am sure that they breed unemployment and I believe that they also breed housing problems because they breed social problems. Many people leave home because they cannot bear to live there any longer.

Obviously the answer is to pull them down and replace them with the sort of housing that was there before—traditional terraced houses with gardens. That is what people want, and I believe that we should provide it.

6.20 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I thank you for calling me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I will see you afterwards.

The hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) has a charming and disarming way of addressing the House. It is no wonder that he was voted the most romantic Member of Parliament. He told us an anecdote. As he is the Member for Walthamstow, what was he doing cycling through Knightsbridge? He did not tell us. If he spent more time cycling through Walthamstow, he would see more of the problems facing his constituents.

The hon. Member for Walthamstow even comes to the House looking like Neville Chamberlain's private secretary. Many of his views hark back to those days, and I shall touch on some of them.

Personal anecdotes are no way to solve London's massive housing crisis. The hon. Member for Walthamstow asked why local authorities could not use the commercial opportunities represented by their land holdings and assets. They cannot do that, because the Government will not let them: it is as simple as that.

The hon. Gentleman should learn something more about capital receipts and the restrictions that have been placed on their use by central Government, in particular by the Housing Act 1988. He should know that that Act prevents more than 20 per cent. of receipts from the sale of council houses being used to build in the first year. The rest has to go towards the reduction of debts. At least in the past the whole 100 per cent. trickled through. Now it does not and some £8 billion of accumulated capital receipts cannot be used.

The hon. Member for Walthamstow wanted to find out why local councils are unable to use accumulated capital receipts, and why they do not release some of their assets. He should have asked why the Government that he supports will not allow them to use those receipts to reduce housing waiting lists, by building new homes.

I do not want to hear any lessons from the hon. Member for Walthamstow, who peripatetically cycles through Knightsbridge, about the problems of tower blocks. Newham has 110 tower blocks—the largest concentration in the country. Members of Parliament for Newham represent more constituents who live above the tenth floor than is the case in any other borough, or any other three hon. Members. Even though they live above the tenth floor, their feet are firmly on the ground.

As the hon. Gentleman said, the vast majority of them do not want to live in tower blocks, but what can we do? The hon. Gentleman suggested the attractive idea of knocking them all down and building nice little town houses. We would like to do that. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will use his good offices with his Front Bench to allow us to do that in Newham.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay) *rose*——

Mr. Banks: I will give way to my good friend, or rather, to my acquaintance.

Mrs. Gorman: I thank my hon. Friend and acquaintance for giving way. Is he not aware that in

Wandsworth ugly tower blocks have been made into desirable residences by selling them off to young people in the private sector? Now they are lovely.

Mr. Banks: I agree that they may be desirable residences for those people who earn six-figure sums, but those flats are selling for £100,000. What good is that to homeless people living in Wandsworth? Of course that can be done. Most luxury hotels are tower blocks but conditions in them are nothing like the conditions found in tower blocks in Newham. The hon. Lady, despite her red dress, should be more practical when she expresses her views to the House.

The situation is fairly clear. The hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh), who is not in his seat at the moment, said that people get into problems with mortgage arrears because they cannot manage financially, that they mismanage, and that that may result from the family breaking up.

Someone who had an average mortgage advance in London in spring 1988, when interest rates were 9·5 per cent., paid £520 a month. Now, with interest rates at 14·5 per cent., the same home owner is paying £740, a difference of £220, or a 42 per cent. rise. That is not mismanagement by the individual householder, but mismanagement of the economy by the Government and that has caused the ludicrous rate of interest that is now being imposed on home owners and on businesses. That is why people find it difficult to meet their mortgage repayments.

It is not broken marriages that lead to difficulty in paying the mortgage, but difficulty in paying the mortgage that leads to broken marriages. I know that from the personal experiences of some of my constituents, and not, I hasten to add, from my own experience.

My hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) also gave a good description of the situation that we have had to face at our surgeries. We have not made it up. The Minister tried to suggest that my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) had made it up. Somehow, we had created a problem that does not exist except in our vivid imaginations, but the reality is there every day in our offices, and every week in our advice surgeries. People come in and break down crying, "What are we going to do?" All we can do is offer them a tissue and a shoulder to cry on; local authorities cannot solve their problems because of the restrictions placed on house building by the Government.

How has the problem arisen? One does not need a PhD in housing administration to work out why homelessness has doubled since 1979, when that wretched party was first elected to government. It has doubled because the housing investment programme has been slashed by almost 100 per cent.—I think by about 70 to 80 per cent. in real terms.

Ten years ago, Tory and Labour local authorities in London were building 25,000 accommodation units a year. Now they are building around 2,000. That is where the housing problem comes from—the failure of the Government to allow local authorities to use their own resources to try to solve their housing problems.

I could get exceedingly angry, and I regularly do get angry, when I am confronted with problems that I cannot solve. The only way those problems can be solved is to get rid of this wretched Tory Government and get a Labour Government elected who are committed to doing something about the scandal of homelessness in Britain.

In 1989, despite 10 years of Government economic ineptitude that has reduced us to a sideline position in Europe, we are still one of the most prosperous countries in the world. Yet people are sleeping in cardboard boxes a few yards from this place, and thousands of families are living in bed-and-breakfast accommodation, with all that that means in human misery. It is a scandal that should be hung round the necks of the Government until they are booted from office. Homelessness is one of the issues that will ensure that we get rid of them.

6.28 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): When a Minister gets the kind of reception at the Dispatch Box at the beginning of a debate that the Minister for Housing and Planning got today, it is normally because people feel angry or because the Minister is not dealing with the issues seriously and in depth. Today both situations apply. Hon. Members are justifiably angry, and people right across the board are angry about the growing housing crisis in Britain.

The Minister does not have a good case, and that was why there was such a vacuum in his speech, and why there is a vacuum in Government policy. That is why we do not have a proper housing Minister. The Minister spends most of his time privatisating water and his junior spends most of his time privatising the Property Services Agency. Housing is a second-rate issue for them. For the welfare of thousands of people throughout the country, however, it is vital.

The Government have gone seriously wrong. I must tell the Minister and other Conservative Members who have spoken that Labour is not alone in accusing them of having a disastrous policy; nor are housing organisations alone in accusing them of having a disastrous policy.

When the Minister criticised, or rather tried but failed to criticise, my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) about the state of repair of the housing stock, he ignored a report produced by the Conservative-controlled Association of District Councils, which could not have put it more clearly when it said:

> "But neither of these estimates take into account the need for resources to tackle additional dwellings falling into disrepair in the private sector or the further deterioration, while awaiting attention, of stock already in poor condition. It is therefore clear that at the current level of public expenditure the bulk of the stock condition problem cannot be tackled within the next decade."

The ADC called for an increase of a minimum of £35 billion, although the upper end of its proposed scale was £50 billion. Its view is seconded by the Conservative-controlled London Boroughs Association and most Conservative councils throughout the country.

On what is the Government's reputation built? They came up with one or two policies in 1974 which, stupidly, they have stuck to. They said of helping first-time buyers:

> "The first part of our programme for doing this is to reduce the interest rate charged by building societies to home buyers to 9½ per cent. and ensure that it does not rise above that figure . . . Our second proposal is to give first-time purchasers of private houses or flats special help in paying the deposit."

In 1979, they backed off a bit from saying that they would keep mortgage interest so low. They were not specific but, when it came to it, the first thing that they did, in November 1979, was to increase the mortgage interest rate from 11 to 15 per cent. On only two short occasions during

[Mr. Clive Soley]

the past 10 years has the mortgage interest rate been below 10 per cent. That is a measure of the Government's economic policy failure.

The hon Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi), who was the Conservative spokesman on housing at the time, said just before the general election:

> "as soon as we are in office we shall introduce a scheme that we announced not just today but as long ago as three and half years ago.
>
> Under that scheme, the first-time buyer will receive a tax-free bonus of £1 for every £2 saved. Therefore, if he saves only £300, he will receive a bonus of £150 when he buys his house".—[*Official Report*, 20 February 1978; Vol. 944, c. 1047.]

The hon. Gentleman spelt the scheme out in more detail. Neither of those promises was kept. They were both clearly broken.

The Prime Minister said in 1980:

> "I recognise that the Government are borrowing too much. The interesting correlation is that when the Government borrow less . . . interest rates go down. I shall be delighted to have the support of the right hon. Gentleman"—

a reference to the then Leader of the Opposition, now Lord Callaghan—

> "and those who sit behind him to get down Government spending and borrowing, because interest rates will then go down."—[*Official Report*, 22 November 1979; Vol. 974, c. 554.]

What went wrong with the theory? It is a disastrous failure. Interest rates are still incredibly high. The failure has been unique.

Recently, something important in housing happened. The former Secretary of State for the Environment was moved to the Department of Trade and Industry, much to the regret of that Department, and we now have a new, green Secretary of State who does not understand much about housing but knows that he has a crisis on his hands. He is much more in the mould of the previous Conservative Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). Significantly, for the first time in 10 years, as a result of the appointment of the new Secretary of State, instead of going down, the housing investment programme is to go up next year. But what the poor new Secretary of State does not know is that he has already been kiboshed by his predecessor, who put through the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 which will mean that there will still be a cut of no less than 24 per cent. in the HIP.

I am grateful to the Minister for Housing and Planning who, although he may have misquoted me several times, did me the courtesy of quoting me almost word for word when he lifted my Labour party press release in which I spoke about rents going through the roof. One of the things that I recommended to the Conservative party, and have done for a long time, is to enable local authorities to extend the lease-back scheme in the private sector to bring into use the thousands of privately-owned empty properties. Lo and behold, the Minister has done that, using almost my very words. He has, however, done it late, and it appears that there is still no policy because only in November, under the previous Secretary of State for the Environment, the Government said that they would not extend the lease-back scheme.

Those of my hon. Friends who served with me on the Committee stage of the Local Government and Housing Bill will remember that we were told that the lease-back scheme would not be extended, although we pleaded for it. More of a crisis was brought on when the Government put out their new rent guidelines, based on the capital value of houses. That was guaranteed to send rents rocketing.

I put out a press release saying that rents in Mole Valley, which is represented by the chairman of the Conservative party, would increase by a fantastic £5·20 a week in the first year, and by 115 per cent. over a longer period. Then, in a letter dated 8 December 1989, local authorities were told that the Government seemed to have misjudged the situation and that they would like to review it before Christmas. They do not know what they are doing because they do not have a policy. That is the reason for the crisis.

I said years ago what Conservative and Labour councils throughout the country said—"For heaven's sake recognise the fact that you are creating an enormous housing crisis." I repeat, for the benefit of hon. Members who have said that they did not hear any policy statement, that one way in which to tackle the problem is to allow local authorities to use capital receipts. The hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green wanted to do that. He claimed, possibly correctly, to be the first Conservative Member to invent the right to buy. He also said that local authorities should keep the receipts and use them for housing. As I said in Question Time, when the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green pushed for that he was moved to Northern Ireland. The Secretary of State said I was insulting Northern Ireland by saying that. I do not agree. The Prime Minister insulted Northern Ireland and her housing Minister, because he was right.

Sir George Young: Is the hon. Gentleman saying that my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) was the housing Minister? Perhaps he would like to give the dates.

Mr. Soley: I am referring to the first years of the Conservative Government—1979 and 1980.

Sir George Young: I think that the hon. Gentleman will find that, in 1979, my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) was the housing Minister and remained such throughout that Parliament.

Mr. Soley: My dates might be marginally wrong.

Mr. Howard: I can help the hon. Gentleman. The time which the hon. Gentleman has in mind is when my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) was shadow housing spokesman. He was indeed moved to Northern Ireland, not in any sense for the reason that the hon. Gentleman is suggesting, but because the late Airey Neave was assassinated.

Mr. Soley: The latter assertion is not the case, I am sure. It would be much more impressive if, instead of worrying about the dates when the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green spoke on housing matters, the Minister concentrated on the issue, which is the use of capital receipts. If they were used now, we could allow local authorities and housing associations to start building, repairing and renovating again. That would not be significantly inflationary because, as I said to the Minister earlier, the skill crisis in the building industry would not allow us to use the money quickly. It could only be used over several years.

Mr. Howard: If the hon. Gentleman is so certain that capital receipts would not have inflationary consequences and has succeeded in persuading his colleagues of that proposition, why is there no reference to that policy in his party's policy review?

Mr. Soley: In the policy review process, there was never intended to be any detailed statement of that policy—*[Interruption.]* That is right. We were reviewing the thrust, direction and aims of party policy, not the detail. That is coming along and has been given in many of my statements—and the Minister knows it. He need not worry about that.

I turn now to some of the comments made by other Conservative Members. The hon. Member for Gloucester (Mr. French) is a classic example of why the Government have got housing so seriously wrong. He talked about extending the right to buy and about what a marvellous idea it was. He suggested doing it this way, and extending it that way and talked about all the things that we could do to increase it. However, I want to ask the hon. Gentleman a question that he has not answered, asked himself or even thought of. If we sell all the rented properties, where will the sons and daughters of the people who have bought those homes, or the local people, find somewhere to rent? In the hon. Gentleman's own area the local people cannot find places to rent. Those local people, their sons and daughters, the postmen, teachers and others cannot find anywhere to rent because about 1·25 million houses have disappeared from the rented sector in the past 10 years. Half have been sold and not replaced in the council sector and the other half have disappeared from the much-loved private sector. Why? Because the Government have failed to address the issue of housing finance. It does not pay to replace houses for councils, housing associations or the private sector. Therefore, they are all selling their properties. Even now, housing associations are not back to the position they were in in the mid-1970s. How on earth can the housing association movement, which has recently made public statements on this aspect, make up the difference that has come about because of the cuts in local authority housing?

The hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) said that repossessions are not caused by interest rates, or not to any great extent. That would be laughable if it was not so tragic. He said that repossessions were caused mainly by unemployment and marital breakdowns. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) dealt with the point well. Someone with a £40,000 mortgage on which the interest rate was 9·75 per cent. when the mortgage was taken out but which then increased to 13·5 per cent. would have to pay an extra £1,016 per annum. If we are not saying that that can lead to economic distress, what are we saying?

The figures given by the building societies are phenomenal. The figures for repossessions have escalated dramatically. In what was effectively the last year of the Labour Government—the figures carry over to the following year—there were 3,020 repossessions. That was in 1980. Every year thereafter the figure has risen until in 1987—the last year for which figures have been given—repossessions numbered 22,630—a sevenfold increase, which is a far larger increase that that for house purchase and, of course, that figure will increase even more. The dream of home ownership is being turned into the nightmare of bed and breakfast, paid for by the ratepayers who are soon to be the poll tax payers.

Instead of silly schemes and the Minister trying desperately to react by saying, "Take in a lodger to help pay your bills", without recognising that he must change the law to enable that to happen, he should call in the lending societies, including the banks and the other finance companies and say, "One in 10 of all homeless families are homeless because they cannot pay their mortgages. It is unacceptable that such families with children should go into bed and breakfast. Let's call them in and have a system whereby the local authority or the housing associations could buy the property from you, the lending organisations, and convert it into a rented property." I accept that some funds will be needed for that, but the amount would not be enormous.

Alternatively—the Halifax and other building societies are prepared to consider this—we could have the system that I understand was used in the 1930s in which the ownership was converted and the property became a rented property with the lending organisation either managing the property or paying a housing association to do so. There are many other innovative schemes, but all that the Minister can suggest is, "Take in a lodger" because, he says, if things go wrong, it is easier to get them out under the provisions of the 1988 legislation. He says that such people should simply be put into the street——

Mr. Howard *rose*——

Mr. Soley: I shall give way to the Minister in a moment. The Minister said that the Labour party wants to create queues. Well, we did not create the queue for the cardboard boxes, did we? We did not triple, quadruple or whatever the housing list queues, did we? The Conservative party did all that and those queues are a disgrace.

Mr. Howard *rose*——

Mr. Soley: Yes, I shall give way to the Minister on one last occasion.

Mr. Howard: On the subject of lodgers, is it the hon. Gentleman's position that building societies should be encouraged to place obstacles in the path of those who wish to take in lodgers? That was the only point that I addressed in my speech on this matter, so perhaps the hon. Gentleman will tell us his position.

Mr. Soley: Subject to satisfactory safeguards, I have no objection to the Minister, the building societies and the other lending organisations getting together to allow that to happen. However, any such provisions must not mean that when the home owner wants to get rid of an individual or when the building society has to repossess because that idea does not work, those people then become homeless almost overnight, adding to the cardboard box queue.

The hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) should be ashamed of himself for using the example that he did. He is one of those Conservative Members who represent the dinosaur tendency. Anyone who believes that all those homeless and hungry kids who are begging on the streets can get £600 per week for doing that must be out of his tiny little mind. I emphasise that teenage children are begging in the streets and that most of us are

[Mr. Soley]

seeing that for the first time in our lives, because one would have to be 60 or 70 to have seen it before. The vast majority of those young people are desperate.

Prior to being elected to the House in 1979, I was a probation officer in one of the most difficult areas of London, but even with homeless youngsters being unloaded at King's Cross and Euston, I could always find such people a roof over their heads unless they were violent or drunk. That cannot be done now. They have to be told to take their place in the queue for the boxes or to take their place in the queues for council homes——

Mr. Summerson *rose*——

Mr. Soley: I advise the hon. Gentleman that the Government have created a major and drastic housing crisis, the like of which no one in this country has seen since the end of the second world war. That crisis is hitting the home owner, those who rent in both the private and the public sectors, and it is even hitting the Government. They own no fewer than one dozen homes in my constituency where we have one of the worst housing problems in the country. Those properties have been empty for up to 10 years, yet the Government refuse to let the housing associations take them over. I am talking about three and four-bedroomed houses and flats. The Government say, "We are keeping them empty because they are near Wormwood Scrubs prison and in the long term we want to knock them down to provide car parking and landscaping." That is a measure of the Government's disgraceful policy and it will be thrown out with the Government.

6.46 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): What a disgraceful display of synthetic indignation—*[Interruption.]* This three-and-a-half hour debate has been the Opposition's chance to tell us about their housing policies—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."]

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Minister has only got half a sentence out.

Mr. Chope: The Opposition have blown their chance. They have shown that they do not have any coherent housing policy——

Ms. Armstrong *rose*——

Mr. Chope: I shall give way to the hon. Lady in a moment.

The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) is not normally as muddled and incoherent as he has been today, but today he has had to clutch at straws and to rely on some dubious statistics. I shall take just one example of his dubious statistics. I refer to the number of people accepted as homeless by local authorities as a result of mortgage arrears. That number has remained stable over recent years and months——

Mr. Tony Banks: What is it?

Mr. Chope: The proportion of homeless due to mortgage arrears is only 6 per cent., which is down from 10 per cent. three years ago.——

Mr. Battle *rose*——

Mr. Chope: I know that Opposition Members do not want the facts to interfere with their argument——

Mr. Battle: Will the Minister give way on those figures?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Minister is clearly not giving way.

Mr. Chope: I shall give way a number of times, but first I wish to stress the positive side. The Government believe that this has been a successful decade of sustained success in housing. We have won the argument today, as we have throughout the decade. We have increased the quantity and quality of the nation's housing stock. There are now 2 million—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This has been a well-conducted debate. The Minister has a right to make his speech in his own way.

Mr. Chope: This takes me back to just over 10 years ago, when I was the housing chairman in Wandsworth. The Labour party adopted the same tactics then and tried to shout me down and pour cold water on the Conservative housing policies. I am pleased to say that, in a decade of Conservative control in Wandsworth, the proportion of owner-occupation has increased from 27 per cent. to 54 per cent. This year we have seen capital investment by the local authority in Wandsworth of about £100 million. That Conservative council now has control over the best housing stock in inner London as a result of Conservative policies.

I know from experience that the Labour party does not like Conservative policies, because it has not come to terms with the demand for home ownership.

Mr. George Howarth: A few moments ago, the Minister said that this had been a decade of great success for the Government's housing policy. If that is so, why are none of these successes mentioned in the Government's amendment?

Mr. Chope: I know that, in the hon. Gentleman's terms, achieving a massive increase in home ownership and responding to people's demands to exercise home ownership does not constitute a success. The Government have increased the percentage of home ownership to 68 per cent. We still have not gone as far as we would wish, because we know that, of those people under 55, about 90 per cent. still aspire to becoming home owners. However, we are entitled to take stock in this debate and say that our home ownership policies have been extremely successful during this decade.

It is not only in the owner-occupied sector that we have responded to the people's needs and aspirations; 160,000 more units of sheltered accommodation have been made available in the past decade through local authorities and housing associations. There is also a healthy private sector market in sheltered accommodation. Shared ownership —almost unheard of a decade ago—is flourishing under this Government. More than 124,000 houses have been sold under the low-cost home ownership scheme since 1979. We have begun to deregulate the private rented market. We have shorthold and assured tenancies and a business expansion scheme that has attracted much more private investment into the private rented market.

We have been pursuing a host of other imaginative policies during the past 10 years—none more so than the tenants charter, tenants choice, the priority estates project and Estates Action, on which £190 million was spent this year.

We are still coming forward with new ideas—Conservative-controlled councils are coming forward with most of them. One such idea, referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), was cash incentives, pioneered by Conservative councils and taken up by the less imaginative Socialist councils. Those cash incentives have a part to play in solving the homelessness problem.

We have revised the proposals so that we shall now be able to allow generous payments—sometimes more than £20,000—to people who wish to move from their existing council accommodation into the private sector. As has been said, that immediately creates a vacancy that can be used for somebody with a real housing need. That positive policy was put forward by the Government and is being emulated by some of the Socialist housing authorities. Next year, we hope to extend that scheme into the housing association sector, and we hope that about 2,500 lettings will arise from the similar tenants incentive scheme for housing associations.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Is the Minister urging other authorities to follow the example of the loony Right Westminster council and its barbarous decision to sell graveyards and try to turn them into building blocks?

Mr. Chope: It is apparent from the hon. Gentleman's remarks that he has not been in on this debate. If he looks at Westminster city council's housing record, he will find that the council spends more on the repair and maintenance of its council stock per unit than any other council in the country, bar one. That shows that it has a sincere concern for improving the housing conditions in Westminster.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) gave some wise advice to those facing difficulties with their mortgages. He advised them to seek their building society's advice before going into the secondary mortgage market. I hope that his advice will be carefully heeded.

The proposal to extend lodgings and encourage more people to take in lodgers has also been mentioned. I find it amazing that Opposition Members do not think it a good idea to make the best use of the nation's housing stock by encouraging and facilitating the taking in of lodgers by those who wish to do so. There are many people who would like—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is unseemly to shout across the Chamber in this way. The Minister must be given a fair chance to answer this debate.

Mr. Terry Patchett (Barnsley, East): In view of the Minister's enthusiasm for lodgers, how many lodgers is he willing to take?

Mr. Chope: That must be a decision for each individual householder. I have been a lodger in the past, and I have an unsolicited testimonial which says that I was quite a good lodger. I have also taken in lodgers in the past and would do so again. Whether I would take the hon. Gentleman as a lodger is a more difficult question.

It is most important to encourage maximum investment in housing. The Government believe that we should bring public capital investment and private capital investment together to solve the nation's housing problems. During the past decade, there has been a massive increase in private capital investment in housing. Last year it was £14·8 billion—up from £4·7 billion in 1979, a threefold increase. That means that since 1979 public and private capital investment in housing has gone from £8 billion to over £18 billion. The way to provide better quality housing is to get the public and private sectors working together. Good housing flourishes under a Government who recognise that the public and private sectors work together. It also needs a Government who work with the market rather than against it.

We must ensure that our housing stock is used to the full. I am amazed that the scandal of empty properties presided over by Labour councils up and down the country still exists. Hon. Members who represent Lambeth had a cheek to respond in the way that they did, given that Lambeth council presides over so many empty properties.

We must ensure that taxpayers' resources are directed to those in the greatest need. Above all, we want realistic solutions to housing problems. The Opposition have failed to tell us their policies. Their attitude is totally negative. We had the right policies for the 1980s, and we have them for the 1990s as well. I ask the House to reject the motion and accept the amendment.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 214, Noes 279.

Division No. 17] [7.00 pm

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*

Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan

Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Cook and
Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David

Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*

Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas

Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Gregory, Conal
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*

Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Stephen Dorrell.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House 'welcomes Her Majesty's Government's commitment to home ownership throughout the last ten years which has enabled many more people to own their homes; recognises the benefits which have resulted from the introduction of the Right to Buy for council tenants; further recognises that the Government's sound economic policies have played an important part in facilitating the growth in owner-occupation; and urges the Government to maintain those policies in the interests of home owners, first-time buyers and the nation as a whole.'.

Famine (Ethiopia)

Mr. Speaker: I must announce to the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

7.13 pm

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): I beg to move,

That this House deplores the totally inadequate response of Her Majesty's Government to the immediate threat of famine in Ethiopia.

I am sorry that the Minister for Overseas Development is not present. I understand that she is ill. On behalf of Opposition Members I send her our good wishes for a speedy recovery.

As I talk, people are dying in Ethiopia. Everyone now recognises that it is possible to save lives if emergency aid is given swiftly and generously. It is in that context that I open the debate. Britain spends far too little on overseas aid. The United Nations asks all developed countries, including Britain, to spend 0·7 per cent. of their gross national product on overseas aid each year. Some countries meet the target. In 1988 the Governments of Norway, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden and France all spent more than 0·7 per cent. of their GNP on aid. The previous Labour Government were moving steadily towards that target, despite the international economic circumstances of the late 1970s.

When my party left office, United Kingdom aid as a percentage of GNP was 0·52 per cent. Under this Government, the figure has fallen to a meagre 0·32 per cent., less than half the United Nations target and one of the lowest ever recorded for the United Kingdom. So-called Government wets such as the right hon. Members for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison), for Bath (Mr. Patten) and for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker) have been happy to preside as Minister for Overseas Development as the Government have slashed the aid budget as a percentage of GNP year after year since Labour was in office in 1979.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): Does the hon. Lady agree that Labour Governments invariably have a record of increasing GNP very little or not at all, whereas Conservative Governments increase GNP considerably? Is not that a statistical influence on the trend that she suggests? Should we not debate the absolute figures for aid and the direction in which they should go?

Mrs. Clwyd: The hon. Gentleman clearly does not understand the points that I make. If I read out the figures, he will find that they are deeply embarrassing for the Government. It would be useful to put them on record. In 1977, under the Labour Government, United Kingdom aid as a percentage of GNP was 0·444 per cent. In 1978, it was 0·46 per cent. In 1979, it was 0·52 per cent. In subsequent years under a Tory Government, it was 0·35 per cent., 0.43 per cent., 0·37 per cent., 0·33 per cent., 0·33 per cent., 0·31 per cent., 0·28 per cent. and 0·32 per cent. That is the position under the Tory Government compared to the position under a Labour Government.

Mr. Arnold *rose*——

Mrs. Clywd: No, I shall not give way again.

As a result of the Government's cuts in aid, the Third world has lost at least £6·4 billion of aid. Yet the scale of the problems facing developing countries today is massive. Almost 1 billion people in Africa, Asia and South America —a quarter of the world's population—live in absolute

[Mrs. Clywd]

poverty without hope of adequate food or shelter. Millions more face malnutrition, unemployment and disease, often without basic health or social services.

For the poor in the Third world, life is a constant struggle for survival. Third world Governments have had to run to keep up with the need for economic growth. The last few years have not been years of plenty for the Third world but years of suffering and austerity.

In his Autumn Statement, the Chancellor of the Exchequer told us that the United Kingdom net aid programme will increase by 6 per cent. in 1990-91, by 6 per cent. the following year and by 4 per cent. the year after that. In real terms that means that the aid programme is likely to decline even further over the next three years. It is unlikely to keep pace with inflation, unless one believes the Treasury's constant optimistic forecasts. Meanwhile Britain continues to pay lip service to the United Nations target of 0·7 per cent. of GNP. During the 1983 general election campaign, the Prime Minister pledged:

> "When economic circumstances permit, we shall move towards the United Nations target of 0·7 per cent. of GNP."

Earlier this year, she told the House:

> "we now have a higher standard of living than we have ever known. We have a great budget surplus."—*[Official Report; 28 February 1989; Vol. 148, c. 154-55.]*

It is so great that we have now fallen further and further behind the United Nations target and the levels of aid given by other major industrialised countries. In the league table of all 18 western aid givers, Britain, to its shame, dropped to 14th place last year. As a result, Britain was singled out for criticism by the other western donor countries when a committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development argued:

> "the time has come to reverse the downward trend in the UK's Overseas Development Aid/GNP ratio . . . and to make sustained progress towards the 0·7 per cent. of GNP, ODA target."

In 1988 the Foreign Affairs Select Committee recommended that the aid budget should increase in line with the nation's increasing wealth and that the Government should set a timetable for achieving that target. However, in reply to my question of 7 December, the Secretary of State was extremely coy and referred me to an earlier reply from the Prime Minister dated 6 June. She was asked:

> "when Her Majesty's Government expect to achieve the United Nations target of 0·7 per cent. gross national product for overseas aid."

Her reply was:

> "The Government accept this target in principle but like previous Administrations and many other donors are not able to set a date for achieving it. Progress towards it must depend upon developments in the economy and other claims on our resources."—*[Official Report, 6 June 1989; Vol. 154, c. 129.]*

I am pleased that aid to eastern Europe has been additional to the aid budget. I hope that the Minister can give us specific assurances tonight that all future aid to eastern Europe will be additional to aid levels currently planned.

The threat of widespread famine is sweeping northern Ethiopia again. It is the third famine in the past 10 years. The average yields from this month's grain harvest in Tigray and Eritrea are only 15 per cent. of the normal level. Grain prices have more than doubled and starvation has already claimed its first victims among small children and the old.

The threat of famine is again the result of droughts in Eritrea, Tigray and Wollo, and the civil war which has been continuing for the past 25 years—exactly the same combination which led to the massive famine of 1984-85 and the near famine of 1987-88. Many people who gave so generously in response to the famine of 1984-85 through Band Aid, Live Aid and Sport Aid must have hoped that such a terrible situation would never happen again. Why is it happening again? The continuing war has devastated food production, dramatically limited long-term agricultural programmes and forced significant migrations of people even in times of good harvests. Failure of the rains in all but three of the past 10 years and a severe drought this year have meant that between 60 and 100 per cent. of crops have been lost in some areas.

The Foreign Affairs Select Committee in its excellent report on famine in the Horn of Africa predicted in 1988 that there was a serious danger of a major catastrophe in northern Ethiopia on a far greater scale than the famine of 1984-85. The report stated:

> "An impression may have been created in the donor countries that, since so many lessons have been learnt, the horrors of 1984-85 would not recur. This would be dangerously false optimism . . . But droughts will occur again —the rains have failed or been inadequate in 3 of the last 4 years—and with a fast-growing population, poor farming techniques, widespread deforestation and land degradation, the consequent famines are likely to be increasingly severe . . . And by each successive drought the resilence of the people and of the land is diminished. It is a spiral which, if unbroken, must result in tragedy."

There is still time to avert that tragedy and ensure that as few people die as possible of the 4 million whom the aid agencies say are now at risk.

Ethiopia needs more than 600,000 tonnes of emergency food over the coming months, on top of the 450,000 tonnes it needs every year to cover its chronic food deficit. The United Nations world food programme, which estimates overall needs, urgently contacted aid agencies on 9 December saying that world donors have pledged only 30 per cent. of the total food requested. In theory, Ethiopia and the international community are both physically better prepared to face the emergency than in 1984, but in practice the awful reality is that thousands could die as the innocent victims of war, famine and indifference.

Although the country's main ports of Assab and Massawa have steadily increased their capacity since 1984-85 and can handle as much as 800,000 tonnes of food a year, the problem is that food shipped to the ports for distribution through Government channels cannot, as things stand at present, reach more than a quarter of the people in need. Outside Government-held areas are 2·5 million people in Tigray which is entirely controlled by the Tigray People's Liberation Front. A further 1·5 million of those most seriously affected are in Eritrea, mainly in areas held by the Eritrean People's Liberation Front. In both Tigray and Eritrea there are local aid organisations whose track record on distributing food and other aid is acknowledged by Western aid agencies. The two organisations are ERA and REST. This morning I received a telex from REST which states:

> "The latest expatriate monitor to visit the affected areas has reported that some people are already foraging for food, digging up wild bulbs and roots. He has confirmed that individual food stocks are nearly exhausted in many areas and that funds are urgently needed now for internal purchase as the timing is all important. More food shipments are desperately needed as soon as possible."

At present several western aid agencies are involved in channelling food through these local agencies from Port Sudan, because it is absolutely imperative that the people most in need must be reached now. Obviously, that can be done best through an open-roads policy, using the northern route of Massawa, which is Government held, in Eritrea to supply a route from Government-held Asmara down the main road to Mekele and Tigray and to Weldiya in Wollo and intermediate points. The Tigray People's Liberation Front is said to be only 90 miles from the capital, Addis. President Mengistu is thought likely to take the view, as he has in the past, that food aid would only strengthen his enemies. While the British Government and others must urgently renew their appeals for an opening up of the supply routes, it must be somewhat unrealistic to expect that to happen quickly.

Reports from Kenya yesterday claim that Ethiopia has agreed to open up the corridors in the north of the country to allow food aid to reach the 4 million people threatened with starvation. But there is no confirmation yet that terms have been agreed. The fear is that hunger will continue to be used as a weapon of war. I should be grateful to the Minister if he could tell us whether he has any news about whether the Ethiopian Government and the rebels have agreed a policy on that. Several calls to the Ethiopian embassy and elsewhere today have failed to obtain official confirmation. According to all the aid agencies, in the event of the Ethiopian Government continuing to refuse access or of the rebel groups refusing to stop fighting, a cross-border operation from the Sudan will be essential.

Some food comes from eastern Sudan and some from abroad through Port Sudan and on to Eritrea and Tigray. As many hon. Members know, that means relying on truck convoys, late at night to escape Government aircraft bombing them, travelling more than 600 miles on rough roads. One accepts that it is politically difficult for donor Governments to bypass the Ethiopian Government in this way, but a cross-border operation from the Sudan must be used as fully as possible. I am glad that the British Government now accept that argument.

What, then, are the needs of the people inside Ethiopia? Everyone agrees that aid is needed now to avoid a repeat of the harrowing scenes of 1984, when hundreds of thousands starved to death and the nightly pictures on television of babies dying in the arms of their widowed mothers brought home the full horror of the tragedy. At least 600,000 tonnes of food and other essential supplies are needed as soon as possible, but already people have begun to emigrate from the areas where there is no food. One lesson that was learned the last time around was that it was uneconomical and socially destructive for people to leave their homes and their land. Thousands of people died on their way to feeding centres or through the spread of contagious diseases in refugee camps and feeding centres.

A doctor responsible for health care in Eritrea came to see me yesterday. He said:

> "Anyone who can walk, walks away from death if they can."

The truth is that many people would not have died last time if food had been brought to them in time. It is, therefore, vital to take food to the people as soon as possible.

The war is going badly for the Government. They have been involved in negotiations with the rebels. Jimmy Carter and Julius Nyerere have both become involved in negotiations with the EPLF and the Government. Talks have been held in Atlanta and Nairobi, but as yet have reached no conclusion. The Italian Government are mediating in talks between the TPLF and the Ethiopian Government and one round of talks has taken place in Rome. It is clearly in everyone's interest for a monitored ceasefire to be negotiated as soon as possible. The talks require all the backing that they can get.

What can and should the United Kingdom do now? It can call for a speeding up of peace discussions between the Ethiopian Government, the TPLF and the EPLF. It can press the Ethiopian Government and the rebels to accept an open-roads agreement. The United Nations must play a leading role in negotiating that. It can support the cross-border food and agriculture rehabilitation programme. It can make money available for internal purchase of food where that is possible. It should obtain maximum support from the EEC member states for those objectives.

As a direct result of the famine crisis, the United Kingdom has pledged a meagre £2 million, and that was only the day after the BBC reports on Ethiopia began to appear on television. I raised the matter on a point of order on 27 November and called for a statement from the Government. The fact that the Government have been indifferent and very slow off the mark is illustrated by a letter that the director general of the Save the Children Fund sent to *The Independent* on 29 November. He said:

> "We welcome the publicity from Michael Buerk on BBC Television on the possibility of famine recurring in parts of northern Ethiopia. A number of voluntary agencies in Britain, including ourselves, have been warning of this problem for the past two months. It is sad, but perhaps not surprising, that it requires dramatic pictures on television to propel our own government into a response."

What does that £2 million actually mean? It would not be quite fair to say that the Government do not care tuppence for the starving—they actually care three and a half pence, the amount from each person in the United Kingdom that makes up that £2 million, which itself will buy only 1 per cent. of the emergency food aid so desperately needed. Yet at the same time, the Government quite easily found £40 million to spend on advertising water privatisation in pursuit of their own dogma.

Only last week War on Want applied for £300,000 to buy food inside Tigray. Its application was turned down by the Government because, they said, there was no money in the kitty. That may be true, but the Minister for Overseas Development and the Minister who is here to speak on her behalf tonight must know that if they had the political clout they could obtain the money from the Government's overall contingency fund, which exists for precisely this sort of emergency and which this year stands at more than £2 billion.

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): One of the recommendations of the Select Committee has always been that when there is a disaster the Treasury's contingency fund should be used. Would it not be better if the hon. Lady was fair with her figures? The £2 million is an additional £2 million, and brings the total this year to £13 million, which is a rather more generous figure than that suggested by the hon. Lady.

Mrs. Clwyd: The point that the hon. Gentleman obviously missed, even though I stressed it forcefully, was that in direct response to the famine crisis the Government gave only £2 million.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. William Waldegrave): I had intended to respond to this point in my speech. The hon. Lady is digging herself into a pit. The dates will easily show that what the hon. Lady said is not true. The £13 million is a response to the famine, and the Government responded long before she raised her point of order and long before this debate.

Mrs. Clwyd: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman will find it difficult to prove his point. A press release from the Overseas Development Administration, in response to the threat of famine in Ethiopia, makes it clear that the £2 million relief aid was a direct response to the worsening position in Ethiopia. The other money would have been given in any event, and was not provided in direct response to the famine crisis.

What sort of world do we live in that we, in the rich developed countries, can turn our faces away from the suffering of the Third world? We spend £500 million each year on special diets to lower our calorie consumption while the world's poorest 400 million people are so undernourished that they are likely to suffer stunted growth, mental retardation or death. As water from a single spring in England is shipped in bottles to the prosperous around the world, 1·9 billion people drink dirty and contaminated water. More than half of humanity lacks sanitary toilets.

Are we again to depend on the generosity of the British people to put their hands in their pockets once more for the starving of Ethiopia? They have already contributed £1 million in response to the television broadcast last week. Is it too much to expect the British Government to make the proper response to the 4 million people who are so desperately crying out for our help? Whatever the Government do or do not do, the next Labour Government will reverse the cuts made in aid spending since 1979. We shall aim to more than double the aid budget to reach the United Nations target of 0·7 per cent. of gross national product within five years, the lifetime of a single Parliament. We shall also review the procedures for emergency relief.

The disastrous famine that hit much of Africa in the early 1980s showed the need for much more effective emergency relief within our programme for aid and development. We shall discuss contingency plans and early warning systems with other donors and the Governments of countries vulnerable to famine and other disasters. Unlike the present Government, we shall also be prepared to use money from outside the aid budget—from the overall contingency reserve—to provide urgent emergency relief during a major crisis such as the Ethiopian famine. That is because we believe that sharing our wealth and feeding hungry people is part of our wider responsibility as citizens of the world. It is a view which we believe is shared by the majority of the British people.

7.39 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. William Waldegrave): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and add instead thereof:

'welcomes the speed and effectiveness with which Her Majesty's Government has responded to the threat of famine in Northern Ethiopia through the provision of food and emergency aid; and strongly endorses its diplomatic action aimed at persuading the parties to the civil wars in Ethiopia to seek a negotiated end to these conflicts and to facilitate the transport of food to those at risk of famine.'.

I had hoped that on this, of all subjects, we would not go straight into a political argy-bargy. Such points can be easily made. A Labour Government could easily have increased aid as a percentage of GNP simply by making the GNP smaller. However, it is easy to show that in absolute terms the Government have done extremely well.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) for her kind words about my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development and I shall pass those on to her. I found little to disagree with in the hon. Lady's political analysis, but one point on which I shall disagree relates to the local purchase of food in Tigray. However, I am afraid that she was either misled by those who have done her research for her——

Mrs. Clwyd: I do my own research.

Mr. Waldegrave: In that case, the hon. Lady is mistaken about what is happening this year.

We are deeply concerned, with the other donor countries, to prevent a repetition of the appalling suffering that we witnessed five years ago. I had hoped, although it may be impossible with the Leader of the Opposition on the Front Bench, that there would not be any party political point-scoring this evening. Opposition Members, including the hon. Member for Cynon Valley, know a great deal about the subject and we had hoped to hear from them positive ideas and practical suggestions to which we could respond.

We welcome the debate for two reasons. First, it enables us to put right some of the misunderstandings in the speech made by the hon. Member for Cynon Valley. Secondly, as the hon. Lady said, the British people will no doubt again wish to respond generously, and this debate, along with the many other activities taking place around the country, will help to focus the nation's attention on the situation. There is nothing wrong with that. As the hon. Lady said, the first £1 million has already been raised. I see nothing to complain about in that. It is admirable.

Let us consider what the Government have been doing. Rather before the hon. Lady took up the subject, we were sending aid, and that is important. About 3 million people in Eritrea and Tigray face the threat of famine over the coming months. The organisations concerned estimate that about 600,000 tonnes of food aid will be needed between now and next October—that is also important —to rescue those people. The hon. Lady is incorrect to say that about 30 per cent. of that has been pledged. She may not have noticed that the Americans have added a further 100,000 tonnes, which means that more than 50 per cent. has been pledged. In the immediate situation, that is probably enough because, as I think the hon. Lady will agree, the 600,000 tonnes will be needed between now and next October.

The hon. Lady's analysis rightly focused on the real problem of getting the food to the people who need it against a background of civil war. As she rightly said, at least half the people at risk are in rebel-held areas.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the first calculations of how much aid would be needed during the previous famine were under-estimates and that as the famine developed it became clear that rather more would be needed? Is the

Minister satisfied that the estimate that he has given is correct and that the 50 per cent. that he claims has been pledged is 50 per cent. of the amount that is really needed rather than of an initial estimate?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman is right. The estimates will be revised if the situation worsens. I think that he will agree, however, that the last famine was the one that did not happen. As the hon. Member for Cynon Valley rightly said, the international effort three years ago averted a famine. It is worth paying tribute to the aid organisations and to the Governments involved. Since then, the civil war has worsened and created further problems, which we are now trying to address. The rebels—the EPLF and the TPLF—hold a much greater area of country, particularly the TPLF which has much greater control over the roads and, as the hon. Lady said, is 80 or 90 miles from Addis Ababa.

Channels exist for the transport of food into the rebel-held areas of Eritrea and Tigray from Sudan, but, as the hon. Lady recognised, there are formidable logistical problems in view of tonnages and distances involved, the shortage of transport and the bombings. However optimistic one is about the 1,000-mile round trip, it will not be possible to meet all Tigray's needs in that way. We shall have to see what can be done using that route. The hon. Lady will understand if, for obvious reasons, some of the methods and routes used by the international organisations with British Government support are not described in too much detail.

The Government's objective is simple, now as in the last famine—the famine that never was. The objective is to avert the famine. We are taking action on two fronts. We are providing food and relief assistance for the aid programme and we are acting through diplomatic channels in concert with European partners and others to try to ensure that the flow of supplies to those at risk of starvation is not hindered by the continuing war. That is the crucial aspect, as the hon. Lady recognised.

The hon. Lady was unfair, however, when she said that our response was belated or that it came only after television coverage or her points of order on 27 November. If the hon. Lady had listened to the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development on 4 December, at column 19 of *Hansard*, she would know that the £2 million of emergency aid announced at the end of October was by no means our first response to the famine. For example, the allocation of nearly 7,000 tonnes of cereal, which my right hon. Friend approved for Eritrea as early as August when the first signs of impending famine became apparent, was one of the first to arrive in the country—almost the first part of the international response. Since then, we have provided further food aid, bringing our total to more than 27,000 tonnes. Nor is the latest contribution of £2 million likely to be our last. We shall continue to play our part. As the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) rightly said, as the dimensions of the famine and the possibilities of getting food to the people are further assessed, the British Government, along with other Governments, will respond.

Mr. Michael Welsh (Doncaster, North): Getting from A to B in Tigray is difficult. Even money may not achieve that and people may die if something is not done. It may be difficult to get from Sudan. It may take many lorries, but are the lorries there? However much money there is, without lorries the food cannot be taken to those unfortunate people. Are arrangements being made to ensure that lorries will be there to transport food to the people within weeks rather than months?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman is right. Part of the recent extra money went specifically towards trucks and lorries for the cross-border routes, about which we do not want to go into too much detail, and inside the country. That has been a particular part of the British effort.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): The Minister has said that it is unlikely that the last money has been allocated and I, like everybody else, am encouraged by that. In any future expenditure, will money be provided directly to the Relief Society of Tigray and to the Eritrean Relief Association? That may be an unusual action for a Government, but those bodies are best placed to purchase such food surpluses as exist within Eritrea and Tigray and to ensure that the food available in those provinces is allocated in the shortest possible time. Otherwise, people will starve. Will the Minister give an assurance that that difficult but necessary initiative will be taken?

Mr. Waldegrave: We certainly do not rule out anything but the right hon. Gentleman will recognise that there are real difficulties. If one provides money for local purchase, particularly in the Tigrayan area, there is the danger that the TPLF, which controls the area, will use it to buy arms. Worse than that, we may create an incentive for the TPLF to obtain local food supplies and then sell them. However, if we can be assured that we are doing good, we do not rule out any mechanism.

Mr. Jim Lester: We have looked at the problem several times in the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs. The real difficulty is not just providing the money, but monitoring whether the money provided is used for food and whether that food is then distributed.

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend confirms my point on the basis of his considerable experience. It would be dreadful if we were inadvertently allowing money to go directly or indirectly into the coffers of those whose civil wars are creating a large part of the disaster.

The £13·5 million committed so far this year in Ethiopia includes assistance for refugees and our share of the cost of relief aid provided by the European Community. That shows the other side of the case put by the hon. Member for Cynon Valley. Britain has provided nearly £150 million in aid since the onset of the last major famine in 1984. That includes more than 200,000 tonnes of food aid. The programme is not niggardly.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Waldegrave: Perhaps I had better continue, as this is not a long debate and I have given way many times.

A senior Overseas Development Administration official visited Ethiopia in October to assess the situation at first hand. In the light of the information that he brought back, we took immediate action to alert our European Community partners and others—including the United States and the Soviet Union, which is an important player having at one time or another supported all three of the organisations involved and which still has a close

[Mr. Waldegrave]

relationship with the Ethiopian Government—to the likely extent of the problem. We urged them to use all possible influence with all the parties in the civil conflict to allow relief supplies across the lines without hindrance.

I was in Addis Ababa on 8 November for a briefing from our excellent ambassador, Mr. Walker. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development gave a detailed account to the House on 4 December of the subsequent steps which she took in Rome, Brussels, Washington and Paris to reinforce the earlier message through the diplomatic channels. Last weekend, at the European Council in Strasbourg, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister joined the other Community Heads of Government in the Community in issuing a clear statement of the Community's deep concern. I am glad to say that that was largely a British initiative.

The Soviet Government were approached in London and Moscow and have also directed the attention of the Ethiopian authorities to the seriousness of the problem. Probably no other Government carry so much weight with the Ethiopians.

I have stressed the importance—as did the hon. Member for Cynon Valley—of access across the lines for relief supplies if food in the amounts required is to reach those who need it in the rebel-held areas. Hon. Members will have seen reports, to which the hon. Member for Cynon Valley referred, that President Moi of Kenya told an independence rally in Nairobi yesterday that President Mengistu had agreed to open the roads. We have been in close touch with Nairobi and Addis Ababa to see whether that is so. However, like the hon. Lady, we have not secured clear confirmation of it yet, although we have indications that it is under serious and genuine consideration in Addis Ababa. If it is, let us take this opportunity for the House to add to the international pressure and say to the Ethiopians that it is essential that they should open the roads. I am sure that hon. Members from both sides of the House will say that with all the passion at our disposal. In the pressing time scale and because of the logistical difficulties of the cross-border routes, that is the only way to bring real hope to the large numbers of people involved.

Mr. Timothy Raison (Aylesbury): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend is an expert.

Mr. Raison: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Surely it would be much easier to give a strong message to the Ethiopians and others concerned if the House did not have to have a Division on a foolish motion. Will my hon. Friend tell the House what the European Community is doing in terms of food provisions as it has enormous stocks and its role is essential?

Mr. Waldegrave: I hinted that I agreed with my right hon. Friend in what I said earlier. If the non-governmental organisations had a genuine case showing that the Government were failing disastrously, it would be legitimate for the Opposition to press us, but that is not the case. We have had meetings today—which my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development would have chaired if she had been well but which were chaired by an official—with all the principal NGOs, and they are not saying that there is something dramatically wrong with the Government's programme. They welcome the steps that we have taken and we are working closely with them.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Does the Minister not think it unusual for the right hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison) to complain about the Opposition's view on this when in his open letter to his successor—now the Secretary of State for the Environment—he said that the only discussion that he had with the Prime Minister on these issues was on the day she sacked him? Surely it is appropriate that when there are clear divisions in the House they should be expressed.

Mr. Waldegrave: There are bound to be arguments about the total level of the aid programme. On this programme, as on every other, the Opposition will say that they would spend more. Over the past few years, however, there has been no serious criticism from the experts about the organisation of emergency relief. My right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury, my right hon. Friend the present Secretary of State for the Environment and my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development have so improved the arrangements for emergency relief that that area of criticism is not the right one on which to launch a division in the House. However, I would not say that there are not areas in which any Government could do better.

The ODA is in regular daily contact with the main British voluntary agencies working in Ethiopia. I have reported on the meeting that took place today. The NGOs were appreciative of the Government's efforts so far. The voluntary agencies have a vital role to play in channeling emergency aid—that which we provide and the funds that they raise—to the hungry. Their expertise and experience are vital. They are an asset to which hon. Members on both sides of the House will join me in paying tribute.

I have spoken of what the Government have done and are doing. I offer no apologies for our record of response to the intense danger of famine which we hope can still be averted. We have done what I am sure the hon. Member for Cynon Valley would have done if she stood in the place of my right hon. Friend the Minister. We have acted promptly and effectively in response to the signals of approaching famine and it did not require television pictures or public pressure to stir us into action.

Mrs. Clwyd: I read the letter from the director general of the Save the Children Fund in which he specifically argued that the Government's response had not been prompt and that they had responded only after the BBC films by Michael Buerk. Does the Minister have an answer to that? Surely it is not correct to say that the aid agencies are happy with the speed and quantity of the Government's response.

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Lady has perhaps not read the response given by my right hon. Friend the Minister on 4 December. She was prevented from being at the meeting today and although I was not there I have had reports from the officials who were. The attempts to allege that there is a campaign by the NGOs against the Government will not run. It is not commensurate with the scale of events to try to make them run.

The hon. Lady's main point, although she spoiled it a little by her factionalism, was that we in this House passionately wish to do all that we can to avoid the threat of widespread famine and starvation in Ethopia. She made a good point—that it is essential to try to prevent people from moving. There is an additional reason for that, which the hon. Lady did not mention—that if people move they do not sow crops for next year in places where they may grow, thus possibly creating a further cycle of crop failure.

The immense generosity of people in the West, the British people among them and the formidable response of Western Governments, who succeeded in averting the last threatened famine and, pray God, will do so this time as well, must not disguise the fact that the key to the problem lies in the hands of the Ethopians, on both the Government and the rebel side. Civil war does not cause drought and crop failure, but it is a serious and unnecessary obstacle to efforts to alleviate the effects of natural disasters.

Bob Geldof was right when he said that if there is a famine this year, it will be man made. In the long term, the civil war is a drain on the country's meagre resources of money, energy and talent which would be far better devoted to the task of working to provide the infrastructure and conditions necessary to break the cycle of famine.

We therefore welcome the opening of talks between the Government and the two main rebel groups. Peace is still beyond the horizon and the process is a fragile one. We, on both sides of the House, can but urge the parties to the talks to persevere, to be flexible and, above all, to keep talking in a way which leads to action. Lives—millions of them—ultimately depend on that.

8.1 pm

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): It is difficult to believe that it is five years since famine in Ethiopia first hit world headlines. At that time I went to Sudan and Ethiopia with the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs. Despite the fact that the Committee had, and still has, a Conservative majority, our report was very critical of the Government's inadequate response to the famine in Ethiopia. We referred to the generous response of the British people, which was due to people such as Bob Geldof and the public appeals that were made by non-governmental organisations and other voluntary organisations. However, our report stated clearly that, sad to say, the generosity of the British people had not been matched by the British Government.

The Committee went to Ethiopia again last year. In our updated report on famine in the Horn of Africa, we said that there was serious danger of a major catastrophe in northern Ethiopia and that it would be on a far greater scale than that in 1984-85. The Government and the House cannot, therefore, claim that they were not warned, yet in Tigray alone approximately 2·5 million people are threatened with famine.

Many people who put their hands into their pockets five years ago and gave generously deserve an answer to the question, why are people still starving? Some people have attempted to blame it on the weather. There are many climatic problems in that part of the world, but we cannot hold up our hands in horror and blame it all on the weather, as though famine were an act of God. It is not. It is a consequence of man's inhumanity to man. It is up to us to find a solution. The developed countries have a particular responsibility to find a solution. The many climatic difficulties in that part of the world could and should have been overcome had the developed countries invested more money in long-term agricultural projects to regenerate the economy.

The Relief Society of Tigray said that it received only 6·2 per cent. of the budget that it requested for agricultural programmes. Wars continue in Ethiopia as a whole. They have reached the stage where Mengistu, backed by the Soviet Union and, apparently, by Israel and North Korea, is spending over 50 per cent. of his national budget on military and related expenditure. Even worse, he is apparently using famine as a weapon of war. He is trying to starve the people into submission. His forces are in control of the Red sea ports of Assab and Massawa, which makes it very difficult, if not impossible, for food to reach the people who are most in need. The only reasonable alternative is to use the Relief Society of Tigray to get food into Ethiopia from Sudan by means of a cross-border operation.

What can the British Government do? I understand that there are those in Government circles, including Ministers, who believe that for diplomatic reasons it is difficult, if not impossible, for the British Government to become over-involved in Ethiopia's internal affairs. That is a strange position for the Government and the Prime Minister to be in. It would be ironic if the iron lady, the erstwhile scourge of Communism, was prepared to stand by while people starved to death because she was afraid of causing offence to a discredited, self-styled Marxist regime.

It is about time that a tougher line was taken in public against the Ethiopian Government. Mengistu should be told bluntly that we are not prepared to stand idly by while thousands of people die. We should get off the fence. We should give financial help and all the other assistance that we can give to the Relief Society of Tigray's cross-border operation from Sudan.

I accept entirely the point about the need to monitor the exercise. There is no hard evidence that the Relief Society of Tigray is using money to buy armaments. If, however, it is feared that the money that has been given to alleviate starvation is being misdirected towards the purchase of arms, efficient monitoring would help to alleviate that fear. It seems to me from our contact with the Relief Society of Tigray, through the Select Committee and personally, that REST has the organisation, the track record and the proven experience to carry that out. Since 1984-85 REST has been involved in the repatriation of 170,000 people from Sudan to their homes in Tigray. It achieved that without riot police with riot helmets, riot gear, truncheons and everything else we have seen in Hong Kong recently under the auspices of the British Government who are treating people like caged animals,

Once again Christmas is approaching and the Prime Minister would have us believe that we are living in a Christian country. Given recent events, it appears that Britain's reputation throughout the world is heading for the gutter. Perhaps we should try to salvage something of that reputation by showing a more humane attitude in our treatment of people elsewhere in the world, particularly in Ethiopia where they are starving. I hope that the message that comes from tonight's debate is that the whole House demands urgent and firmer action from the British Government.

8.11 pm

Sir John Stanley (Tonbridge and Malling): I suppose that for all of us occasional sights are so etched in our memories that they will remain with us for the rest of our lives. One such sight for me is the visit I made almost exactly five years ago as Minister for the Armed Forces to the children's hospital at Mekele in Ethiopia at the height of the famine. The press dubbed the children there as the "Belsen babes". For once the press may have indulged in understatement. I suspect that at Belsen the SS, with their grim attention to efficiency, would have ensured that the children there did not suffer malnutrition to the point at which they were no longer able to walk to their deaths.

The children that I saw in Mekele had long since lost the capacity to walk. The malnutrition that they suffered had resulted in the total wastage of their body muscles to the point at which they could no longer move. The worst cases lay there unable to turn over, raise an arm or a hand or even move their heads. Children of 10 and 11 lay there with faces of 70 or 80-year-olds. They were living, inert skeletons. One wondered at the appalling pain and agony that they must have suffered to reach that state of total body decay yet still be alive.

Happily, during the same visit, I saw many other children in a very different condition. Those were the children in the food distribution centres. They ran about, shouted, jostled and played and they had laughter instead of agony in their eyes. For those children relief had come in time. In 1984-85, when the relief arrived, the distribution was carried out extremely well and eventually the food arrived in abundance. I do not accept the criticisms made by the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) about the scale of the British contribution when the relief arrived five years ago. Our operation was carried out with conspicuous skill and efficiency by our armed services.

The inescapable fact was, however, that five years ago our contribution and that of every other western developed country came too late for the many who died and for the very many who will suffer permanent handicaps in their bones and joints for the rest of their lives as a result of serious malnutrition in childhood.

What will be the outlook for the children and adults of Ethiopia in the weeks and months ahead? In the early months of 1990, will we see large numbers of so-called "Belsen babes" as I saw at Mekele hospital five years ago, or will we see children who have been spared the ravages of malnutrition as a result of a satisfactory programme of food aid? Hon. Members on both sides of the House fervently trust that we will see only the latter group of children and adults.

I urge Ministers to make every possible effort to ensure that the British contribution is sufficient and do everything in their power to ensure that it gets through. In our modern world of affluence in Europe, North America and Australasia, with speedy delivery of food supplies, there should be no question but that famine should be part of the history books. There should be no place for mass famine in the modern world. It is unacceptable and intolerable that any group of people in any country should be allowed to starve to death.

8.17 pm

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): The right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) made an extremely moving speech which was compelling in its honesty and force. I have not seen the sights that he described, except on television, but I can well believe that they must leave a deep scar which nothing can remove. If the right hon. Gentleman had been talking with the authority of a Minister, I would not be contemplating voting for the official Opposition motion tonight.

I understand that a fair estimate of the position in Ethiopia is that some 4 million people are at risk of starvation between now and the end of March, and, more urgently, between 800,000 and 850,000 are at risk of starvation between now and the end of January. That is the scale and proportion of the problem. As a number of hon. Members have said, that is pretty horrific.

What can we effectively do? The Minister referred to an article in *The Independent* today about the statement by President Moi of Kenya that he had

> "asked President Mengistu . . . of Ethiopia to accept opening the corridors . . . He has accepted."

The Minister said that the Government have no firm confirmation of that. Obviously, it is difficult to press the Minister further. As an opposition Member, I find it difficult to understand how the Kenyan head of state can be reported as making that categorical statement without our Government being able to confirm whether it is true. Obviously, if it is true, it is excellent news.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: As I understood the reports, it was a question of its being conditional on other things happening. The problem is whether those conditions are being met.

Sir Russell Johnston: The report, which inevitably has been abbreviated, said that President Moi had asked the "rebel" leaders in Tigray and Eritrea to do the same—whether one should call them rebels is a matter for discussion. In other words, there would be a ceasefire, as the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) said. The overland routes can be opened without a ceasefire.

The Minister of State said, as has the Minister for Overseas Development previously—I hope that the right hon. Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker) will soon recover from her flu—that the Government had been using a lot of diplomatic pressure. On 4 December 1989, the Minister for Overseas Development said that Britain was stepping up

> "our continuing diplomatic efforts with the United States, the Soviet Union, our European Community partners, certain Arab countries."—[*Official Report*, 4 December 1989: Vol. 163, c. 19.]

and so on. How seriously are the Government pursuing those efforts? Are they simply official-to-official talks or are they Minister-to-Minister talks? What is the objective of this pressure? The Minister was right to say that the Soviet Union was central to the matter. The Soviet Union is in a much more responsive mood than she has been since perhaps the war.

Mr. Jim Lester: When the four of us visited Ethiopia to produce the report, which has been widely quoted, we talked to the Soviet ambassador in Addis Ababa and made the same remarks that had been made consistently year in, year out, about applying pressure to all three protagonists. The ambassador said, "We do all that we can, but you must remember that the Ethiopians are a proud people." No one can instruct a sovereign Government to do what we want, even though all of us are willing these changes to happen.

Sir Russell Johnston: I take that point. The Ethiopians are a proud people and it is not possible to instruct them on what to do. But we can turn off the weapons tap. President Mengistu needs the weapons and he gets them from the Soviet Union. We should remember the involvement of other eastern European countries. As I understand it, the police services are run by the Bulgarians and military intelligence by the East Germans. Other eastern European peoples are involved. The Saudis are the essential people to the Tigray People's Liberation Front and the Eritreans. It is a matter not just of having discussions with the individual Governments involved but of finding a way to bring them together. The British Government would make a valuable contribution if they tried to get the interested parties together—the Russians, the eastern Europeans, the Saudis and the European Community—to offer a guarantee on the movement of food into these areas. One should not forget that in 1984 or 1985 a United Nations convoy was blown up by the Tigray forces because they suspected that it was an armed convoy, although it was not.

Mr. Lester: It was 1987-88.

Sir Russell Johnston: I am sorry—that happened in 1987-88. Although inevitably we are concentrating on President Mengistu, free movement depends not just on him but on the co-operation of others, as the hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) said. Obviously, a monitored ceasefire would be much better, but a solution can be found in other ways.

The hon. Members for Cynon Valley and for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) said that people were determined that the famine would not return after 1984-85, but that it has. The civil war is the main reason—if it is a civil war, because it can be argued that it is a liberation war—but there are other contributory factors, one of which is the British Government's reluctance to use the internal distribution system in Tigray and Eritrea. It has been argued that the money could be used for other purposes and the food used in the wrong way, but the circumstances are such that risk should be taken. Indeed, it should have been taken.

The hon. Member for Falkirk, West said that there was insufficient investment following the 1984-85 famine. Rehabilitation of the areas was inadequate. There was no proper replenishment of, for example, the oxen stock. I am told—I do not know whether it is right or wrong—that one reason was that the Overseas Development Administration persuaded the European Community not to back any such scheme. If that is true, I should like confirmation.

I believe that refugees are pouring into the eastern region of the Sudan and that the Sudanese commission for refugees believes that 2,000 people have crossed during the past 11 days. There are supposed to be 1 million refugees in the region, which has a total population of only 4 million. Although aid agencies are helping, United Nations aid has been cut dramatically from £52 million in 1985 to £8 million this year. Are the Government apprised of the situation and what are they doing to alleviate the problem?

I am not saying that the British Government have done nothing—that is untrue. In many areas, they have done a great deal. Nevertheless, their response has been inadequate in both financial and political pressure terms —I suppose for all the reasons of the heart which were expressed so vividly by the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling. For that reason, we will support the motion.

8.26 pm

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley), and I echo every sentiment that he expressed. Some of us have had the sad opportunity to follow the subject of famine in Ethiopia since the first famine there. I well remember scenes similar to those that my right hon. Friend described. I remember the way in which the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs first drafted its report. It is not fair to say that we criticised the amount of money that the Government gave or the way in which they gave it. Our principal criticism of the Government was that that £90 million came from the ODA's contingency fund. We recommended that it should have come from the Government's contingency fund.

We criticised the speed of operation, the inability to co-ordinate, and the European Community's long-winded procedures. I am satisfied that, as a result of those criticisms, we now have a much better system. The report from which the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) quoted referred to the way in which famine was averted because things had changed and the delivery systems worked.

Until recently, all four members of the group who went to the area were in the Chamber. The hon. Members for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) and for Doncaster, North (Mr. Welsh), my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) and I travelled widely in Tigray and Eritrea. We saw how a food distribution system can work on a sensible basis. People were encouraged to collect food on a once-a-month basis and stay in their villages, so that they could take advantage of the upturn when it came. As the hon. Member for Cynon Valley quoted, we warned in stark terms that this was only a temporary position and that it could only be a temporary position. We also warned that another famine would occur because of the reasons that we spelled out in that telling paragraph.

As the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) said, we use the relief organisations of both the Tigray People's Liberation Front and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front. They are the people who receive the food that comes down the route from Port Sudan. We are talking not about the fact that they have food to distribute, but about the fact that we are not giving them money to buy food within their own communities unless we can monitor it satisfactorily. It would be wrong, therefore, to say that we do not use every possible method to meet the need.

In our first report, we gave the greatest credit to the Overseas Development Administration, and especially to its disaster relief operation, because of its knowledge and its ability to move quickly. I am sure that that ability has become greater rather than less recently. I reject the criticism that we are not competent, that the ODA cannot move quickly enough and that we do not care. We care

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enormously about ensuring that the mistakes of the past have been learnt and that we can operate quickly and efficiently.

We saw food distribution as it should be carried out in 1987-88, but we warned that nothing had changed basically and that if nothing changed, there would be a greater famine in future years. It is a great tragedy that we now see that prospect. However, some things have changed. There has been an overall change in the strategic position, as other hon. Members have mentioned, and the rains have failed for three years out of the past four. However, in Tigray and Eritrea, one basic element has not changed. I want to draw the attention of the House to our last report in which we said that the three protagonists made the relief operation second to their military and political objectives. That remains the most critical matter. However much the world bleeds and however much we try to find ways to get food to distribute, until that is changed we are doomed to difficulty.

The hon. Member for Falkirk, West and I travelled on the aeroplane from Mekele to Asmara. There was an available road and there was food in store coming from Massawa to Asmara, but the last bit of road was part of the war zone. The international community mounted at enormous cost—with money that could far better have been spent in rehabilitation, in building micro dams and in helping the local community to grow food—a massive airlift. We sat on the aeroplane that was bringing food down so that Mekele would not starve. Mekele is now part of the TPLF territory, as is the whole area. It is not possible to mount such an operation again.

We are all anxious to know whether there has been a breakthrough as a result of the efforts of President Moi. I want to pay a special tribute to the President of Kenya and to his officials who have done a great deal of background work to try to bring the talks in Nairobi to a successful conclusion. We should try to do everything we can to assist and to build on what President Moi said, so that we can see whether corridors can be created through which to bring food. From what has been said already, I understand that none of us has up-to-date information, but I am sure that President Moi would not have made a statement if he had not achieved something.

I talked to representatives of the EPLF yesterday. It was a difficult interview because of the suspicions, the qualifications and the issuing of counter-reports, which are always in their minds, and the situation is still fraught with suspicion. We have only to consider the efforts of ex-President Carter in Nairobi. He achieved a declaration, the establishment of a co-chairman and the establishment of seven observers, but immediately after he had achieved all that and made an announcement, one of the protagonists issued a counter-statement saying that he did not agree with everything that he had just signed with ex-President Carter. I use that example to show how fraught with difficulty the problem is and how the suspicions run deep among the three protagonists.

The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber mentioned the convoy. We saw the convoy that was supposed to be being used by the Ethiopian Government as a military convoy. The convoy consisted of white lorries with the United Nations flag painted on the doors. The convoy could not have been used—or even been seen to have been used—for military purposes, yet it was shot up and the food was burnt for purely military, tactical reasons. Nobody can claim that that was a mistake or that the Mengistu Government were using those lorries for false purposes. I use those examples to show that, however much we care and however much money we vote, the position on the ground, the degradation and the problems of the infrastructure are still the major difficulties in solving the problem.

I suggest to my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench that one of the ways in which we might make progress is to use the International Red Cross, which has done sterling work in Ethiopia. If it was not for its efforts, the problems of the first famine in Eritrea and Tigray would never have been met. The International Red Cross was quiet about it and we still have to be careful about such sensitive matters, but it carried the principal weight and fed the cross-border operation.

The irony is that in the potential second famine, which was averted, the International Red Cross saw that the best place from which to operate to feed the people was on the other side of the border. As a result, it was immediately called a traitor and condemned. How can anyone say that of the International Red Cross? It has done a marvellous job in the Sudan in a similar civil war, with the help of James Grant. I hope that if we cannot bring about a ceasefire, which is a dream in a sense, we can at least, following the initiative of President Moi, achieve an agreement on food corridors and for food to be carried by the International Red Cross. No one in the world could imagine that the International Red Cross would be allowed to be used for tactical or military advantage.

I am sure that the Government and my right hon. and hon. Friends the Ministers, whom I recognise to be involved and caring people, will do all that is necessary to match the British effort to the need. I am sure that the fact that our own ambassador in Addis Ababa co-ordinates the European effort is important. He has been there a long time and he is incredibly knowledgeable. I am sure that we shall meet the need in every possible way that we can within the physical limitations.

However, we must bring home clearly the fact that, however much we realise, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling said, that nobody should starve in our world of plenty, we cannot rely consistently on the most costly form of relief which is, of course, the cross-border operation involving bringing food into Port Sudan, shipping it down through the Sudan and carrying it over the most immensely difficult terrain that anyone can imagine. If any hon. Member had seen the Mercedes lorries that had been driven for only six months in the relief operation, he would have thought that they had been driven for 600 years as a result of the battering in the terrible terrain which they had to cross.

We cannot rely consistently on providing the most costly form of relief while the protagonists carry out an internecine war with military objectives that override their people's welfare. That is the real message of the Select Committee report, and that is the real message that we should still pass on to the three protagonists, whatever and from wherever the diplomatic effort.

I know that, as a result of our previous report, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office sent out about 35 telegrams to try to mobilise all possible international diplomatic effort to bring the three groups together, as we now know, in two separate parties. When we were in Rome only 10 days ago, one of the major subjects that we discussed with Senator Agnelli, who is responsible for this area, was how the talks would be conducted in Rome between the TPLF and the Mengistu Government.

We have seen a change in the British aid effort as a result of our report. Until we went in 1987-88, we had a firm policy of giving no assistance other than humanitarian relief. Our report suggested that that was a nonsensical approach. The lack of water was the main reason why agricultural communities could not grow food. We said that, if we could guarantee that the money would not go to the Government or to the protagonists, it made a lot of sense to support non-governmental organisations in building micro-dams and in small projects to bring relief to communities. I am happy to say that the Minister accepted that argument and we have been pursuing that policy ever since—subject, of course, to the overall military consequences of bombing and fighting, which undo the work of the communities, who build the dams themselves, realising that it is in their interests to do so.

There are two other causes for concern in Ethiopia. The first is the situation of the Somali refugees in Hararghe in the south-east. Their circumstances have become increasingly difficult and their state increasingly unsatisfactory. The second is the plight of the Sudanese refugees in the south-west. Some of us have visited the camps there and have been greatly disturbed to find 350,000 people living in such inadequate conditions.

This is an important debate, and its message is a good message—that we are genuinely concerned. I do not join the hon. Member for Cynon Valley in her criticism of the Government and their operation. I am sure that they have learnt a great deal and that this debate will ensure that they are very much on their toes as events unfold.

I have one last message to leave with the House. One of Ethiopia's tragedies is that is has remained one of the five poorest countries in the world, just as it was one of the five poorest countries in the world in 1960. Yet, given a civilised Government with the desire to liberate the talents of their people, Ethiopia would have tremendous potential. In spite of deforestation and the terrible problems in the north, 82 per cent. of Ethiopia is capable of profitable and full development. It is on such development—and away from the internecine war—that we should try to focus the Ethiopians' attention.

8.42 pm

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): I sympathise with the Minister of State, who is not in his place at the moment, because this is the second time in just a few weeks that he has been dragged to the House to defend the indefensible. On the first ocasion he sought to defend the Government's policy in Cambodia, which we regard as beyond belief. On this occasion, he is defending the Government's response to the famine, which could be described as "too little, too slow." I shall deal in detail with the extent to which it is too little and too slow, but first I give the Minister my sympathy, because his is one of the more acceptable faces in this hard-faced Government. That is why he is dragged out to do the dirty work, in the hope that he may be able to place some kind of gloss on the situation.

In response to the hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester), let me say that this is in no sense a criticism, of the Minister for Overseas Development, still less of the officials at the Overseas Development Administration. The Minister and her officials do their very best within the prison of parsimony in which the Government's hard-faced approach has them well and truly incarcerated. Let no one say that we are criticising the fine officials in the ODA who are doing their best within severe limitations to put all hands on deck.

Like the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley), I am a veteran of the previous famine in Ethiopia. I went to the Library to dig out some articles that I wrote for the *Spectator* and *The Sunday Times* on my return from a visit to Ethiopia. Only then did it strike me that it is virtually five years to the day since I walked among the carnage that that famine visited on those in the killing fields not only of Ethiopia but of Eritrea, Sudan, Chad, Mali and other countries in the belt of Africa that suffered the drought of 1984-85. The memory of those events is seared on the mind of anyone who has stooped and held the hands of children who have died for want of a crust of bread a matter of hours later. It is a greatly humbling experience.

Let me make a positive point. I hope that one of the effects of this debate will be to concentrate the minds of the British public and the media on the desperate need to give in this Christmas period. Whatever the Government's response may be, we shall need the public to dig as deeply into their pockets as they have in the past if we are to ensure the necessary response.

As I reread the articles that I had written, I was struck by the dreadful and grim familiarity of the events that are now unfolding. We have the same place names, the same dreadful routes down which aid lorries have to trundle in the night to avoid the bombing and strafing that the war involves. We have the same numbers of people, and we hear of the same crops being necessary. There is a grim sense of deja vu for anyone who was involved in 1984-85.

There seems to be some surprise—I suspect that it is feigned—from Conservative Members at the fact that the Opposition have tabled a motion that is critical of the Government. I believe that that motion should be supported because it is fully justified. The Minister made much of the figures—whether £2 million extra or £13 million—and of what had been done in a particular week after a particular point of order had been raised. The Government say that they have presided over what the former Chancellor used to call an economic miracle. A Government who make such a claim must find it difficult to come to the House and justify a steady reduction in the percentage of our GNP that we are giving in oveseas aid. Any Government who seek to pay off the national debt and give tax handouts to the best-off in our society, as this Government have, must find it difficult to justify giving such small sums—whether £2 million or £13 million—when millions of people are in danger of dying of starvation.

It is useful to look at the figures. Last year Ethiopia received a grand total of $15 per head of population in development assistance from the world community. Compare that with Botswana, for example, which received $92 per head of population and Somalia, which received $94 per head. Yet those countries can hardly be regarded as rolling in money or as being over-generously treated.

Ethiopia is a special case in a number of ways, one of which is the abysmally low level of development assistance that it has received from the international community. The Minister rightly praised the response of the public to the

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previous famine. It is true that people voted with their cheque books for Africa and Ethiopia during that famine—in unprecedented numbers and to an unprecedented extent. But, at the same time, the Government voted with their parliamentary majority steadily to reduce the percentage of gross national product that goes in overseas aid. That is a disgrace.

Other hon. Members have sketched the scale of the danger, and I shall not reiterate their remarks except to say that it is estimated that by January—only a few short weeks from now—4 million people will be in need of emergency food. Some 600,000 tonnes of food aid is required, but only a third of that has been pledged. Wealth and food in abundance exists in the North and West and the situation must be tackled urgently.

The need for trucks has been mentioned. Some 700 trucks will be needed to carry food, and I hope that the British can do something about that. In the past, they have been generous. I hope that we can step up that aid.

Above all, we must stop the flight away from the land, over the borders and into refugee camps. One of the worst scenes that I have ever witnessed was at the refugee camp at Wad Kowli in Ethiopia, near the Sudanese border. I visited the camp twice in 1985. Some 40,000 people were living and many were dying there. It was a sea of tuberculosis, coughing, disease, malnutrition and death. When people fled from their land in the hope of receiving some meagre relief in such camps, the seeds were sown for such disasters, or rather the seeds were not sown, because they had fled from the land. If water came, nothing could be done with it because the people who husbanded the land had been forced to flee to survive.

During the last famine, I was the general secretary of War on Want. That organisation was one of the most strident voices in the whole world, saying that we should lay a substantial proportion of the responsibility for those events at the door of the Mengistu regime. That remains true today. The disastrous policies of the Dergue and its failure to resolve the outstanding questions of nationalities and the Eritrean people are a major cause of the problem. However, the Dergue is not the only cause.

I should like to disabuse some of my hon. Friends, because the columns advancing on Addis Ababa under the banner of the TPLF are not knights on white chargers who will radically alter the course of events in Ethiopia for the better. The political programme of the TPLF is, if anything, worse than that of the Ethiopian Government.

In an excellent report in *The Independent* on 28 November 1989, Richard Dowden was told by the chairman of the TPLF that the Soviet Union and other Eastern bloc countries have never been truly Socialist:

> "The nearest any country comes to being socialist as far as we are concerned is Albania".

Anyone who thinks of swapping the Stalinist school of agriculture of President Mengistu for the Albanian school of agriculture and economics of the TPLF is making a serious mistake. Peace and negotiations are needed in Ethiopia. No one should be giving blank cheques of any kind to the TPLF.

The Eritrean case is different, as it is not a civil war. Ethiopia is occupying the territory of Eritrea and it should be given independence as soon as possible.

I am conscious of the need to be brief, so I shall bring my speech to a close with a couple of reflections. While Mengistu and drought are major problems, the fundamental cause of the famine, as in the rest of the Third world, is not dictatorships or the weather, but grinding poverty. As my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) said, one quarter of the world's population is afflicted by what the United Nations describes as absolute poverty. I read a striking article in *The Guardian* entitled "Children 'die as money goes on debt and arms'", which said that, in its annual statement on the world's children, UNICEF—the United Nations Children's Fund—reported:

> "40,000 children are dying each day—nearly one every two seconds. Of those, nearly 8,000 die because they have not been immunised, nearly 7,000 from dehydration caused by diarrhoea, and nearly as many again from pneumonia."

At the same time Third world countries are paying out enormous sums of money on armaments to fight petty grim little wars, which are often fuelled by the superpowers—or less than superpowers like us—who sell them the armaments and on debt payments.

It is worth remembering that in the year of Band Aid Third world countries paid back more in interest than they received in total overseas aid from all the Governments and all the people of the world.

Grim, unrelenting fatally desperate poverty afflicts Ethiopia and is a fundamental problem in the Third world. Until we solve that problem we shall return to debates like this time and again.

8.55 pm

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): This debate has been characterised by the fact that almost everyone who has taken part has spoken with real knowledge of the subject and some first-hand experience of Ethiopia. I welcome the opportunity to take part as I went to Ethiopia in 1985 with the hon. Members for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) and for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood). We went under the auspices of the Save the Children Fund and Oxfam. Like anyone who visited Ethiopia that year, and like my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley), I was struck by the need to express the dimensions of the catastrophe which faces thousands of people in Ethiopia. However, I am not confident that we can find the right words to express the disaster that they face.

Anyone who visited Ethiopia during the last famine has memories that are for ever etched on their minds. For me, the picture that almost gives me nightmares is a plain which, as far as the eye can see, is brown and arid, covered with rocks rather than green and verdant. The plain is not empty but full of people who are literally bones and rags. Thousands of them were camped out on the plain at Mekele with little or no food or shelter. During the day, the sun beats down remorselessly, but at night it is near freezing. There is an even more poignant and horrific memory. UNICEF has had a feeding programme in Mekele for a long time. It had enough food only for a limited number of children, who were kept in a compound and fed daily. Outside a large number of children looked over the wall, watching the children who were part of the feeding programme. The children outside the wall were without food, shelter or comfort. That memory was not a nightmare—unfortunately, it was the truth, and it was called Mekele.

As we have heard today, those circumstances will almost certainly return, and thousands of men, women and children will die unnecessarily of starvation. When we went to Mekele, Cardinal Hume by chance was with us, and I remember him, or perhaps someone else, saying as we looked numbly at that plain full of people:

> "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but these people have absolutely nothing."

Some two million people are again threatened with famine. It would be comforting to be able to assert, that the problems could be solved by a massive injection of food aid in the short term, and by further increases in development aid in the longer term. Heaven knows, Ethiopia's problems are bad enough when the harvest does not fail—even in a year of good harvest there is a substantial food shortfall. Per capita food production has declined steadily as the rate of population growth has substantially outpaced improvements in agriculture. Ethiopia is one of the poorest countries in the world, if not the poorest. Food production lags further behind food needs. Even when the harvest succeeds, Ethiopia has problems. Worse than that, not only is Ethiopia gripped by famine, but it is gripped by civil war, and by a cruel twist of fate the area where the civil conflict is worst is the area where the drought is most intense. There have been total crop failures in large parts of Eritrea and Tigray this year.

It would be comforting in such circumstances to look for heroes and villains. Mengistu is a tyrant who has spent more than 80 per cent. of his country's pitiful income on ever more arms to prosecute civil wars. Some £3 billion worth of arms has been bought from the Soviet Union in the past few years. It is worth contemplating that figure. Insanely, ports such as Massawa and Assab, which could be used to import food, are closed on Mengistu's orders. The Ethiopian air force Mig fighters regularly bomb and strafe the roads to Tigray and Eritrea—the very roads on which the relief convoys should be travelling. This is not a story of villains and heroes because, as the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) said, the other protagonists in these conflicts are not completely innocent. Tragically, all the protagonists in the internal conflict have used food aid as a military and political weapon.

The Select Committee on Foreign Affairs produced an excellent report which I hope that all right hon. and hon. Members will read. It went to Ethiopia in 1988 and reported 1,500 men of the EPLF attacking a United Nations convoy carrying food supplies on the road from Asmara. The trucks were clearly marked and painted white, but they were destroyed by grenades and rockets and the food was burnt. That and other attacks were clearly carried out to tie the Ethiopian army to protecting the roads and to attempt to force the United Nations and other relief agencies to accept the EPLF's proposals for carrying out relief work in Eritrea. The same can be said for the TPLF, which wants to demonstrate de facto control over certain areas by the use of food aid, just as the Ethiopian Government want to use hunger to force people out of what they regard as rebel-held areas.

No headway can be made until the civil wars come to an end. No side can hope to achieve military victory. Using food as a political weapon will not provide any solutions. Tragically, the Ethiopian army, the EPLF and the TPLF have all put politics before relief, and the prospect of military advantage ahead of the lives of their own people. It is time to end that insanity.

All possible civilised international, diplomatic and political pressure must be brought to bear, through the United Nations, from the Soviet Union and from the European Community, to prevent further arms sales to the protagonists in Ethiopia, to persuade the Ethiopians to open their ports and adapt an open-roads policy which would allow the free passage of food throughout Ethiopia, and to enable the United Nations world food programme and the relief agencies to get food as urgently as possible to those who need it.

I appreciate that it is the role of the Opposition to oppose, but by tabling the motion that they put down for this debate they have chosen the wrong target and the wrong arguments. Through bilateral and Community channels, Britain's emergency food aid to Ethiopia has totalled more than £54 million since January 1987 and more than £138 million since January 1985. So far this year, 17,000 tonnes of food aid have been pledged. In opening the debate, my hon. Friend the Minister confirmed that further emergency contributions would be made in response to the worsening situation.

The hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) sought to make play of a letter published in *The Independent* from the director of the Save the Children Fund. I am president of the Banbury branch of the Save the Children Fund and a keen supporter of its work. When I read that letter in *The Independent* I was disappointed because, as my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development made clear to the House on 4 December, it was in the offices of the Save the Children Fund that she and representatives of other non-governmental organisations drew up their contingency plans for how the Save the Children Fund and other members of the Disaster Emergency Committee could help in the unfolding situation in Ethiopia. I recently met the secretary of the Disaster Emergency Committee at the annual meeting of the Anglo-Ethiopian Society and there was no scintilla of criticism about the way in which my right hon. Friend the Minister and the Overseas Development Administration had been handling the situation so far.

As my right hon. Friend made clear on 4 December, Britain has been at the forefront of numerous diplomatic initiatives to improve the situation in Ethiopia. My right hon. Friend has clearly taken every opportunity here, in Rome, in Washington, in Brussels and in Paris to seek to persuade the international community to act together. That was reinforced by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister at the recent summit in Strasbourg where the Community Heads of Government made it clear in their communiqué to the Soviet Union that they very much hoped that the Soviet Union would use all its power and influence and apply pressure in Addis Ababa to help to end the civil conflict and to stem the flow of arms to the protagonists.

The problem cannot be solved by Britain or any one country alone. It has to be solved by the whole international community. I very much hope that, having heard the debate, the Opposition will decide not to divide the House because this is not a subject upon which we should be divided. The subject is so tragic and horrific that the House should be united. If the House is united, the various diplomatic and other initiatives that this country takes will have a far greater chance of succeeding. If we are seen to be divided, it will be far easier for those in Ethiopia and elsewhere who choose to be deaf to what we say to turn a deaf ear to what we want to tell them. We want to

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tell them and the world that there is no reason on God's earth why, in the latter part of the 20th century, millions of people should face starvation.

9.10 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I shall try to be brief, because I realise that several other Members wish to speak in this short debate.

I cannot go along with the hon. Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) in his defence of the Government. It seems indefensible for the Government to have been cutting the proportion of our gross domestic product that goes in overseas aid. I find it extremely difficult to justify that to my constituents or to anyone else in the civilised world. If the Government want us to have any sympathy with their problems, they should take the earliest possible opportunity to restore the proportion of our aid at least to its 1979 level, and should steadily aim towards the United Nations' target.

I accept that the hon. Member for Banbury was in Ethiopia at the same time as me. I recognise the pictures that he has recounted to the House, as I did those drawn by the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) and my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway). I still have nightmares about the scenes I saw in Ethiopia at the height of the famine.

I have another memory. I also went to Ethiopia in 1981. I went up to the north, in Karin, and visited the British war graves there. Like most war graves, they reminded me of those who lost their lives in the second world war. I was struck by the fact that they were scarred by bullets from further conflicts. Since 1981, those graveyards in Karin have been fought over another four times.

Ethiopia has suffered 60 years of almost continuous conflict. It is scarred by famine, but it is also scarred by those 60 years of war. Almost all those wars have been not totally Ethiopian affairs but affairs encouraged by people outside Ethiopia. Large world powers have fought out their battles in Ethiopia. It is one of the tragedies of Ethiopia that so often the wars fought there have been fought either directly by world powers or in proxy for them.

I hope that we can bring some relief to the people in Ethiopia. However, the only possible relief for Ethiopia will be if we can bring peace to that country. When a war is being fought, it is impossible to persuade people to fight nicely so that they do not use starvation as one of the weapons. Starvation is just another nasty example of the weapons of war.

My message is firm: the only way to improve the position in Ethiopia is to achieve peace. I would argue strongly that the Government should place much more emphasis on diplomatic efforts to bring about peace in Ethiopia. We should try to ensure that there is an arms embargo. No country should be prepared to supply arms to any of the protagonists.

We cannot apportion blame or virtue to any of the people in Ethiopia. They are all to blame, because at some point each group of people in Ethiopia has had the opportunity to negotiate for peace. However, almost every time, some group has felt that it was on the verge of outright victory and has therefore been reluctant to participate in negotiations. Then the tide of war has swung against it, and it has been in no position to negotiate.

We must find a solution in Ethiopia which produces some federal forum to give all groups the opportunity for independence and self-government for their part of the country, but also gives them an overall pattern to establish a position in which the three or four major groups can live peacefully without resorting to conflict, and without people from outside encouraging conflict. I hope that the Government will use all their powers to encourage an arms embargo and will encourage in every possible way the talks that are taking place between the three protagonists to bring about a lasting peace.

If the open-road initiative that was announced by the President of Kenya is embarked upon, we must see it only as the first step to a lasting peace. If that open-road policy is accepted by all the parties, it must be backed by getting food through quickly. As my hon. Friends have said, it is important to encourage people to stay in their own villages and not to go to camps or elsewhere in search of food. The only way to encourage people to stay in their villages is to convince them that food will arrive. The only way to do that is for people to see the food being moved quickly. If the open-road policy is implemented, it should be possible to move food quickly by road. The world powers will also have to look at the possibility of an air lift, at least in the short term, in order to convince people that food will arrive.

Ethiopia is a beautiful country; as Conservative Members have said, it has great potential; but while it suffers from war and famine, there will be no opportunity to realise that potential. The first priority is to stop the war. When that is done, there will be a chance to tackle the famine in the short term. After that, we must look at long-term aid which can release the potential of the country.

9.16 pm

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): I must declare an interest in this sad project. I was director of fund raising for the Save the Children Fund in the last major famine in 1984-85. My brother-in-law is the overseas director of Oxfam, and my father-in-law is generally credited with having founded the Overseas Development Administration.

The Government have given generously so far in this latest Ethiopian crisis, but whether the amount is £2 million or £13 million, more is needed. Of that £2 million, £800,000 went to Oxfam and I think that a bit more went to the Save the Children Fund. However, in the next three months Oxfam has budgeted to spend £5 million and the Save the Children Fund budgets to spend approximately the same. Those are the largest United Kingdom agencies in Ethiopia at the moment, but of course there is also Christian Aid, the Catholic Fund for Overseas Development and the Co-operative for American Relief Everywhere. Other tiny agencies are also putting in the largest amounts that they can. That, of course, is linked to the enormous expenditure of the World Food Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations.

The public response in Britain to the latest appeal is fascinating. It is the most generous response ever to the Disasters Emergency Committee. In the first seven days of the appeal, £1·3 million has been counted and that is the largest amount ever raised by the committee. Much of that came by way of credit card donations. The Save the Children Fund is the co-ordinator and there are sacks of cash waiting to be counted. That means that the total for the first seven days will be much larger than £1·3 million.

The generosity of the public is amazing, especially in the light of the huge response to the recent BBC Children in Need appeal and, of course, the phrase, "Charity begins at home" is very compelling. In addition, there are all the normal Christmas appeals that occur in mid and late December. It is worth remembering that British people are the second or third most generous individual donors in the world, beaten only by people in the Netherlands and the United States of America.

Raising money always seems difficult at the beginning, but the generosity of the British people makes it relatively easy. However, spending it is a truly difficult task. In the 1984-85 famine 60 per cent. of the European Community grain donation rotted on the docks in Djibouti. Food aid is notorious for devastating local farming. That is why our simple method of teaching Ethiopian farmers how to alter the plough to use one ox instead of two, which was a British innovation, may mean more in the long run than any great tonnage of food.

Food aid is also notorious for encouraging people to flee from their homes to where the food is being distributed. At present people are not in camps in northern Ethiopia, but they certainly were during the previous famine and a cholera epidemic started as a result. Afterwards they do not return home or they return to untilled land. It is worth remembering that two thirds of the fertile land in Ethiopia is not farmed at all due to the political problems.

Also food aid irrevocably alters people's dietary tastes. Ethiopians have gained a taste for wheat which is far more nutritious than the grain that they previously ate. Wheat is contra-indicated in high, wet areas such as Ethiopia, which is mountainous, too. That is why the Israelis and the Weissmann institute have developed a grain which will grow in those climatic conditions.

Food aid is difficult to manage in a way that is helpful to the people at whom it is aimed. A country at war offers irrevocable logistical difficulties.

It was said earlier that the British people had been generous in giving to Band Aid, but Band Aid expenditure —and that is what matters—was immensely difficult to organise. Hon. Members will recall the pictures of rusting trucks. Where did that money go? Was it honestly well spent as the Ethiopian people would see it? Hon. Members will recall that even non-governmental organisations have not been effective spenders. Why is War on Want no longer a member of the Disasters Emergency Committee? The answer is that it, too, had massive difficulties in managing good expenditure of Disasters Emergency Committee funds.

The political difficulties are seemingly impassable. I suggest that unless the Soviet glasnost effort is extended to eradicating Mr. Mengistu from the Ethiopian Government, there will be no open road. It will remain as mythical as the golden road to Samarkand. Between 40 and 60 Save the Children and Oxfam trucks waiting to use those open roads will still be waiting.

Nothing that the Ethiopian Government have done since the first famine of 1973-74 has helped. Each time the effect of the famine on people worsens. This time the famine is worse than in 1987 but not as bad as 1984. It enters a country that has suffered centuries of land neglect and where the drought is worse each time against a particularly impoverished environmental backdrop. People's resistance is lower each time and their response to starvation is more feeble. All that is in the context of a gross national product for all black African countries south of the Sahara which is identical to that of Belgium. Spending wisely in that context of total poverty is not easy.

The Government are to be congratulated on their intelligent application of funds. It has started well. The Overseas Development Administration is an extremely efficient, world-renowned organisation. We are most fortunate in the tremendous service that is given by that part of the Government.

The Government must now adopt a Morton's fork approach. On the political front they must pursue an open-roads policy by all the means available. I suggest that they get in touch with the Soviet Government as fast as possible. However, on the practical side they must recognise that it is unlikely that the open-roads policy will come about. The cross-border tactics that NGOs have had to use so often in these recent miserable years will once more be the only way to get food to Ethiopia. The Sudan offers a poor, dangerous, expensive and inappropriate route for the Government to use. That must mean more funding of agency work through the large voluntary organisations in the United Kingdom which can achieve it and less bilateral aid. The British Government cannot spend through the Ethiopian Government in their current political circumstances.

It is easy to stir consciences. Britain has a great history of generosity. But it is difficult to walk the tight rope of combining our outpourings of comparative wealth with care and appropriate expenditure, and with personal sensitivity to the great suffering that we continually witness in Ethiopia. We must allow these unfortunate people, who are crippled by warfare, to keep their dignity. Do not let us become vultures of compassion, peering at poverty on the small screen from comfortable armchairs. That is the challenge.

9.24 pm

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Comfortable armchairs and the opinions expressed from them may not always be acceptable, but the same is true of comfortable debates in this Chamber. When the reality of famine in Ethiopia faces us, it is absolutely right for my right hon. and hon. Friends to table motions such as this one. I proudly support it.

Christian Aid, not a politically motivated body, recently published a pamphlet in which it said:

> "For the last ten years official aid has been consistently lower in real terms than the level achieved in 1979."

What loyal Opposition could possibly accept that, pretend that there is consensus and do nothing? Problems of infrastructure undoubtedly exist, the war in Ethiopia is undoubtedly a great scar and the problems of food distribution undoubtedly exist, but we cannot allow the Government to get away with a fairly miserable contribution. We cannot endorse that.

I am sorry that the right hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison) is no longer in his place. I was more than surprised by his intervention. After all, it was he who argued in his famous open letter that time after time his Department was in opposition to the Treasury which, he

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gave the impression, was mean-minded and at one with the Prime Minister. I should have thought that he would welcome this opportunity to criticise constructively the limited contribution that the Government are making.

Obviously, there have been harvest failures, droughts and war. Alas, they are not new. They were both predictable and predicted. Although I do not expect my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) to remember my speech, he will recall that in 1984 he and many other hon. Members drew attention to the appalling problems which then existed in Ethiopia. Since then the problems have scarcely changed. People, including those who were so generous and who will continue to be generous, must be asking why they are seeing on their television screens in 1989 the pictures which besmirched the international community in 1984. I was delighted that my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) repeated the need for a successful appeal.

We in the Labour party cannot go along with the Government's attitude. Spending cuts in the Department, reflecting Government policy, have been even more severe than elsewhere. We cannot pretend that the Prime Minister's attitude, popularly known as Thatcherism, is being applied to every Department except overseas aid, especially when the reality suggests that that is not the case.

The narrow political approach—which I regret is the attitude, although we would all wish otherwise—is evidenced by, for example, the figures that show that we give 40p per head to the people of Bangladesh as against £2,000 per head to people who happen to live in the Falklands. How can the Opposition accept those priorities? The Minister said that the gross national product was small under the Labour Government. We are entitled to argue that as the wealth of the nation grows, and as the GNP increases the national cake—and no one would dispute the fact that the standard of living has, on average, increased since 1984—it is reasonable in a caring society that a larger amount of that cake should be given to the millions of people in need.

The Henley Centre says such is the thrust of Government leadership in these matters that in its recent survey only 10 per cent. of people viewed world poverty as one of the major issues being faced today. Many view green environmental issues, important and profound as they are, as transcending other issues. Surely it is possible for all hon. Members, on both sides of the House, to have a well-based concern for the future of the planet while also being concerned to show commitment to the millions of people already living on this planet who are suffering from malnutrition, poverty and disease to an unacceptable extent in the modern world.

Some 750 million people experience absolute poverty, illiteracy, disease and malnutrition to an extent well beyond any standards of human decency acceptable to the British public. Therein lie the seeds of hatred and wars that could contaminate the future and which I believe could be so easily avoided. We are seeing on television the starving Eritreans, the ghost of Christmas present, but that need not be the case. It could be avoided and it represents a challenge to the consciences of all those in this modern world. It has been predicted; it can be dealt with.

I do not believe that apathy need always triumph. Starvation in Ethiopia represents the sort of lifestyle that, sadly, so many of our fellow citizens in this universe are now experiencing. We know of the unspeakable misery in the south China seas. We know that by 1992 the number of infants infected by AIDS in the sub-Saharan region will rise to 250,000. We know that now; there are things that we can do now. We should reflect the spirit and the generosity that I believe is shared by the British people.

Because I am passionately convinced that the Government, in their rather squalid approach to these matters, do not reflect the views of the people in this country or those of the international community towards international poverty, I shall vote against their amendment and, with pride, support the motion in the name of my right hon. and hon. Friends.

9.34 pm

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): My hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) has struck the right sombre and challenging note, as so many other hon. Members have done today. The debate has been based on the deep concern at the scale of the mounting tragedy in the Horn of Africa and Ethiopia in particular, with some poignant speeches, particularly from the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley), the hon. Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry), and my hon. Friends the Members for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) and for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett).

There has been frustration at the lack of progress and at the fact that after the awful experiences of 1984 and 1985 yet another famine is looming in that sad part of the world. My hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) expressed so well the anger felt at the human reasons for the tragedy—the scale of the armed conflict, the civil wars that seem to go among elites over the great mass of the people, the victims of the tragedy in the area. There has also been perplexity at the way forward because of the multiplicity of problems in the area, natural and man-made.

If we are tempted to switch off and say that we are fed up with the fact that the tragedy is likely to recur, how much more reason do the victims of that tragedy have to be fed up with the fact that famine is with them yet again?

We cannot discount the fact that the problems in Ethiopia are now taking place in a harsher international context, with some evidence of compassion fatigue, despite what was said by the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) about her experience and the evidence of the generosity of the British public in their response to the current appeal. I think not only of the recent UNICEF report mentioned by some hon. Members but also of the World Bank report with Mr. Conable's speech, not just drawing attention to the collective breast beating of the western community, saying that it is all our fault as a result of past colonialism, but pointing out factors relating to the countries themselves such as the vast expenditure on arms. For example, Ethiopia owes the Soviet Union in excess of $3 billion for arms purchases. In addition, there were rumours in the press on Sunday that, because of a deal on the Falashas, Israel may well be ready to replace the Soviet Union as a major arms supplier of that sad country. I hope that the Minister will say whether that rumour has any basis.

The World Bank report in September criticised what it elegantly called the "governance" of the countries of the Third world. But who can doubt that in Ethiopia, in addition to the natural problems of drought, so much blames lies at the door of Mr. Mengistu—a point made so graphically by my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, West? Equally, my hon. Friend the Member for Hillhead pointed out that the leaders of the TPLF are no great exemplars of human rights and the wish for democracy.

The basic facts are well known. They include the climatic factors, the erratic rainfall in the area, the increasing population, which adds to the pressure on land, the increase in soil degradation and the deforestation which has gathered pace since the turn of the century so that now Ethiopia's forest cover has been reduced from 40 per cent. at the turn of the century to 14 per cent. in 1970 and to but 4 per cent. today. In addition, there are the great sociological factors—the danger of community disintegration as people go to the food centres and farmers are unable to plant for the next year. There is an ever-increasing frequency of famine to the point where famine is not a cyclical problem but part of the chronic condition of that sad country.

We have heard the World Food Programme's estimate that 4 million people are threatened with famine by the end of January. I understand that the Minister suggested that there might be a large time scale, but if anything like that is threatened by the end of January, when we work back from January and look at the lead times in terms of procurement and delivery, we must surely recognise that the problem is with us now. If we are to make a serious impact on that problem, we must make the relevant decisions now.

The World Bank figures for 1987 show that Ethiopia is possibly the poorest country in the world. Clearly, long-term work needs to be done and that was shown in the Select Committee report last year. It is well known that work needs to be done on food security and storage, an improved distribution system, reforestation and water conservation. The key factors of time scale and transport were highlighted by the Minister. Knowing that people are facing almost immediate famine, how are we to get the necessary foodstuffs to them in the relevant time scale?

Will the Minister comment on the rumours over the past 24 hours or so about the open routes and the alleged speech by President Moi of Kenya? If President Moi is confident that there has been a substantial change by the Mengistu Government, it is puzzling that in the 24 hours that have elapsed the Government have not used the available communications to Nairobi to obtain further particulars for today's debate. Did President Moi make that speech, and what, if anything, was said about the small print and conditions? Given the track record of President Mengistu and the leaders of the rebels, can we believe that this is not just a stalling tactic in the civil war programme? I hope that the Minister who replies will tell us a little more about the speech of President Moi as it is fundamental to the possibility of getting food speedily to those in need.

We accept that as a country our leverage is relatively limited in that area. However, there is a widespread feeling that in this conflict, as in others in the Horn of Africa, the Government are being too traditional and are working only through the Governments of the day and in this instance through Addis Ababa. Surely, if the aim is to help those in dire need now, we have to use less orthodox methods and be prepared to take all the risks that the Minister pointed out. We have to be prepared to work through the Relief Society for Tigray and the Eritrean Relief Association—the agencies on the spot with a good track record. We have to be prepared to work through the British agencies—the non-governmental organisations—which have such a good record on reaching those in need.

Hon. Members have already pointed out the difference historically and in terms of need of Eritrea, Tigray and to a lesser extent Wollo. They have pointed out that Eritrea can be reached through cross-border routes and that Tigray needs a more adventurous policy and the co-operation of the Governments concerned. The question is whether the food will get to those areas on time.

We have no doubt about the Minister's commitment and we regret that because of flu she is unable to be here today. We know that she is working within a cage imposed on her by the Prime Minister's policies over the past decade. Ministers for Overseas Development may have pressed at the bars, but the bars have been set by the Government's policies.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) pointed out that the figures on the reduction of aid over the decade are well documented. They were given by my hon. Friend and speak for themselves as a measure of the reduction in the Government's commitment. The aid budget has been consistently sidelined at a time when the Government have been indulging in economic triumphalism and talking about economic miracles. Perhaps the new Chancellor of the Exchequer is less prone to indulge in talk of economic miracles, but that was his predecessor's theme.

We do not criticise the Government as strongly as we did in 1984-85. So much depended then on the generosity of the British people. It shamed the Government's niggardly response. However, what is beng done has to be set against a reduction in the overall aid budget. Hungry people need to be fed now if another major human tragedy in Ethiopia is to be averted.

We hope that the Government will follow a several-track policy and say something about what is being done by the Soviet Union. President Mengistu's position has been weakened. Is there evidence of pressure being exerted on President Mengistu by the Soviet Union? We have to work through our non-governmental organisations. We remain to be convinced that the Government will be able to respond in time and according to the scale of the need in that area.

9.46 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): The debate has highlighted the deep concern of all hon. Members about the threat of famine in Ethiopia. The contributions to the debate have been of a high quality, accompanied by a remarkable degree of personal knowledge of the area and its problems.

The hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) asked a question that many people in the country are asking: why is it happening again? It was a powerful question. Subsequent contributors to the debate sought to provide an answer to it. However, as the hon. Gentleman recognises, it is not easy to find the right answer to that question. My right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) spoke movingly of his visit to

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Mekele in 1984 when, as he so poignantly pointed out, the relief arrived too late. It was a stern reminder to us all of our duty to ensure that that does not happen again.

My hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester), who also has great knowledg of the area, referred to the fact that the three protagonists in the major civil wars, who believe that relief is secondary to their military aims, make it more difficult to find a solution to the problem. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway), who has direct personal knowledge of the problems in the area, made important points about the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front and its likely effect on the food and relief programmes. My hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry), who also knows the area, referred to his terrible memories of 1984. He said that it will be difficult to make the kind of headway that we need to make if that tragedy is not to be repeated. My hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson), who is a former director of fund raising for the Save the Children Fund, spoke with great knowledge of the valuable work being done by the voluntary organisations. I was glad that she referred to the Government's intelligent use of funds. She also drew attention to the great importance of teaching people how to make better use of their resources of land and food to solve the problems.

The House has shown a common determination that the threat of famine referred to in the motion and in the amendment must be averted. We must not allow a repeat of the tragic events of 1984. That concern and that determination are, I am sure, an accurate reflection of the way in which people all over Britain are already responding to appeals for assistance to the region. The Government welcome the fact that today's debate will have helped to focus public attention even more closely on the problem, as the hon. Member for Hillhead said.

I hope that this debate will also have shown clearly that the Government have already done and are continuing to do a great deal to alleviate suffering. We are determined to make sure that it does not get worse. The general public may understand this better than some Opposition Members. A humanitarian problem of this nature should not be addressed on purely party lines. A number of my right hon. and hon. Friends made that point strongly. I accept that all right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House are sincere in their concern, but I stress that the Government are also sincere.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): May I ask the Minister a very simple question? To his knowledge, is any REST transport available in the Sudan to carry famine relief food supplies to Ethiopia? Does the Minister know whether any trucks are available right now?

Mr. Sainsbury: As has been mentioned in the debate, there are a very large number of trucks in the region. The problem is not so much trucks as opening the corridors to the food convoys. That it the key issue.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Sainsbury: I am sorry, but we have a very limited amount of time.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Answer my question.

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the Minister does not give way the hon. Gentleman must not persist.

Mr. Sainsbury: No one should be in any doubt about the scale of the problem. As hon. Members have pointed out, the risk of famine is compounded and complicated by a web of related factors. First, there is not one but two civil wars. In Eritrea, the conflict has been in progress for 27 years. In Tigray, a hard-line Marxist regime is opposed by rebels who believe that Albania is the ideal to which their citizens should aspire. Incessant fighting would challenge any Government's ability to run the country. Secondly, misguided economic policies, particularly in the agricultural sector, have reduced the country's ability to feed itself even in non-drought years.

There are, however, some signs of hope. Peace talks aimed at ending the civil wars are now taking place. We continue to urge all parties to keep the process going in a spirit of compromise and flexibility. We shall do all that we can, in association with our European Community partners and through direct and indirect contact with all the parties concerned, to give those talks the best chance of success. There are also signs that the Ethiopian Government have begun to moderate the worst aspects of their economic policies. That is a result of representations made to them by the donor community, including the EC and the World Bank.

The conflict obviously has a direct bearing on the success of the aid effort. Convoys must be able to get through. As hon. Members have pointed out, the logistical problems are enormous. The tonnages of food required and the distances over which they have to be moved are very great, particularly in Tigray. There is a shortage of transport and a fuel problem, particularly in Sudan, which means that it has to be imported at great expense and difficulty. The terrain is particularly problematical and there is a constant threat of bombing of the food corridors. Some food certainly can be moved through Sudan and into the areas of need. If free access across the lines cannot be agreed, it will be necessary to move as much as possible through that channel, but it certainly will not be possible to meet all the requirements.

That is why it remains vital that food corridors should be opened to allow relief supplies through the ports of Massawa and Assab, which are controlled by the Ethiopian Government. If confirmed, President Moi's announcement that President Mengistu has agreed to this is welcome. We can confirm that President Moi made the speech in the terms quoted, but we cannot confirm independently that President Mengistu has specifically agreed to the proposal. As I am sure that the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) will appreciate, the key to progress is not President Moi's announcing an agreement but the protagonists accepting and adhering to that agreement.

The recurrent droughts affecting the Horn of Africa are the prime cause of famine, and they are beyond anyone's control. The effects are worsened, notably in northern Ethiopia, by over-grazing, poor agricultural techniques and deforestation, to which the hon. Member for Swansea, East referred. All of this causes great environmental damage and weakens Ethopia's long-term capacity to feed itself. Those are problems which can be tackled in the longer term. We are helping to do that under our technical co-operation programme, as are the multilateral donors such as the European Community and the World Bank.

The hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) referred to the need for developmental aid, and that is certainly recognised.

There are further important steps that the Government of Ethiopia can take. First, they can negotiate an end to the fighting—a number of hon. Members have recognised that as the prime task—thereby releasing the resources needed to tackle the problems of drought and under-development. Secondly, they can move further towards more liberal and market-oriented policies, particularly in the agricultural sector. This will do much to increase food production and enhance the security of food supplies, even in years of drought.

The scale and complexity of the problem are daunting. I hope that we would all accept that humanitarian issues such as this must be dealt with on a non-party basis. I echo my hon. Friends' call. It is not a matter of accepting the motion or the amendment—it would be much better if both were withdrawn and the House could agree with one united voice on the need for help. I assure the House that we work closely with all the NGOs, although I find that expression a little off-putting—I refer to the voluntary organisations and charities which do such excellent work. They have a tremendously important role to play in the relief operation and we shall stay in close touch with them. The voluntary agencies have long experience in ensuring that aid reaches those who need it on the ground as quickly and effectively as possible. That is why we channel the bulk of our emergency aid through them. The European Community has already committed significant contributions of emergency relief aid. We fully support that and our share of that assistance is substantial. The United Nations' role, too, is vital.

The United Nations emergency planning and preparedness group in Addis Ababa, which the United Kingdom helped to establish, co-ordinates the efforts of the various United Nations agencies, such as the World Food Programme, in coping with the emergency. It is a mechanism which has worked extremely effectively. We should very much like to see the International Committee of the Red Cross resuming a fully active humanitarian role in Ethiopia, as it did before April 1988, when it was asked to leave the country. I understand that negotiations are in hand and I wish them well.

I pay tribute again to the response of the British public. Their typical generosity was no doubt given an additional spur by the distressing and disturbing television reports transmitted last month. The Opposition have suggested that what we offered was a wholly inadequate response to a tragic situation, but my hon. Friend the Minister of State has made it clear that that is totally unjustified and wrong. We have been aware of the risk of famine in northern Ethiopia for some time, and we have been working to prevent it. This year we have given nearly £13·5 million to Ethiopia. We have given £67 million since 1987 and £150 million since 1984.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 210, Noes 262.

Division No. 18] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hume, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*

Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ken Eastham and
Mr. Ray Powell.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tom Sackville and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MR. SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House welcomes the speed and effectiveness with which Her Majesty's Government has responded to the threat of famine in Northern Ethiopia through the provision of food and emergency aid; and strongly endorses its diplomatic action aimed at persuading the parties to the civil wars in Ethiopia to seek a negotiated end to these conflicts and to facilitate the transport of food to those at risk of famine.

Education Reform (Northern Ireland)

10.15 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): I beg to move,

That the draft Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 23rd November, be approved.

This draft order contains provisions which represent the most far-reaching changes to education law for almost half a century. Such changes are not undertaken lightly, and while the order reflects the Government's general education policy, it is a uniquely Northern Ireland piece of legislation.

The Government first published their proposals for reform in March 1988. In the 21 months since then, there have been two formal periods of consultation—first on the original discussion document, and secondly on the order itself. In practice, however, the consultative process has been continuous over the period. I said at its outset that the consultation would be genuine—that we would listen, discuss, and change where appropriate. That commitment has been honoured.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I am grateful to the Minister for allowing me to intervene so early in his speech. I congratulate him on the extent of the consultation, which has been real and widespread, in marked contrast to that which preceded the Education Reform Bill. Will he please tell us why, bearing in mind the importance of integrated education, he has not taken the trouble to meet the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education?

Dr. Mawhinney: I shall come to integrated education later in my speech. I have met many groups who have been involved with integrated education, and representatives of the schools and of the original two trust groups which were set up and are, as it were, the parents of those trust groups. The council is a much more recent group. It had an opportunity to make representations during the consultation period.

The order is the product of more than 5,000 written submissions, a large number of oral presentations and numerous discussions in other forums. It contains many changes from the proposals that were originally put forward and reflects as broad a consensus of support in Northern Ireland as we can achieve. I am grateful to all who recognise the importance of these reforms and who contributed of their knowledge and experience.

The Government have two main objectives in introducing this legislation. The first is to raise educational standards. Northern Ireland's young people are its greatest natural asset. Some of them achieve A-level and general certificate of secondary education examination results which are among the best in the United Kingdom, but at the other end of the academic spectrum, Northern Ireland has the highest proportion of pupils who leave school without any formal qualifications. We intend to preserve the best. We must secure improvement elsewhere.

Our second objective is to give parents more choice and involvement in the education of their children, on terms similar to those enjoyed by their counterparts in England and Wales. These twin objectives are reflected throughout this order.

Giving effect to the first objective, the order will set in place a common curriculum to be followed by all pupils from the age of five to 16. This will guarantee them a broad education based on common programmes of study and offer a common basis for assessing what progress they are making. The order lays down that the curriculum must include six areas of study within which pupils will follow a number of compulsory subjects. In addition, hon. Members will note the inclusion of six important educational themes which will be interwoven with, and taught as part of, the compulsory subjects. This framework will leave adequate room in the timetable for schools to add to the common curriculum those subjects most appropriate to the children in each class. In future, no child will be disadvantaged because his or her school does not offer an educationally balanced programme, or allows its pupils to opt out of essential areas of the curriculum.

The continuation of a selective system of secondary education will not present a barrier to achievement for those outside the grammar school sector. I firmly believe that, in the long run, secondary intermediate schools will benefit most from these proposals. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] All schools will have the same basis for their common curriculum and will, in addition, be able to develop their own particular strengths. These curriculum reforms will present secondary intermediate schools with an unprecedented opportunity to achieve increased status and, in the opinion of many of us, long-overdue public esteem.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): I thank the Minister for giving way. Does he not recognise that many secondary intermediate schools already have enhanced status, which was granted to them by the education and library boards when they were allowed to change their names and call themselves high schools because of the distinctive courses and qualifications that youngsters attending them could achieve?

Dr. Mawhinney: Yes, I do, and I am confident that the reform proposals will enhance not only their status, but that of other secondary schools also.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): I thank the Minister for giving way and apologise for intervening so early in his speech, but my point may clear up something. What exactly does he mean by "enhancing the status" of a school?

Dr. Mawhinney: As Northern Ireland Members know, I mean that there is widespread perception in Northern Ireland that, if at all possible, parents wish their children to go to grammar school. That is unfair to a significant number of secondary schools which deliver good education now and which, as a consequence of these proposals, will be enabled to deliver even better education —and will be seen by the community to be delivering better education—

Mr. Mallon: They will do the opposite.

Dr. Mawhinney: The people of Northern Ireland fiercely defend the many positive values in their society, the moral and social well-being of their children, and the preservation of their traditions. At the same time, they are increasingly receptive to changes which will strengthen those values and play a part in bringing together the two communities.

Historically, Northern Ireland's children have been educated separately—by religious belief and tradition. An increasing number of parents are now demanding a third option. They want their children educated in the same classroom as children from the other side of the community, in a school which values both traditions. So this order contains new arrangements to help establish integrated schools. It also places a duty, for the first time, on the Department of Education for Northern Ireland to encourage and facilitate integrated education.

That does not mean that we intend to impose integrated education. We do not. It will happen only when and to the extent that parents themselves choose it. This order also enables Government to offer greater and earlier help to those seeking to establish new integrated schools. It signals our commitment to afford integrated education equal legitimacy alongside the controlled and voluntary sectors.

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): I thank the Minister for giving way again. He is obviously going to use the term "integrated education" and "integrated schools" considerably during his speech, so for the benefit of the less well informed, such as myself, will he define what he means by those terms? Does he mean 50 per cent. Catholic plus 50 per cent. Protestant, or 80:20 or 10:90, or does he mean to include other religions as well?

Dr. Mawhinney: No, it does not mean 16 to 90. It means exactly what the order defines it to be. If the hon. Gentleman will be patient for a few minutes, I shall come to precisely the point he raises.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Does the Minister agree that, if we are to have three types of schools in Northern Ireland, they should all be treated equally? Is it not a fact that the order discriminates in favour of what the Minister calls integrated education and will mean the reduction of money to other schools which have previously achieved good work in the education system?

Dr. Mawhinney: No, I do not accept that. The capital arrangements in Northern Ireland to which the hon. Gentleman referred are exactly the same as those in England and Wales. Schools with no predominant majority of one particular group on the governing board, such as controlled schools, receive 100 per cent. capital funding. The schools in which one group retains an overall majority on the board of governors receive 85 per cent. That applies to Catholic maintained schools and voluntary grammar schools in Northern Ireland, some of which would be perceived as Protestant voluntary grammar schools. That is exactly the same as in England and Wales. The new proposed integrated schools will not have any group holding a majority on the board of governors. Therefore, they qualify, as does a controlled school, for 100 per cent. capital funding.

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): Is the Minister prepared to give the precise percentage given to Catholic schools in England and Wales?

Dr. Mawhinney: Not without notice, but I can obtain the information for the hon. Gentleman. We are talking about Northern Ireland here.

Mr. McNamara: The Minister drew a comparison between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom.

Dr. Mawhinney: The arrangements between those schools which have no overall majority in control of the governing body and those which have are similar in Northern Ireland, England and Wales.

Mr. Beggs: There are more Members present tonight than there have been for some time. Will the Minister clear up the confusion over the extent of interest and enthusiasm in Northern Ireland for integrated education? Does he agree that in a recent survey carried out in the Coleraine area—a likely spot for developing integrated education —only 4 per cent. of parents interviewed considered that they might send their eldest child of pre-school age to an integrated school? That is a reflection of the level of interest across the Province. It will take much promotion by the Minister and financial inducements to develop integrated education.

Dr. Mawhinney: I have no idea whether those figures are well based. If I understand the implication of the hon. Member's question, he seems to hint that, because only 4 per cent. of people in Northern Ireland are interested in integrated education, the option should not be available to anybody because that is not a big enough percentage to satisfy the hon. Gentleman. The basis of the order is that an option will be made available of equal legitimacy to parents in Northern Ireland. It will be up to them to decide whether integration should take place, to what extent and how quickly.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Does the Minister take comfort from the poll conducted by the *Belfast Telegraph* which shows that large numbers of people in Northern Ireland from both parts of the community want to see the integration option made available? In Lagan college, the numbers increased from 28 at its inception to nearly 600 pupils today. About 1,700 pupils are now in integrated education, and ultimately that must be a matter for parents.

Dr. Mawhinney: I pay tribute to the hon. Gentleman for his robust and long support for the concept of integrated education in Northern Ireland. I am grateful to him for drawing that reference to the attention of the House, thus saving me from having to do it. Perhaps I may now make some progress with my speech.

Mr. Mallon *rose*——

Dr. Mawhinney: The hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to make his own speech. I shall come back to integrated education.

I spoke about equal legitimacy and I stress the word "equal". Assistance to this group of schools does not imply a lessening of esteem for any other type of school; nor is integrated education a panacea for Northern Ireland's future. It is a legitimate education option and will be treated as such. Its legitimacy is no more and no less than other existing school options.

We recognise, however, that for the foreseeable future the majority of children in Northern Ireland will continue to be educated in schools which reflect the two different traditions. Given that reality, it is vital that our young people learn early that differences do not have to lead to division but can become the strength of a society. We

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intend, therefore, that the school curriculum should play its part in fostering greater understanding, tolerance and respect across the community divide.

Therefore, for the first time, all children of all ages in all schools will study two new cross-curricular themes—education for mutual understanding, and cultural heritage. In addition, they will learn from a common history curriculum. Those changes are designed not to produce a homogenised Ulster man or woman, but to allow all in the community to live comfortably with cultural diversity and differences of aspiration, without threat to their own beliefs and identity.

Religious education occupies a central role in the curriculum. The order will strengthen the quality of religious education teaching by opening it to inspection by the Department's inspectorate, where a board of governors so wishes. The order also enables arrangements to be made for the provision of a core syllabus for religious education, and to that end constructive discussions have already taken place between the main churches.

For some, an important element of their identity is the Irish language. The Government recognise the important place that the language occupies in the educational and cultural life of a significant proportion of the population, as well as its place in the curriculum of many schools. The order therefore enables children to study Irish in addition to, or instead of, one of the major European Community languages which the school must also offer, in accordance with their parents' wishes.

If parents are to be constructively involved in their children's education, they need more and better information about how well their children are performing at school and how the schools themselves are performing. Schools, too, need to know how their pupils are progressing so that they can gear their teaching to each child's needs. Therefore, the order will set in place arrangements for the regular monitoring of pupil achievement. It is anticipated that the arrangements will follow broadly those being introduced in England and Wales. The aggregated assessment results of all the pupils in a school will form part of the annual report which each school will produce. The report will be available to parents and will contain a wide range of information about the school's activities and educational opportunities.

Among the most important provisions in the order are those in part IV, which relate to the admission of pupils to grant-aided schools. The Government consider it unacceptable that parents who wish to send their children to a particular school which has places available to accommodate them are prevented from doing so by artificial quotas. We intend that admissions will be constrained only by the physical capacity of the school. Parents will be able to choose the school they wish their children to attend, and the school will be obliged to admit them so long as it has places available.

Hon. Members will already be familiar with the concept of the local management of schools, which was introduced in the Education Reform Act 1988. Schools in my constituency have been managing their own budgets for several years, and I believe that none of them would wish to return to the old system. The new delegation arrangements in part V of the order give those directly involved in the day-to-day operation of the school much greater financial control over their own priorities.

I now turn to Part VI of the order, the provisions of which are intended to encourage and facilitate the development of integrated education, mainly through the establishment of integrated schools. These provisions are introduced in direct response to public demand. The integrated education sector is as yet small, as the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) said. It comprises eight primary and two secondary schools, with some 1,600 pupils in all. But its growth has been rapid, and I pay warm tribute to the determination and perseverance of parents who have achieved this, at some personal sacrifice.

The Government's consultation paper included a proposal for a new category of schools to be known as grant-maintaned integrated schools. Responses were strongly supportive of the proposals and advocated that they should be extended, in particular, to provide the means for assisting new integrated schools with strong growth potential to get started. Both these proposals are reflected in the order. Grant-maintained integrated schools will be established by parents choosing, through secret ballots, to transfer a school from its existing structure to GMI status.

Throughout this part of the order there are key references to the need for the enrolment of an integrated school to include "reasonable numbers of both Protestant and Roman Catholic pupils". A number of representations have been made that this provision should more strictly define integrated schools as having an equal balance in the numbers of pupils from each tradition.

We have carefully considered these representations. It is axiomatic that an integrated school should have a reasonably substantial representation of pupils from both backgrounds, and Governments will seek to ensure that this is always the case. However, we also want the aspirations of as many parents as possible for integrated schooling to be realised. The harsh reaity is that, in Northern Ireland, only a few schools could hope to achieve rough equality of balance and maintain it over a period of time. In our view, therefore, the end result of imposing such a rigid definition would be to reduce the number of eligible schools to unacceptably low levels.

Physical numbers are important, but they are not the sole determinant. Indeed, the key features which are likely to distinguish integrated schools from others will transcend considerations of mere arithmetic. The perception by parents of the character and ethos of an integrated school will depend on how the school operates day by day, and how effectively it respects and accommodates the cultural identities of all its pupils. The central responsibility for offering these guarantees to parents must lie with the managers and teaching staff of the school.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): Many Conservative Members support the order as a genuine attempt to break down sectarianism in Northern Ireland. However, I am worried about the governing bodies of the schools. Can my hon. Friend assure us that, although there is nothing in the order, there will be a balance between the two communities on the boards of governors? At present, nothing in the draft order requires those making nominations to have regard to the balance between the two communities.

Dr. Mawhinney: I thank my hon. Friend for his support for the general principle of integrated schools. Integrated schools are defined in the order in terms of their management, control and ethos. If they do not reflect some element of balanced representation of the two communities in all three of those attributes, they will not qualify under the terms set out in the order. I believe that that is the assurance that my hon. Friend seeks.

Mr. Ashdown: Like the hon. Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham), I support the order. The Minister has provided what we seek. He talked about a rigid equation. However, no one has asked for a rigid formula. We want some statement that will allow for a balance; something that might be left for the courts to decide in the last analysis. By no means do we want a 50:50 analysis. He used the words "a rough balance". That is exactly one of the characteristics that we seek. If he can say that in his speech, why can he not enshrine it in the Bill?

Dr. Mawhinney: For the reasons which I have already given the House. I remind the right hon. Gentleman that I said that the Government recognise the importance of having significant numbers of pupils from both Protestant and Roman Catholic backgrounds if the ethos and character of the school is to be truly integrated. The Government will seek to achieve that when development proposals are submitted, subject to parents choosing to opt the school out of an existing structure into a grant-maintained integrated structure.

Mr. John David Taylor (Strangford): If a school opted to become an integrated school and was accepted as such, but after a time failed to comply with the conditions and criteria which the Minister has just described, what kind of school would it be? Could it convert back to being some other form of school?

Dr. Mawhinney: The order covers entirely those circumstances. The board of governors ultimately has legal responsibility, and if it did not carry out that responsibility under the order, it would be replaced.

In Northern Ireland, unlike in England and Wales, it is proposed that a school can change its character at the time of acquiring grant-maintained status. There have been some representations that special arrangements, similar to those made in the Education Reform Act 1988, should be made in this order to protect the existing ethos of a school acquiring GMI status. However, they ignore the fundamental difference that, in Northern Ireland, a grant-maintained integrated school can only have an integrated ethos, and if a school was not formerly integrated there must of necessity be a change of ethos.

Let me also emphasise that schools do not just proceed automatically to integrated status following a ballot. Applications will be decided by the Department of Education having regard to all the circumstances of the case, including whether or not the school would be likely to be attended by reasonable numbers of both Protestant and Roman Catholic pupils. It will also be possible for a proposal to be approved subject to certain conditions.

Part VII of the order deals with further education. The further education sector in Northern Ireland plays an important role in the training of suitably qualified young people who have the knowledge and skills to support the economic life of the Province and create new areas of enterprise. Colleges will henceforth be given delegated budgets which will enable them to meet more effectively the needs of the communities which they serve. They will also have new governing bodies in which local business and professional people will have a major involvement. Education and library boards will be given new specific responsibility for the strategic planning and the preparation of schemes for the overall further education provision in their areas.

The Catholic maintained school system is an important element in Northern Ireland's education system. This sector will benefit from the creation of the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, described in part IX of the order. Both Government and the Roman Catholic Church authorities saw the need for a central body which would promote effective management in Catholic maintained schools, as well as advising the Department and the education and library boards on matters relating to these schools.

The Government welcome the creation of the council, not in any sense as a sixth area board, but as an important element in its objective to raise educational standards in all parts of the system. The statutory responsibility to provide curriculum support for all types of schools, including Catholic maintained schools, will fall to education and library boards.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Is the Roman Catholic council a public body in the same sense as the education and library boards, and therefore subject to scrutiny by the ombudsman and the Fair Employment Commission?

Dr. Mawhinney: It is a public body, the members of which are appointed either through the Church or the Department of Education.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Will it be subject to the ombudsman?

Dr. Mawhinney: The hon. Gentleman asks a good question. I shall double-check the answer.

Mr. Alton: I am grateful to the Minister, who has given way a number of times. On the issue of the reorganisation of schools within the Catholic sector, where there is some need to reorganise in any event, can he give an assurance that capital expenditure and grant rate will be reconsidered and that he will be open to representations on that issue and on that about governing bodies?

Dr. Mawhinney: We always take seriously a request from all sectors of the education community for capital expenditure. That is foremost in our thinking on reorganisation and rationalisation schemes when, each year, we decide how to disburse the capital programme. I hope that that is the assurance that the hon. Gentleman seeks.

I can tell the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) that the council will be subject to the ombudsman procedure.

Rev. Ian Paisley: And to the Fair Employment Commission?

Dr. Mawhinney: Education does not come under the auspices of the agency, as the hon. Gentleman knows.

Another feature of this order that has been welcomed is that it clarifies the responsibilities and roles of each of the major partners in the education service in Northern Ireland. At a time of radical change, it is important that each partner in the education service knows its role and

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that that role is valued. In particular, the education and library boards will have a central role in supporting the implementation of the reforms. They are to have major new statutory duties relating to curriculum support and in-service training. As major partners in the delivery of the education service, their views, as well as those of the CCMS and others, will continue to be sought and to influence education policy in the Province. It will be essential that the close partnership that already characterises our system is both maintained and strengthened to permit a smooth transition to the new arrangements. I am committed to ensuring that that will happen.

Teachers are at the forefront of these changes. One of the prime objectives of this partnership must be to support them, both professionally and with resources, as they discharge their duties. We all admire their professional commitment and are grateful to them for their dedication to the children we place in their charge every day. The Government have already shown that support for teachers by the decision to phase the proposed introduction of the programmes of study, so as not to overburden them or their schools.

I do not under-estimate the size of the challenge ahead as we implement these reforms. Meeting that challenge will, I believe, be exciting for everyone involved. It will also be costly. Major programmes of in-service training for teachers and boards of governors have been initiated. Large capital and equipment expenditure will be required. The Government are committed to providing the necessary resources and additional money has already been allocated. I intend to make a further announcement soon about the future levels of increased support that we shall be making available. That will demonstrate our commitment to the classroom.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): My hon. Friend has told the House that this is a measure of massive importance for the reform of education in the Province. Does he really believe that it is satisfactory for such a measure to come before Parliament that is unamendable and with no opportunity for any debate in Committee or on Report? Can my hon. Friend reassure my right hon. Friend the Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) and me that this measure has the approval of the Government of the Irish Republic?

Dr. Mawhinney: I shall begin with the last point. This measure has not been presented to the Government of the Irish Republic, so I have no idea of what their views might be. It certainly does not come to this House with their approval, as it has never been presented to them for their approval. Indeed, it has not been presented to them for comment.

As to the hon. Gentleman's first point——

Mr. Gow: Honourable Friend.

Dr. Mawhinney: I beg my hon. Friend's pardon.

As my hon. Friend knows, his first point is a matter not for me, but for the Leader of the House. He also knows that Northern Ireland business on transferred matters is conducted through the Order in Council procedure in the House. It was at least partly with that in mind that we conducted an extensive consultation during 21 months in Northern Ireland. Like my hon. Friend, I would wish to see the order in as good shape as possible and as sensitive to the needs of the children of Northern Ireland as it is possible under the circumstances to achieve. I hope that my hon. Friend will agree that we have sought to do that in presenting the order to the House.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): Will the Minister give way?

Dr. Mawhinney: No. I have almost finished, and I have given way generously.

Hon. Members will recognise that the order is a major piece of legislation. To permit hon. Members as much time as possible to comment on its provisions, I do not intend to go into more detail. All legislation that comes before the House is important, but that which affects the education of our children, and thus the future quality of our society, is particularly important. The fact that the legislation concerns Northern Ireland, with its unique combination of social and economic problems, gives the order an added significance. It deserves our special attention. I am honoured to commend it to the House.

10.51 pm

Mr. Roger Stott (Wigan): The hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) took the words out of my mouth when he asked a simple but important question. I have been a parliamentarian for a considerable number of years, but I come to my present position as Opposition spokesman for Northern Ireland in some kind of virginal innocence.

We have before us a document which is hardly insubstantial. It is a weighty tome. It contains what the Minister has described as the most fundamental revolutionary changes in Northern Ireland's education system since the war. The sadness is that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) said last night, the matter would have been best dealt with in some devolved system of government where Northern Ireland representatives could at least have had the opportunity to debate and amend what is being proposed. In the absence of any devolved Northern Ireland Parliament, the order should at least have been debated in Committee so that we could have subjected it to the test of scrutiny and tabled amendments.

I should have preferred that to the further centralisation of power in the hands of the Secretary of State, whose presence we note. I am sure that he has read article 158 which further enhances his plenipotentiary powers in Northern Ireland. We should have preferred a different method of dealing with the order.

The Labour party welcomes some elements of the proposals. The Government's commitment to integrated education, the expansion of the curriculum to include courses designed to improve cross-cultural harmony and the abolition of the 11-plus examination in its present form are all supported by the Opposition.

Mr. Mallon: This debate is not about integrated education. It is about whether any sector should take financial preference over other sectors and be able to jump the capital expenditure queue. It is about the justice of the proposal.

Mr. Stott: If the hon. Gentleman will bear with me, I intend to deal with integrated education. If he catches your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, I have no doubt that he will make a robust contribution to the debate.

We support certain elements in the order. However, it is an ill-informed and ill-conceived attack on Northern Ireland's education system. The Minister referred to financial support for the recommendations. Northern Ireland's education system is underfunded. Between 1979 and 1986, net expenditure on education, libraries and arts in Northern Ireland fell from 22·7 per cent. of the Northern Ireland budget to 20·9 per cent. If we use the GDP deflator to calculate the necessary level of spending, by 1986 education in the Province was underfunded by £35 million. Despite that evidence, the Government say that there have been no cuts in the education budget.

That claim was refuted by the Southern education and library board in a paper to the Secretary of State for Education on 29 April 1986. It said:

> "Since 1980/81 the annual increases in cash allocation to our board have been insufficient to keep pace with inflation."

Evidence of underfunding is backed up by articles in the *Belfast Telegraph:*

> "City schools face £700,000 in cutbacks"

and

> "Government will force more closures"

and

> "Good and bad news as board agree cuts"

and

> "Education blueprint will need cash aid, warns head."

Without sufficient funding, Northern Ireland's schools will be unable to implement these expensive and far-reaching changes.

Rev. Ian Paisley: If there are to be across-the-board grants to schools, does the hon. Gentleman agree that we must first raise the level of all schools and then deal with the grant system?

Mr. Stott: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that underfunding is a major problem. If the proposals in the order are applied to schools that are already underfunded, they will increase their existing problems.

Who is to implement the changes? Who will be at the sharp end? Those dedicated men and women in Northern Ireland who are responsible for teaching Northern Ireland's children will have to implement them. I am married to a teacher. I know from first-hand experience that the education system in England and Wales is experiencing great difficulties as a consequence of its reorganisation.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): And Scotland.

Mr. Stott: Yes. My hon. Friend reminds me that Scotland is experiencing the same difficulties.

The core curriculum, testing and opting out have put great pressure on the education system in England, Wales and Scotland. The teaching profession in Northern Ireland has been steadily demoralised during the 10 years of Conservative Government. Morale is at an all-time low, with a constant flow of teachers quitting the education system. Recent research shows that in 1988 the number of teachers retiring prematurely through ill health increased by 42 per cent. and that during the past 10 years the ratio of teachers leaving the classroom before retirement age has gone up by a staggering 260 per cent.

David Allen, the leader of the Ulster Teachers Union, blamed those figures on teachers being "saturated with innovation". Stress consultant Dr. Sandra Mills warned that the Government's proposed reforms will serve only to increase teacher stress and further undermine the delivery and standards of education.

The result of the drain on teaching resources has been extra pressure on the remaining teachers, with substitute teachers now being so scarce that the absence of a single teacher may result in other classes being swollen by as many as 50 pupils. Only today I learned that the pupil-teacher ratio in Northern Ireland is the worst in the United Kingdom. The situation is compounded by the chronic lack of investment in the physical environment of schools in the Province. Because of the Education Reform Act, teachers in England and Wales have no direct salary negotiations. I understand that that is not the case in Northern Ireland.

This evening I received a factsheet from the Irish National Teachers' Organisation, stating:

> "The Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 currently provides for the Department determine teachers' salaries. Practice to date has been for the Department to issue regulations which encompass the agreements reached by employers representatives (including the Department) and the recognised teachers' unions in negotiations. It is now being proposed that unidentified 'prescribed persons or bodies' may determine teachers' salaries. This new provision has been included in the Draft Order laid on 23 November 1989; it did not appear in any of the Consultative Documents nor in the Proposal for a Draft Order published in June 1989. There has been absolutely no consultation on this matter which is of central importance"

to all teaching unions in Northern Ireland.

In spite of what the Minister said about the consultation period, he has failed to consult the teachers on the important issue of salaries.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the Minister should follow the precedent of his former colleague in the Northern Ireland Office who, in a similar situation when something was introduced into an order at the last minute, gave the House an undertaking that he would introduce amending legislation at the first opportunity?

Mr. Stott: Perhaps the Minister will note what the hon. Gentleman said, and perhaps we can persuade him during the debate. Having listened to the veracity of the arguments, he may very well take that point on board.

I am conscious of the time and I know that other hon. Members wish to speak so I shall try to get through my speech as quickly as I can.

Although official figures show, and the Minister has pointed out, that school leavers in Northern Ireland are more likely to leave school with A-levels—23·4 per cent. compared with 16 per cent. in England and Wales—the figures at the other end of the scale show that in Northern Ireland 21·9 per cent. of school leavers leave school with no GCE or CSE qualifications. The figure for Wales is 16 per cent. and in England it is only 9·6 per cent. Clearly, although the Northern Ireland education system is doing well for those geared towards A-levels and higher education, it is not performing effectively for the majority of schoolchildren not geared to those qualifications.

We believe that the current attainment problems are a direct result of the selective system of education in the Province which labels children as educational failures at an early age and seriously limits their future opportunities.

[Mr. Stott]

We are concerned at the omission from the order of a serious appreciation of the differences in educational qualifications of school leavers from the Catholic and Protestant backgrounds. The 1978-79 report of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights highlighted the fact that, in 1985-86, 19 per cent. of leavers from Protestant schools were classified as having no qualifications, compared with 25 per cent. of leavers from Catholic schools, and that in 1987 it would have required a 10·4 per cent. increase in the number of Catholics leaving school with A-levels to match the Protestant position. That is unacceptable, and I do not believe that the order has addressed the problem.

We welcome the fact that the Government have substantially withdrawn their proposals to allow schools to opt out. They tried to justify opting out on the ground that it represented a democratisation of education provision. As the Minister with responsibility for education admitted, and I think that I quote him fairly, absolutely no one thought it a good idea. People appreciate that in reality opting out represents a Government attempt to centralise educational power by further removing local control and placing further additional powers in the hands of the Secretary of State.

Opting out in Northern Ireland now applies to only one class of school—integrated schools. Once a school is officially recognised as integrated, it becomes eligible for grant-maintained integrated status. Labour Members are strong supporters of the concept of integrated education and believe that it has a vital role to play in the development of a school system which does not promote and reflect sectarianism. There is growing support in the Province for integration. A poll conducted in April last year for the *Fortnight* magazine showed that 67 per cent. of people were in favour of the Government supporting integrated education. However, we are concerned that the Government's proposals for opting out may seriously discredit integration as an option throughout the education system in Northern Ireland.

I have recently received a letter from the Belfast Charitable Trust for Integrated Education, which says:

> "Several governors of integrated schools have in recent weeks declared their opposition to seeking GMIS status for their schools if the draft order is not suitably amended. We fear that if it is not we will soon have a small number of schools outside the legally defined integrated system, but accepting our definition of integration (i.e. schools where Protestant and Catholic children are educated together on a footing of equality), while the schools inside the legally defined integrated system will not be accepted by the integrated education movement as properly integrated."

Although we support the principle of integration and integrated schools, we believe that the Government are going about it in the wrong way.

On the subject of integration, the leader of the Social Democratic party asked a question——

Mr. Ashdown: Liberal party.

Mr. Stott: If the right hon. Gentleman cannot get the name right, he cannot expect me to get it right either. He asked a question concerning the consultation with the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education. I wonder why the Minister has not seen fit to talk to the council. It has made suggestions in its correspondence about "reasonable numbers" and "a reasonable balance". The Minister tried to justify what he meant by that. As I understand it, these people want a ratio not of 50:50 but of something like 40:60.

There are other people in Northern Ireland who may not be religious, such as those from ethnic minorities or those families in which the parents come from different sides of the religious divide. There is nothing to prevent the Minister from accepting the definition that people want. I am sorry to labour the point, but here again is an issue that could have been taken up in Committee and on which we could have tested the Minister. We could have flushed out the reason why he has refused to accept that definition.

We also dispute the Government's claims that their proposals to allow open enrolment in schools will lead to greater choice for parents. Their stated intention is to force schools to enrol to the limits of their physical capacity according to the number of parents who want to send their children to a particular school. In practice, that represents a system of rationalisation because while some schools will expand, others will close. Grammar schools, as a result of their elitist reputation, are likely to benefit from the new system as parents will compete to send their children into what they perceive to be the best school. Aside from the adverse implications for non-grammar schools under this system, grammar schools will find themselves oversubscribed and will be forced to introduce some type of selection. That seems likely to be on academic ability and parental suitability. In short, open enrolment provides a backdoor method for preserving the 11-plus and the less popular schools will go into a vortex of decline.

A Northern Ireland head teacher recently summarised the situation in stronger language when he said:

> "We would prefer to have a marriage rather than a rape. We are afraid that the grammar schools will just take over and push many of the secondary schools to the wall."

Mr. William Ross: Has the hon. Gentleman noticed that, whenever the Minister was speaking on this matter, he said that schools could enrol up to their capacity, but that he did not define the capacity? Is the hon. Gentleman as well aware as the Minister that there are many schools in Northern Ireland with many temporary huts sitting in the school grounds? Are they included in the capacity or is it simply the permanent buildings that are being covered?

Mr. Stott: I am aware of that. We have serious doubts about the Minister's description of how open enrolment will work. Will it be carried out until schools are bursting at the seams? We believe that there should be some planning in education. In England and Wales, the local education authority, the local community and the local education committee have the responsibility.

One of the key Government proposals is for the establishment of formal tests at the ages of eight, 11, 14 and 16 to assess pupil performance. The system of testing that is proposed could lead to a lowering of standards, reinforce failure and demotivate many children. Assessment and testing in the widest sense are integral to the very process of teaching and learning. Some testing is beneficial both for individual pupils and their parents, and for those who are concerned with judging the effectiveness of schools. But the Government's proposals represent an over-reliance on inappropriate forms of testing which could result in paradoxical results and to a possibility of lowering rather than raising standards.

Experience in some American schools shows that testing can lead to teachers teaching to test and neglecting both the high and low achievers. Rigid testing at an early age will have a demoralising effect on some children who perform poorly and will lead to their developing a feeling of inadequacy.

I believe that information on a child's performance at school should be gleaned through sensitive diagnostic testing which fully tests each child's strengths and weaknesses. We welcome the Government's decision not to use tests to construct league tables of pupil against pupil, of class against class and of school against school, but some of us are still not convinced that the testing data will not be used for such purposes.

The Labour party considers that the Government's proposals to establish a formal test at the age of 11 represent a back-door method of preserving the 11-plus examination. The move clearly reveals the Government's desire to resist the development of universal education and to reinforce and further develop selective education. That is also the view of all the people in the Northern Ireland trade unions to whom I have spoken over the past two weeks.

The Labour party has always believed that the framework for the curriculum should be clear and more explicit. Our 1987 manifesto contained a commitment to a "clear but flexible core curriculum agreed at a national level." We therefore welcome the broad concept of a Northern Ireland curriculum, but we have serious reservations about its detail. We are alarmed that the national curriculum does not apply to pupils in the private schools. The Government's plans are not about establishing a common curriculum for all pupils but about setting up a state syllabus that applies only to certain pupils. That is both politically dishonest and educationally divisive. We also feel that the Government's proposals are too rigid and too prescriptive. The likelihood in practice of time impositions for the compulsory contributory subjects will serve to squeeze out important subjects such as information technology, electronics, statistics, personal, social and career education and home economics. We believe that schools should be permitted great flexibility in the range of compulsory subjects offered and the teaching approach adopted.

The proposal to include education for mutual understanding as a cross-curricular theme deserves praise. We fully support the aim of EMU in educating children to understand the different traditions in Northern Ireland. We also support the Government's new position on the Irish language. Irish is a key strand of the Catholic tradition in Northern Ireland and is growing in popularity —it is second only to French, the most studied language in schools. It is being studied by more than 20,000 students. We believe that the Government have made the right decision in allowing schools the flexibility to include Irish in the framework of the curriculum.

We feel that the current method of educational funding may create problems for voluntary schools in the provision of the full curriculum. Controlled schools, which tend to be Protestant schools, receive 100 per cent. funding from the Northern Ireland Office for capital projects, compared with only 85 per cent. that the voluntary, largely Catholic, schools receive. It is often argued, for example, that the reason why proportionately more Protestants than Catholics study for A-level science is that controlled schools can more easily raise the funds needed for expensive science blocks whereas Catholic schools have been faced with the problem of having to raise significant sums from donations.

The Labour party believes that the system of differential capital funding should be ended. That change would not only facilitate the more successful implementation of the curriculum but would play an important role in the achievement of greater equality in educational attainment between the two main sectors.

I have already explained that this substantial document deals with virtually all aspects of education in Northern Ireland. But it does not deal with one very important aspect of Northern Ireland education—pre-school education. Pre-school education in Northern Ireland is woefully inadequate. Day nurseries provide only 2·8 places per 1,000 children aged between one and four, against a United Kingdom average of 16·7 places. Only 208 places per 1,000 children aged between three and four exist in registered playgroups in Northern Ireland. In the United Kingdom the average is 322. Only 13 per cent. of Northern Ireland's children aged between three and four exist in registered playgroups in Northern Ireland. In the United Kingdom, the average is 322. Only 13 per cent. of Northern Ireland's children aged between three and four attend nursery classes, as against the United Kingdom average of 23 per cent., which is bad enough.

The Government have clearly failed in their duty to provide adequate child care provision in Northern Ireland. We consider the Government's failure to tackle the problems of pre-school education while introducing the most wide-ranging reforms of the education service in the Province since the war represents a shameful neglect that clearly illustrates a blinkered approach to education in Northern Ireland. We believe that nursery education should be provided for every three and four-year-old whose parents want it.

The Labour party believes that education is central to the quality of individual lives, to the establishment of moral values, to the functioning of society and to the general economic prosperity of the Province. We believe that the people of Northern Ireland should be entitled by right to the best education without regard to their family background, income, sex or religion.

The proposals outlined in the order represent a combination of dangerous, divisive and destructive measures which constitute a substantial threat to respected Northern Ireland educational values. We cannot amend the order. It will go forth and its provisions will be visited on the educational establishments of Northern Ireland. All I can say is that when the next Labour Government assume office in two years' time we shall return to the subject and involve everyone in Northern Ireland in its implementation and in meaningful consultation.

11.21 pm

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): I should like to place on record at the beginning of my speech the continuing dissatisfaction of Ulster Unionists and other right hon. and hon. Members at the fact that we are forced to embark on yet another debate on an unamendable order which affects the education of children in Northern Ireland.

This is not the beginning of a personal attack on the Minister, but a further reminder to the Government that elected representatives from Northern Ireland agree that the use of the Order in Council procedure to deal with the

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affairs of Northern Ireland is shameful, reflects badly on the mother of Parliaments and should be discontinued and replaced before the end of the Session with proper legislative procedures.

I recognise the efforts that the Minister made to consult and to obtain submissions and responses, but I must observe that although the Northern Ireland Office and the Government think that a considerable time was given for consultation, because the recent consultation period covered the holiday months of July and August, even with the extension granted by the Minister, the timing was not conducive to obtaining maximum participation of all interested parties and in-depth analysis of such complex and radical proposals.

The electorate in Northern Ireland, school governors and members of education and library boards are sceptical about the consultation process. If consultation is to be effective, and not just a cosmetic exercise, there must be seen to be positive responses to representations. Some of us had considerable difficulty persuading major interests to respond at all, and even then it was difficult to arrange suitable dates for discussion of the proposals. Consultation on education matters with people involved in schools is well nigh impossible in the holiday period and utterly impossible in the first month of a new school year.

I accept that the Minister responded positively when advised of the difficulties faced by those seriously wishing to examine the provisions in the order and extended the consultation period to 30 September, but concerns still remain, despite the ministerial statement of 10 August which emphasised that the proposals were designed to give more power and greater freedom of choice to parents and school governors. It is clear that many of the changes have been widely accepted and welcomed and it is recognised that education has always been a partnership between parents, teachers, boards and the Department.

Will whichever Minister replies to the debate tell the House whether part II, article 3, of the order has made provision for central control of education by the Department of Education, thereby reducing considerably the function of the education and library boards and other bodies in Northern Ireland? If the proposals were designed to give more power and greater freedom of choice, why has there been this centralising of the control of education within the Department? It is dangerous in a democratic society and especially dangerous in a divided society.

The Minister should tell the House whether article 3(a), which extends the Department's duty to promote the education of the people of Northern Ireland, thereby goes beyond the provisions of the Education Reform Act 1988, which appears to have no similar provision for education in England and Wales. Suspicion arises from perceived central control of education. People in both communities demand an assurance—the Unionist community demands that its children will not be subjected to indoctrination through a green-tinged curriculum and the Roman Catholic community demands assurances that there will be no orange indoctrination of its children.

Under article 4(i) of part III, the board of governors and the principals of every grant-aided school are charged with the responsibility of ensuring that the curriculum in the school satisfies the requirement of the article. Good Ulster schools have always provided a broad and balanced curriculum which is child-centred and has sufficient flexibility and depth in the subjects studied to match the age, ability and aptitude of the pupils. Principals and teachers, as professionals, produced that balanced curriculum.

Does the Minister really believe that members of governing bodies desire responsibility for curriculum matters? Perhaps he will tell the House why the order has departed from the provision made for England and Wales under section 1 of the Education Reform Act whereby the Secretary of State, the local education authorities, the governing bodies and the head teachers have responsibility for delivering the curriculum. By omitting area boards and other bodies from article 4(1), the Minister has reduced the functions and responsibilities of the area boards. Will education and library boards be consulted on curriculum content, or will schools and boards be forced to accept packages produced by Ministers and hand-picked curriculum draftspersons?

If it is accepted that professional teachers and principals will be expected by most governing bodies to have a key role in curriculum matters in each school, why, under schedule 8(3), do the qualifying conditions for membership of the Northern Ireland Curriculum Council and the Northern Ireland School Examinations and Assessment Council not include any reference to knowledge and experience of education? Members only have to be persons appearing to the head of department to have knowledge or experience relevant to the council's functions.

It is strongly felt by some practising teachers that teachers should be members of each council. Will the Minister give an assurance that teachers will have such representation and, if possible, give further information about the proportion of teacher members, the areas of expertise and the means of selection that will be used to appoint teacher members to the two councils?

Curriculum responsibility is referred to in articles 4, 10 and 11. Article 11(3) states:

> "It shall be the duty of—
>
> (a) the Department and the boards in relation to all grant-aided schools . . .
>
> to exercise their functions with a view to ensuring that the Boards of Governors and principals of grant-aided schools are in a position to fulfil their duties".

These articles give area boards no direct authority in matters relating to curriculum, yet many matters of policy are concerned with curriculum issues. Has the Minister amended, or has he even the power to amend, the order to include a change of emphasis to reflect these area board functions?

Arising from the requirement that school curriculum policy should reflect the findings of inspections, will the Minister say whether all schools can expect to have more frequent general inspections and subject inspections than in the past? Will he explain why, under article 6(4), there will be no formal assessment within creative and expressive studies? Will not the decision lead to a loss of esteem by parents, pupils and employers and to a deterioration of provision for such study within schools? Will the Minister reconsider article 6(4) and remove this permanent exclusion from assessment to ensure that the career prospects of many talented young people in Northern Ireland are not adversely affected?

Articles 9 and 34 cover external qualifications. There is concern in schools to meet the needs of individual pupils. Article 9 provides that no course of study for school age pupils leading to an external qualification shall be provided except when the Department approves the qualification and the syllabus. That requirement applies to courses offered to all pupils of school age in grant-aided schools and may, by order, be extended to include pupils above compulsory school age and students below 19 in full-time further education. Acknowledging that GCSEs will form the basis of assessment at 16, will the Minister ensure that alternatives to GCSEs which have relevance and currency in the sphere of further education and the world of work, and have met individual pupils' needs in the past, will still be available to post primary pupils?

Part IV deals with admissions to grant-aided schools. Will the Minister spell out honestly for parents that unless they make realistic choices when stating a preference for the post-primary school at which they wish their child to be educated, they and the child could be disappointed?

Does the Minister agree that, in reality, grammar school heads will select? Does he accept that open enrolment will lead to a demand for grammar school places to fill available accommodation and that only when oversubscription occurs will academic attainment or aptitude be used as criteria for admission to those grammar schools?

How does the Minister expect secondary or community schools to compete fairly for pupils? In the long term, removing the 27-73 per cent. split of intake between grammar and secondary schools could prove harmful to both types of school. Grammar schools which use open enrolment to accept pupils beyond those who are highly motivated academically will have difficulty with less able pupils, and many smaller secondary schools will be unable to provide the curriculum demanded in the order and will be forced to close or amalgamate.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I have an enormous admiration for grammar schools in Northern Ireland and I am amazed that Northern Ireland does so much better in A-level and O-level attainment than England, Scotland or Wales. What do Ulster Unionists think about the abolition of the 11-plus in article 38(5), bearing in mind that that will not happen in England and Wales—thank goodness—and that grammar schools in Northern Ireland have a broad social base and get the best out of above-average pupils?

Mr. Beggs: I have no doubt that the grammar school system as established in Northern Ireland will remain. Even with the disappearance of the 11-plus selection procedure, the new attainment testing will provide a basis on which children will be enrolled in grammar schools. Our real concern is that to maintain numbers and to protect staff when there is falling enrolment, there may be a temptation for some heads of grammar schools to enrol pupils who will not benefit from a grammar school education.

Mr. Mallon: Surely the nub of the problem is that secondary schools are apeing grammar schools and not performing the role for which they were intended. Open enrolment and the proposed system of testing will encourage that trend to increase, with the result that we shall have even more of a two-tier system.

Mr. Beggs: I accept that some secondary schools ape grammar schools. In our better secondary schools, however, children have had an opportunity to realise their potential with only a small group being encouraged to proceed to examinations which are on a par with the courses that are available at grammar schools. Reference has been made to the level of young people who leave school without qualifications, but we should be honest with ourselves and take into account the low grades that have been achieved by many school leavers in England and the way in which they were evaluated by employers.

It is impossible to provide opportunities that will ensure that all children will have the same level of achievement. We must accept that there are wide ranges of individual ability while affording the opportunity to each individual to realise his or her potential.

I am concerned that with the loss of the 27-73 per cent. intake split there will be damage done both to grammar schools and secondary schools. I fear that many smaller secondary schools will be forced to close. If that should happen, the Government's intention of improving education standards across the board could be destroyed.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that secondary schools have closed and have then reopened with a lower intake of pupils as integrated schools which receive the full grants? The Government had said that they could not support the schools as they were. That has happened in Belfast and elsewhere.

Mr. Beggs: It is difficult for many of us to accept that once enrolment falls in a secondary school, whether it is maintained or controlled, there is pressure for closure. It is difficult to understand how they can be reopened as integrated schools on the same site. Of course, much more money is available for the schools because integrated education is the flavour of the day and gets every encouragement and incentive. We do not object to that development, but people should realise that there has always been a degree of integration in education in Northern Ireland. We have never been given much credit for that. My right hon. Friend the Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), the leader of our party, was educated at a Roman Catholic school. I am a member of the governing body of a voluntary grammar school which has a high percentage of Roman Catholic pupils. The matter has never come up because the religion of those pupils is nobody's business but their own.

Mr. Alton: Schools such as Sullivan Upper, which I visited a few weeks ago, bear out exactly what the hon. Gentleman says. Some schools have a mixture of pupils and are not designated as integrated schools and do an excellent job. I think that Hazelwood school was mentioned in the debate. Does he accept that that school, which has 209 pupils, has gone from strength to strength because it decided to become an integrated school and therefore became more popular?

Mr. Beggs: It has gone from strength to strength because there is a demand for that type of education. I am not aware of its impact on smaller maintained Roman Catholic post-primary schools or controlled post-primary schools in the area. It seems nonsense to encourage a new start at the expense of closing neighbouring schools. It would be much better to encourage co-operation and the sharing of expertise and so on.

So that others can check my comments about the demand for integrated education, I should like to put on record a reference in the second edition of an independent

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education magazine for Northern Ireland called *Education North*. It is edited by the education staff of Queen's university and the University of Ulster. It says:

> "Indeed, only 4 per cent. of the sample visited were extremely likely to send their children to integrated schools."

I am not here to thwart the wishes of such parents because we all believe in parental choice. I want to sound a word of caution and ask for consideration to be given to the impact of Government policy. I urge people to look closely at what is happening to community schools and small secondary schools in the rural and border areas of our Province. I hope that the Minister will assure us that open enrolment will not be allowed to be the final straw that drives out Protestant families whose number is declining because of the Government's failure to provide proper security and defeat terrorism in those areas. Those small community and secondary schools need support and protection in areas where they have been subjected to sectarian terrorism.

I was disappointed to read in the *Belfast Telegraph* tonight that the Minister, who is encouraging and promoting integrated education—none of us wishes to block that development—is not permitting it to happen because of parental choice. He is doing so with the co-operation of teachers. The paper attributes to him a categorical statement that he would not give consideration to teachers, whether Roman Catholic or Protestant, who feel on the grounds of conscience that they could not move with their Roman Catholic school to integrated status or from their controlled school to integrated status. He said that he would not give consideration to teachers who wished to be transferred to another school or leave teaching altogether and seek compensation. He wanted to know what he would be compensating them for.

I hope that the Minister will rethink his position. It is important that teachers should feel free to go along with the proposals if they wish and not feel coerced into supporting Government policy.

As Ulster Unionists, we believe that the funding of all schools should be fair and equitable. We seek an assurance from the Minister that the state has equal regard for all children that there will not be priority or privileged status for integrated schools and that extra funds will not be directed towards currently fashionable schools.

Mr. Mallon: That is in the order.

Mr. Beggs: The Minister must tell us that he is prepared to treat all children in the Province equally.

We accept the right of parents to choose to send their children to grant-maintained integrated schools, but we want the Minister to justify why they cannot be maintained by education and library boards as is the case for Protestant and Roman Catholic schools and, indeed, schools in the controlled sector.

Does the Department have extra funding for the promotion of grant-maintained integrated schools?

Mr. Mallon: The order says so in article 64(2).

Mr. Beggs: There is a strong feeling that other schools have lost out so that integrated schools could be promoted.

Mr. Mallon: I do not want to delay the hon. Gentleman unduly, but it is stated clearly in articles 64(1), (2) and (3) that it is Government policy to encourage and facilitate the development of integrated schools and to provide funding to do that.

Mr. Beggs: But is it extra money? I am anxious that there should be extra money and that the money is not taken from the overall money available to Northern Ireland.

What assurance can the Minister give that under local financial management school governors will not become the buffers between parents and the Department when spending cuts occur and the perception of responsibility for cuts in school budgets transfers from the Department to school governors?

The order establishes in legislation a council for Roman Catholic maintained schools. We as Ulster Unionists have not objected, but as the role and influence of the main Protestant churches has been steadily diminished in controlled schools, it is an appropriate time to invite the Minister to take steps to establish a similar council for the transferor representatives of the three main Protestant churches. It is important to demonstrate to Protestant communities that their church representatives enjoy recognition, status and esteem equal to that afforded to other interest groups in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): Does the hon. Gentleman recall that churches other than the Catholic church handed over complete control of their schools to the state, thereby unfortunately lessening their control over what was happening? Is he saying that state schools, which we always understood to be non-sectarian, are Protestant schools?

Mr. Beggs: I accept the hon. Gentleman's helpful intervention. It is easy to be wise after the event. The assurances given when those transfers took place were not honoured. It is therefore appropriate to invite the Minister to establish a similar council for the transferor representatives of the main Protestant churches.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Is it not a fact that the then Stormont Government refused to increase the grant to the Protestant schools and said, "Hand the schools over to us and we will guarantee your rights as transferor"? Immediately that happened, the money increased. If the hon. Gentleman were as old as I am, he would remember the fight about 65 per cent. grants and the battle that took place between the Protestant Churches which were deceived by the Stormont Administration and the Roman Catholic Church.

Mr. Beggs: I will take the hon. Gentleman's comments as read and on the record.

Mr. Alton: I am sorry to intervene once again——

Mr. Beggs: I would appreciate it if the hon. Gentleman would let me finish my speech because others want to make their points.

There is so much in the order that one would like time to deal with. It would have made a proper Bill and we could have discussed the issues thoroughly in Committee. We must endeavour to prevent an abuse of power by the Department of Education and to ensure that public confidence is maintained. To that end, an independent ombudsman should be appointed in Northern Ireland to deal with specific education matters.

We hold our teachers in high esteem. We congratulate them on the achievements of primary guidelines, the 11 to

16 initiative and the introduction of GCSE. I am confident that, despite this enforced legislation, which deserves more thorough discussion, teachers in all sectors of education in Northern Ireland, including further education, will successfully cope with change, provided that the Government provide the necessary financial resources, adequate staffing levels and opportunities for in-service training, and take the necessary steps urgently to improve morale and halt the drift of highly qualified, experienced teachers who are leaving the education service because of the pressures under which they are expected to work in schools and colleges.

11.54 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Northern Ireland is under a great shadow tonight. Two gallant members of the Army were murdered this afternoon, with another seriously injured. Those who did those acts evidently escaped over the border to the Irish Republic. We meet under that shadow. It runs deep into the hearts of the Ulster people. I want to express our sincerest sympathy to the families and the assurance of our prayers at Christmas time. They have received terrible tidings that will go down into the depths of their hearts.

Before I come to my main points, I wish to protest about the procedure tonight. We are at a great disadvantage. This is a massive Order in Council. If it were a Bill, I do not know how long it would take to go through this House and its Committee stages, yet we have to discuss it in three hours. I do not blame the Minister—he gave way quite often—and I do not blame the Opposition spokesman, but at the end of the day, and because in courtesy we must allow time for the Front-Bench spokesmen to reply, we are left with only one and a half hours to debate the order. That makes it not a properly brought about law, but rule by decree. That is the measure of how the procedure has deteriorated.

The Minister and others have said that we might have had only an hour and a half in total. I know that, but must tell the Minister that three hours is just crumbs from the rich man's table. To be told that we are lucky to have three hours rather than an hour and a half is like the dog licking the sores after he gets the crumbs. That is how we feel about this procedure tonight. The Government should have provided at least a full day's debate on this Order in Council.

We are asked, "Why do not the leaders of the Unionist parties and the SDLP get together?" We did, and we made a request for further time to debate this matter. What happened? The Government said, "Oh no, you are not getting any further time." What is the use of the Government preaching that we should get together when, on the simple matter of giving Government time to deal with an order that the Minister admits is comprehensive and drastic and turns around education in Northern Ireland, we are denied further time and asked to consider it in these circumstances? The anomaly is that, if it were a Bill about education in England, Wales or Scotland, I could move an amendment; for Northern Ireland, however, I cannot move an amendment. All that we can do is to vote against the motion, and I shall exercise my right to vote against it. It is the only way to register my protest at the way that this matter has been arranged.

I know that the Minister will say that there was time to consult. Democracy is not built on consultation and the Government deciding what the consensus is. The Government have the right to consult the people concerned, but the meaning of democracy is having a proper debate in the parliamentary forum, where the legislation can be examined line by line, arguments can be advanced, and the Minister must reply. The reply may not convince those who oppose him, but at least he has to attempt to justify the legislation.

We could not read this Order in Council in one and a half hours. We could not intelligently digest it in one and a half hours. Yet that is the impossible test for us. What an uproar there would be if this was offered as an Order in Council for England or Wales. What an uproar there would be if it were to be passed as we are being asked to pass this Order in Council. The Minister and the Secretary of State could have helped us a great deal if they had said, "Look, we are dealing with the whole of the education system of Northern Ireland, so let us have a full day's debate at least, and let it be open-ended so that all hon. Members can take part."

Many hon. Members from England, Wales and Scotland would have liked to take part in the debate. No doubt their contributions would have been valuable. But, out of respect to Northern Ireland Members, they are giving us what little time there is. That is not helpful, as Northern Ireland happens to be, and I trust will ever continue to be, a part of this United Kingdom.

Mr. Alton: I strongly agree with the hon. Gentleman. Is there not overwhelming evidence that throughout the House hon. Members want to see the establishment of a Northern Ireland Standing Committee so that issues such as this can be remitted to it for proper discussion? Does the hon. Gentleman also agree that if there is ever to be normalisation of politics in Northern Ireland, these bread-and-butter issues are exactly the sort of thing that should be analysed line by line in Committee before they come to the House to be pushed through in this undemocratic way?

Rev. Ian Paisley: That is a right which has nothing to do with the Anglo-Irish Agreement. As of right, Northern Ireland should be treated like any other part of the United Kingdom. A happier position would be a devolved Administration in Stormont. A happier position would be that those Northern Ireland Members who are affected by such legislation could debate it. That was done in consultation in the Stormont assembly, but we at least had the opportunity to examine Orders in Council line by line.

The time has come for a change. But I do not want a talking shop upstairs with no power. Legislation should be submitted as a Bill, so that amendments could be moved in a proper Committee session, if not on the Floor of the House, at least after a Second Reading on the Floor of the House. That would give Northern Ireland Members real power, and that is what we want.

Mr. John D. Taylor: Does the hon. Gentleman understand why the Government introduced the fair employment legislation in the form of a Bill, but introduced this much more important piece of legislation on education reform in the form of an order?

Rev. Paisley: I do not know the answer to that. The Government would probably argue that this is not primary legislation; that it alters certain laws that apply to

[Rev. Paisley]

Northern Ireland. I do not know. But the Minister can argue his own case. I shall not be an apologist for the Government.

Mr. Lenihan made a long statement in *The Irish Times* in which he said that education was thoroughly discussed at the Anglo-Irish Conference, and matters relating to opposition from Nationalists to certain Government proposals were discussed and would be further discussed as they were important matters.

The Minister guarded himself carefully and gracefully. He said, "We did not submit this to the southern Government." No. But according to Mr. Lenihan, statements and matters in the order were discussed at an Anglo-Irish Conference. I suppose that the controversial matters were discussed and exchanges made. We will never know, because they are like masonic lodge meetings. They are on the square. We will never know exactly what takes place behind the doors. We shall have to leave the matter there.

However, I would take exception to the Minister pretending—I hope that I do not misjudge him; I do not want to do so—that Dublin had no influence on the matter. Dublin has an influence on all legislation that comes before the House for Northern Ireland through the Anglo-Irish Conference.

The order deals with the general duties of the Department, the curriculum, the admission of children to grant-aided schools, the financing of schools, integrated education and general provisions relating to education in the Province. Its scope is wide-ranging.

It is not right to ask hon. Members to say whether they are for or against integrated education. I sent my children to an integrated school. They sat side by side with Roman Catholics. Education in Northern Ireland should be non-sectarian. Northern Ireland's state schools are not Protestant schools. The education system should be non-denominational. Denominational ministers should have the right to instruct children in state schools according to the tenets of their faith.

That is impossible in Northern Ireland, for the simple reason that the Stormont Government built up the grant system for Roman Catholic schools, not for Protestant schools. Dr. William Corkey has written up the story of the battle for grants, and it is available in the Library.

When I was in Los Angeles, I met about 100 pressmen. I asked them, "How much money does the Government here give to Roman Catholic schools?" They said, "Not a penny." I asked, "Do they pay teachers' salaries?" They said, "Not a penny." Then I asked whether the Government paid their pensions. The reply was, "Not a penny", so I pointed out to them that they had said that, during 50 or 60 years of Stormont misrule, Roman Catholics had been very badly treated.

Roman Catholic Church schools were liberally treated by the Stormont Government. Their representatives should acknowledge that fact. We cannot now say to the Roman Catholic Church, "We're going to take away all your grants." It is impossible to create a non-sectarian, non-denominational system of education for Northern Ireland. It is developing into three systems.

The tragedy, however, is that the Government have not allowed every system to take its chance. They have made special provision for integrated schools. What about state schools that have been integrated for a long time? What about schools that have always opened their doors to those on both sides of the ecumenical divide? One state school in Londonderry that the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) knows very well, in an area where there has been severe bombing, has been integrated almost from the beginning. Both Protestants and Catholics attend that school. However, it will not enjoy the same financial advantages as an integrated school will enjoy. It is not fair that those who have worked hard should be treated in this way.

Everybody knows about my opposition to the Roman Catholic Church, but it has worked hard and increased the number of Roman Catholic schools. Why should they be discriminated against? The hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) may smile, but Roman Catholics have come to me and said, "We are being discriminated against." The bishops have threatened to take the Minister to court. The hon. Gentleman need not shake his head. Members of his own Church in Northern Ireland are not happy about the proposals in the order. I am not their spokesman, but that needs to be said.

Mr. Alton: An interesting coalition appears to be developing between the hon. Gentleman and Cardinal O'Fiaich. I do not support the idea of sectarian education. The hon. Gentleman should look at what happened in the diocese of Chelmsford last week, when an Anglican school and a Roman Catholic school amalgamated to become a Christian school. Christians decided to work together to provide non-sectarian education in which Christian values could be maintained. I hope he will consider that as a comparable model for Northern Ireland.

Rev. Paisley: In Northern Ireland we have three systems. Independent Christian schools are not included in any grant scheme. They get absolutely nothing from the Government.

I am asking that all the systems should stand equally in the market and be treated in the same way. But they are not being treated equally. I shall illustrate that point. Hazelwood school, which I am sure the hon. Member for Belfast, North (Mr. Walker) knows well, had to close down. It was immediately turned into an integrated school and money was poured into it. Although the attendance at that school has not improved, I understand that it was closed because of falling pupil attendance. That is not right, because the state sector suffered to the advantage of the integrated sector. I agree with the spokesman for the Ulster Unionist party, the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs), that we should look at the results of integrated education.

The hon. Member for Mossley Hill mentioned Lagan college. I am sure that he would hope that Lagan college would keep within the law. Is he aware that that building was built without planning permission and defied the planners? Is he aware that there had to be an enforcement order against it? Is he aware that only influence in the Department prevented them from being taken to court while other people who put up a sign saying, "Belfast says No" were taken to court? Those are the facts. The hon. Gentleman should go to Castlereagh council planners and find out exactly what happened in respect of Lagan college. Are those the ethics that they plan to teach their young people? Example is stronger than precept, so they should set the right example.

The hon. Member for Mossley Hill referred to a coalition. I am opposed to abortion, but that does not mean that I join the Roman Catholic lobby in my opposition to abortion, so let us not talk foolishly about coalitions, but see things in perspective.

I am worried about the emphasis that has been placed on education for mutual understanding and cultural heritage. I am sure that the Minister will understand how I feel. He told a certain gathering that part of the work of education for mutual understanding

"would be to de-mythologise some beliefs among children."

Where do they get those beliefs? Are they the beliefs of their parents? It does not matter which side of the argument one supports. There are people who consider that some of my beliefs should be de-mythed, and equally I consider that some of their beliefs should be de-mythed, but who is to decide?

When the Minister says that education for mutual understanding is to de-myth some beliefs among children, I regard that as a very serious statement. I do not like the underhand way in which this matter is being handled. Teachers who were called to a conference in Enniskillen were told to tell no one its purpose. The first steps in this education for mutual understanding came from that conference. No teacher has a right to say to a child, "Do not tell your parent where you are going today."

I strongly protest. I should like the Minister to give me an unequivocal assurance that that will not be his Department's policy and that parents will have the right to say whether their child goes somewhere and say that he will not study a certain book. I should like the Minister to tell us all the beliefs that he thinks need to be de-mythed. He had better start working on that. Proceedings in the House begin every day with a prayer from the Prayer Book. Some things in it are anathema to the Roman Catholic Church. Roman Catholics would say that that Prayer Book should be de-mythed. Everyone has a right to his beliefs.

I do not believe that education for mutual understanding and cultural heritage will achieve anything. A faceless member of the educational establishment stood up and said, "The older generation of Ulster will never change, but we will change their offspring." That was a reference to the Anglo-Irish Agreement. I have news for the Minister. An attempt was made recently to involve schoolchildren in a massive rally, but it did not come off because the children did not come. We cannot change children.

Mr. Mallon: What about the demonstration on 15 November?

Rev. Ian Paisley: Those were grown-ups.

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): The hon. Gentleman said that we cannot change children. If he is correct, that means that their view will not differ from his, and of course we respectfully listen to his view. An Edinburgh person called James Connolly went to Ireland and argued in a Marxist way for a Socialist Ireland. Surely his view should be understood in Ireland, North and South. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that that is anathema to the South, to the green Tories as well as to orange Tories? Does he agree that James Connolly's view is understandable and acceptable?

Rev. Ian Paisley: James Connolly was entitled to believe whatever he believed. I cut my political teeth in the Dock ward. Lord Fitt was there as well. He was a Connolly man and preached Connolly's Marxism in the streets of the Dock ward. I have been well indoctrinated, and I know exactly what Connolly believed. It is not the duty of a teacher to de-myth the beliefs in which a child has been brought up. If we make schools a place where we change children's beliefs, we are on dangerous ground.

I do not know whether the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Brown) has a family. If he has, its members would probably have been brought up to be staunch Socialists. He would not want a Tory teacher to say, "I have come to de-myth your beliefs," and teach the child the wonders of capitalism and all the blessings that flow from it. The hon. Gentleman would be the first to denounce the teacher and all his work.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Following through his argument, does the hon. Gentleman accept that, apart from what teachers may be asked to do, it is wholly anathema for a Conservative Government who talk about parental choice to try to impose this indoctrination on our children?

Rev. Ian Paisley: I thoroughly agree with that comment. I should have thought that no Government in Westminster would take that line. This is a serious matter and it is causing great concern in Northern Ireland. I do not know what will be taught in the Roman Catholic schools. I should like to sit in on their education for mutual understanding and to see the textbooks that they will use. I should like to know what will happen. The Secretary of State made a dangerous speech when he said that the Government would "de-myth" the beliefs of children.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Might de-mything not depend on the approach that is adopted to try alter people's views in the long term? Will there be counter-indoctrination to try to change people's views or will there be questioning, which should be part of education? Will there be questioning of beliefs as well as everything else? In the questioning process, it is possible that different, freely chosen views will start to emerge in the children who are subject to that climate of investigation.

Rev. Ian Paisley: The hon. Gentleman refers to education, but education is a different matter altogether. De-mything beliefs will go to the heart of a child's beliefs. Where do children get their beliefs? They get them from their parents and from the Church in which they are brought up.

Mr. Ron Brown: And from prejudices.

Rev. Ian Paisley: They get them from their parents. It may be that there are prejudices. Some Tories would say that the hon. Gentleman is prejudiced. Where does it end? Let us get the matter straight. I do not know or care whether the House agrees with me: I do not believe that it is the duty of a teacher to de-myth belief. It is the duty of the teacher to say what happened when giving a history lesson and to paint Cromwell, warts and all. The teacher should tell it as it is. Hon. Members may not know that, unfortunately, Irish history was never taught in the schools of Northern Ireland. I never learned Irish history in my curriculum because the state schools never taught Irish history.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): It is not taught over here either.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I had to read all about it when I was older. All I can say to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes)—and I know his view of the matter—is that a teacher has a responsibility, but it is wrong to put this extra load on the teachers of Northern Ireland. They cannot carry it, and it is not fair to them. The Government have no right to try blatantly to manipulate children who are sent to school. That view must be stated.

Mr. Ron Brown: The hon. Gentleman is not going to manipulate children in church?

Rev. Ian Paisley: Yes, of course I indoctrinate them in church by preaching, but they can say aye or no. The very genius of Protestantism is not authoritarianism, but the right of every man to choose for himself. I can preach to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Leith the necessity for a new life and a new birth, but he may not accept that. He may say that he does not want anything to do with that new life or that new birth and that he will go his own way. He is entitled to do that. I am not going to get into a preaching session with the hon. Gentleman or we might have a penitent, and dear knows what would happen. He might be lost to the Socialist party eventually.

Education for mutual understanding causes serious doubts. The committee that drew up the curriculum is very unbalanced. I do not see one prominent member of the Protestant community, although I see names of people who are well known for their religious and political views. Why was a man who was well known for his Protestantism, as some of these people are well known for their Roman Catholicism, not chosen as a member of the committee to draw up the proper curriculum? Those are the questions that need to be asked, and I should like the Minister to tell us why that did not happen.

I must now deal with finance——

Mr. William Ross: Before the hon. Gentleman gets too far away from the whole question of religious instruction, let me ask him this. Did he note that the Minister said that the Department's inspectors would examine the quality of religious education, and would he, with his own religious qualifications, care to inquire what theological training the Department's inspectors have?

Rev. Ian Paisley: I do not know anything about the inspectors at the Northern Ireland Office; I do not know what their religion is or what their religious views are. I can only say that I fear that this concept will take us into deep waters, and I do not think that we should embark upon it. If people want to hear what others teach and believe, they have a perfect right to hear it directly from those people's representatives. But it is not right to tell teachers that it is part of their job to de-myth children's beliefs.

The financing of schools will play an important part in the programme. I fear for secondary schools. I fear that grammar schools will be put at a great advantage because they can take in all the pupils that they want to accept but can then exercise a veto. The headmaster can say. "You cannot send your child to this school because it will be detrimental to his educational interests." That is too strong a veto for any headmaster to have, and I do not think that it is right and proper that secondary schools should be put at that disadvantage. I worry about secondary schools, especially in the areas that the hon. Member for Antrim, East mentioned, because they are in danger.

It has been argued that the financing of schools should be put on a par. But will we bring all the schools up to the same level before introducing level pegging? That is an important matter, and I ask the Minister to enlarge on that theme. Can we have the money to pay for the massive changes that are envisaged? One only gets what one pays for. The time has come for the Minister to tell us whether he is prepared to bring all the schools up to a certain level before he starts handing out the grant because at present some of the schools are disadvantaged.

The hon. Member for Londonderry, East made an important point when he asked about the schools whose grounds are filled with Portakabins. Will they be given proper capital grant so that they can build proper school rooms, or will they be left as they are? We need to know that, and I trust that the Minister will be able to help us.

We must also consider the whole concept of the curriculum. We know that the Government are postponing for a period their production of the new national curriculum, but the Minister should spell out clearly what the Government propose to do in Northern Ireland.

Article 158 of the draft order is viewed by many as a dictatorial and draconian measure. It seems from article 158 that, despite being obliged to consult, the Department of Education is given wide-ranging powers in regard to the education service in Northern Ireland. We are well used to diktat in Northern Ireland, and it seems that the order will perpetuate that feature of life in the Province.

I have a question about the new Council for Catholic Maintained Schools. The Minister said that education does not come under the Fair Employment Commission, but am I not right to think that boards and their employees come under its remit?

Dr. Mawhinney: The hon. Member is making a good point. Schedule 9 provides that staff employed by the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools are subject to the ombudsman and the fair employment legislation.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I am grateful to the Minister for that reply. I wanted to clarify that, although education is not covered, those who are employed by boards are.

I think that boards are having powers taken from them. I wonder whether the Minister is moving towards having one board for the whole of Northern Ireland. Having got one Roman Catholic board, is he trying to get one education board for the other schools? Perhaps he would care to tell us whether that is what he has in mind. There is no doubt that boards' powers are being depleted. Many people who want to serve on them, and who have done good service on them, will not want to serve because they will not have the powers they want to exercise to help forward education in Northern Ireland.

I regret that we cannot have a proper debate, move amendments and have a free-for-all. That is not possible, so my colleagues and I will vote against the order.

12.31 am

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): I appreciate that many right hon. and hon. Members want to speak and I shall try to be brief, but we have had two long speeches from members of the Unionist community in the North of

Ireland, so if I require more time than I should like to take to describe a different view, I shall, with your permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, take it.

I deeply regret that it is the present Minister with responsibility for education who is bringing this order forward. I have found him prepared to listen to people's views, to get out of the ivory tower and to talk to people. That has been noticeable. I say with the utmost sincerity that I cannot understand why he has not got the message from the entire community which we shall give him tonight. I and my party will vote against the order with the other political parties in the North of Ireland, knowing full well that our opposition is shared by the Catholic Church, the Church of Ireland, the Presbyterian Church, all teacher unions, area boards and the Council for Integrated Education

I want to know who these people are who were able to have such influence on this Minister who, to his credit, travels the North of Ireland and listens to people. Those people will have told him that he is touching a raw nerve. For historical reasons, education is part of the folk memory in the North of Ireland. People of the same religious denominations as the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) and me were once not allowed to be educated. We are non-conformists in our various ways. We could not have schools and be educated because we were considered dangerous. What did we do? We had something called Hedge schools. That is going back a bit, but it is relevant because it is in the memory of the people in the North of Ireland. That is why their nerves are touched by these proposals. That is why when the Minister started to bring forward these proposals, manyof us said to him, "Tread softly because you are not just treading on dreams; you are treading on the sacrifices that many families made to create and build schools and to send their children to them. You are treading on the deep pride of local communities at having their own spick and span schools and at having a good education system." The people of Ireland have always taken pride in education for the simple reason that in many ways it has been the only alternative to the dole queues in the present and to famine in the past. We asked him to tread softly——

Rev. Martin Smyth: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way on that point which I should like to underscore. Does he equally acknowledge that it was out of our Presbyterian tradition that the Royal Belfast Academical Institution was founded? It was open to everybody and was to the educational benefit of the Minister.

Mr. Mallon: I confirm exactly what the hon. Gentleman has said and that the same position applied to many schools in the North of Ireland which did not draw attention to the fact that they were indulging in what is now called "integrated education". They did not have to do it, but they were making a contribution and the community knew it and responded.

Ironically in a place such as the North of Ireland, where the whole fabric of society is falling down around us, the Government have chosen to change the one thing that was succeeding—the education system. Furthermore, they are changing it fundamentally. It will not be easy because those traditions are in our folk memory and in people's historical dimensions. They are shared by the people of the North of Ireland. Given that the three Northern Ireland parties in the House are asking the Government to stop, even at this late stage, will not the Minister recognise that fact and respond to it? Has he chosen to tread on all those susceptibilities to cater for the predilections of the few? Who are they? I do not know because we have not been told, but we are entitled to know.

I should like to make many points about the order, but time does not allow it and I shall make only four. First, I should like to consider the one most important thing in education, which has not yet been mentioned tonight, and that is the child, the person who is being educated, and who I believe must have some rights in this. I am concerned about the rights of the child in relation to the new procedure of testing. I am not opposed to testing. Indeed, as a teacher for 20 years, I used it myself, but there is a difference between diagnostic testing which is helping the teacher and the school to try to gear the child's educational programme, and testing that puts one child against another, one school against another and one position against another. I believe that that is contrary to article 16 of the United Nations convention on the rights of the child, which surely must be noted when it states:

> "The education of a child shall be directed to *(a)* the promotion of the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential".

That principle should underlie everything in relation to testing.

However, I am afraid that we are getting a market mentality about this. I shall not go so far as to say that we are getting Conservative dogma in that market mentality, but I shall quote from the Ulster Teachers Union which best sums up what I want to say. I give the union credit for saying it much better than I could when it stated that this approach

> "reflects the economics of the market place which are not appropriate in the field of human endeavour".

That sums up the way many people feel about this testing. I repeat that I am not against testing—indeed, it is essential to the education process—but it must be done for the right reasons. It must be done so that we can learn something from it so that the child's education is improved. It must not be done for the reasons behind these proposals.

This testing is dangerous because it is aimed not at the pupil but at the teacher. Who better to quote as an authority for that than the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) who, during the debate on the Education Reform Act 1988, said that resistance to testing came not from pupils and parents, but from teachers. It was a fear of quality control. That is as though we were talking about something which was inhuman and wrapped up in a parcel—part of a market mentality which the Ulster Teachers Union was right to identify. George Orwell said something about this long before the right hon. Member for Chingford.

I shall make a point related to testing, about which I feel strongly, and which I tried to make in an earlier intervention. I have taught in more than one secondary school. The following problem has not been faced by the Government, the Department of Education, the church authorities of whichever church—whether Catholic or controlled: a vast number of young people in the North of Ireland are not receiving the vocational skills they need. We are not training them to be good bricklayers, joiners, cabinet makers and plumbers because the Department says that they must study this subjects, that subject and

[Mr. Mallon]

other subjects. The principal says that they cannot do one subject because we have to compete because if we do not we shall go down the tubes and will not receive more pupils. The management says that the school will not get a good photograph in the local paper for prize-giving day and will not look like a grammar school. What does that matter if we send people out equipped to enter the world and bring their skills and talents to the rest of the community? That is what we should be doing.

The testing procedure is not for the child's benefit or as a diagnostic tool to help the child, but a crude market stick to create competitive forces in a field which, thankfully, has been protected from those forces for more than 40 years. The Minister's reasons are not good, fair, just or workable in the terms stated. I ask him to rethink them.

The other substantive issue to which I wish to draw attention is open enrolment. I shall not have time to expand in detail, but I wish to nail one great lie: open enrolment is not based on parental choice, but is the choice of headmasters of good schools in good areas. That is what open enrolment involves. Grammar schools will increase at the expense of secondary schools, especially those in isolated rural areas and deprived urban areas. Less able pupils will suffer because none of us has had the courage to say, "Let us train people for the lives that they will lead afterwards."

Schools will be categorised. There is a case for rationalisation, but it must be planned and not determined by market forces which are identified in this legislation. The essence of this unfairness is shown by the fact that we have created two types of school: one, called a grammar school, for the academically able pupil; the other, called a secondary school, for the less academically able. Then we say to the pupils that they will be given a common test and curriculum and be expected to compete. Wonder of wonders, the Department, Her Majesty's inspectors and the Ministers will all be surprised when they do not compete. The absolute injustice of this system is that we put two football teams on the pitch that simply cannot compete against each other.

I am proud to quote from the UTU document which states that the system

> "shows a cynical disregard for those smaller, less fortunate and less well-resourced schools which have done splendid work over the years, despite the system which is now going to militate against them even more harshly."

In reality, we are talking about school choice, not parental choice, that will be based on the place where the school is built and the type of pupil who goes towards it and not on the merits of the school. There is the inherent and human element of snobbery in the education system. It will not go away, but we do not have to nurture it in this way.

If we have secondary schools and grammar schools with the same curriculum, tests, assessments and scrutiny, let us give them all some chance of competing equally. Let us have co-ordination, not competition. There must be co-ordination of schools that are not equal initially. Without that, there is injustice.

This is not a debate about integrated education. It is a debate about a set of Government proposals that will give a new sector within the education system preferential treatment in terms of capital expenditure and in jumping the queue to obtain additional capital expenditure, and in my book that is unjust. It is wrong if that advantage is given to a maintained system, a controlled system, an integrated system or any other system. That, however, is Government policy. It is the Government's policy to create that unfairness by providing moneys that other schools will not get. The opting-out provisions will place other schools at a tremendous disadvantage.

The hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott), in a fine speech, talked about lack of funding. Funding will be much more of a problem when the pool is much smaller. Surely that is unjust. I am not discussing integrated education, although I think that there is a place for it. When I spoke at the Northern Ireland Assembly as long ago as 1973, I said, "Let's try it. Let's see what is involved. Let's see what it can contribute. Let's have the courage not to turn it down." I emphasised, however, that it should not have unfair advantage. I said that it should not take money from other schools that might have been waiting 15 years for improvements or extensions. I stressed that such a system should not be placed ahead of other schools that had been waiting a long time for valuable moneys. My view was that we should not be unjust in our efforts to be fair, and that is one of the great contradictions in the Government's proposals.

I believe that parents have the right to seek integrated education and to have their children educated within such a system. That right must be defended by us all. They have no reason to tell us of their objectives, definitions or motivations, but we can guess at them. There are some who say that it will contribute to the alleviation of conflict and the promotion of reconciliation. That view deserves to be respected. It is a commitment which deserves to be respected. There are those who say that it is the answer to the divisions in our society. That, too, is a sincere view which must be respected. It is entirely wrong, but it must be respected and we must let people act upon it.

There are those who argue for integrated education for good, old-fashioned snobbish reasons that are always attached to education. Whatever their reasons, people do not have to explain them to us. If, however, a Department brings forward legislation that will be with us into the next century, it has a duty to present and explain its definitions. It must explain its objectives and their bases. Does this order do it? It does not. The Minister failed abysmally to answer the question in the intervention of the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown).

We have heard many quaint and whimsical approaches by the Minister and others. The Minister should be honest and tell us the basis of the analysis. Why do the Government think that somewhere down the line the result will be the one that they envisage? People in the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of Ireland, the Presbyterian Church, the SDLP, the DUP, the Ulster Unionists and the teachers' unions might agree with the Minister if only they were told the Government's view. There is a case for being honest in relation to that. There must be an overridingly worthy objective to justify the change and it must justify putting us all through the emotional wringer of this legislation.

The Government cannot get away with not answering questions that they do not like. They are dealing with our lives and, more important, the lives of our children and they have a duty to answer. We await those answers and we want no more whimsy or quaintness. The Government should be straight and deal with the matter. I could go on at great length about that, but I should like to sum up in relation to integration, but not in relation to integrated schools.

It is unfair for schools to be put in a queue for scarce money. It is unfair to maintained schools which get 85 per cent. of their capital costs on foot of exercising parental choice. I am a parent and I contribute to that. It is okay for me to do so because I am exercising my parental choice. I have no quarrel with that, but when other people who exercise parental choice on foot of exactly the same position get a 100 per cent. grant I have reason to say that there is a difference which militates against me. There is not parity of treatment nor the type of approach that would add to the status of what will be. None of us knows what integrated education will become, but unfortunately the whole concept has started and has produced emotion and ambivalence all over the North of Ireland. That is bad.

I am being encouraged to finish and I shall do so. How can we justify allowing opting-out? If a group of parents decide to have an integrated school, how can the Government justify the taking of property on a different basis from that which applies in England and Wales? The trustees have some rights as well. The order says that the Government will consult the trustees in such circumstances. How nice of the Government. They will say, "That which you have owned for 200 years will be taken away from you, but don't worry because we will consult."

Mr. McGrady: The Government will pay in pennies.

Mr. Mallon: That is right and it goes back to the syndrome that I have spoken about. Section 89(2) of the Education Reform Act 1988 for England and Wales is most specific. It provides that the trustees of Catholic schools in England and Wales are assured that no proposals shall be published under the section for the purposes of making a significant change in the religious character of a school unless the trustees of the school have given their consent in writing to the change in question.

There is no doubt that where there is a change in a grant-maintained integrated school in Northern Ireland its ethos and its religious position will change as defined in the order. Where is the parity in that? When we ask about income support and family credit we are told that there must be parity in every region. No doubt we shall be given whimsy in relation to that, too. Some people will look for a lot more than whimsy. They will make sure that the proposals are subjected to the utmost rigour of examination. Whimsy will not be enough.

I said that I should finish at 5 minutes to 1 and I shall. I wish to leave the Minister with two quotations, again from a Northern Ireland source. They are both kind to the Minister about his efforts to create understanding within the community in the North of Ireland and about the whole concept of integrated education. They are from an editorial in the *Irish News*. I put them on record as the view of a paper which, by and large, reflects the Catholic Nationalist position and yet is kind to the Minister. The first is:

> "Whatever about the merits of integrated education, there can be no justification for diverting much-needed resources away from disadvantaged schools and pupils to underwrite the choice of a minority . . . the present Minister seems bent on re-opening old wounds by promoting legislation which flagrantly discriminates in favour of a sector with a specific religious ethos—that of 'integration'."

That must surely sum up the view of the Catholic Nationalist community and is reflected across the whole of the North of Ireland.

Aristotle once said, in what could be described as cynical terms, that education is the best provision for old age. The Government should not make education another item of confrontation in the North of Ireland where there is already far too much confrontation already.

12.56 am

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): I regret that all the hon. Members who wished to speak in the debate have not been able to do so. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) on his first appearance at the Dispatch Box to speak about Northern Ireland, particularly as he came here from his sick bed to inflict his opinions on us. We welcome his opinions—we just hope not to get the flu.

The number of issues running through the debate shows the anxiety felt about the Government's proposals in the state, Catholic and integrated sectors of education. The Minister has gone out of his way to listen to people but on occasions it has seemed to be a dialogue of the deaf. He has heard and made changes where appropriate, but none of the changes has been appropriate in the view of any of the Northern Ireland Members who have spoken.

I welcome what the Minister sought to do in the education for mutual understanding and the cultural heritage proposals. I also welcome the provisions that he has made about teaching the Irish language and some of the other provisions that he has made.

The Minister must reply to several profound questions which cause anxiety. The first is about resources. My hon. Friend mentioned the reduction in resources for education. If the changes are to take place easily and properly in schools in Northern Ireland, adequate finance must be provided to back up the great demands that the Government are making.

The Minister made several vague statements at the beginning of his speech giving promises of jam tomorrow. Let us hope that there wil be some jam today. We want jam, not spread thinly, but put into the system in large quantities if the changes are to work. He must also look at the morale of teachers, who are at the front line of education changes. Proper recognition of their status in society must be accorded. Otherwise, the flood of teachers out of education will continue—as has happened in the United Kingdom generally—into other jobs where they receive better financial rewards and greater respect from the general public.

It is not only the financial aspects of the teachers' rewards that must be considered, but the status and administration of the new system. Teachers should have a proper stake in the overall direction of events and a place on organisations such as the Northern Ireland Curriculum Council and the Northern Ireland School Examinations and Assessment Council and on the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools. It should be as of right for teachers to appoint teachers to represent the opinions of teachers on those bodies.

Hon. Members have said a great deal about their fears about the assessment of pupils and schools. There is a real fear that one school might be played against another, and that a school in a middle-class area might do better than one in a deprived area. We need to know more about the

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assessment techniques that will be used. We must ensure that schools in deprived areas do not go further and further down in the people's estimation because they are not getting pupils because they are not getting support from the Department because they are not getting the necessary funds to carry out some of the more difficult tasks in some of the more difficult areas. Trouble in the North of Ireland is often in deprived areas where teachers and schools are held in low esteem. That must change.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) spoke about the problems of open enrolment, which will place in doubt the viability of schools in more remote or deprived areas and has serious implications for planning the allocation of resources and for the periodic necessity to rationalise the provision of education. Open enrolment is of great significance to the integrated schools movement.

Over the years, the Minister has constantly refused to give his definition of what would be reasonable balance and a balanced intake. He was asked again today by the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) and others. The definition in the order is wide open to abuse. It is bound to be the subject of judicial comment and people are bound to seek a judicial review of it. The order provides no guarantee that a school which pretends to be integrated will actually be fully integrated. Supporters of integrated education are horrified at the way in which the order seriously undermines all their work in recent years.

The proponents of integrated education are joined by the Catholic bishops on this issue. They believe that the order permits people who would seek to discredit the integrated schools movement to set up schools, the real purpose of which is the opposite of promoting mutual understanding which the integrated schools movement seeks to promote.

In such circumstances, the Minister's response to the most reasonable suggestions put forward by the Northern Ireland Centre of Integrated Education is most disappointing. The centre suggested departmental monitoring of the status of schools and proposed balanced representation of both traditions on the boards of such schools. Both are sensible recommendations and we should like to hear the Minister say that they will be carried out in full in the regulations on integrated schools which are to be published.

Integrated education has raised a further issue which the Minister must take extremely seriously and which has been raised by the hon. Members for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) and for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) and by my hon. Friends the Members for Newry and Armagh and for Wigan. The Labour party is convinced that an essential element in ending the conflict in Northern Ireland is to ensure complete equality of treatment for the two major traditions. The order fails to do that.

Rightly, the order provides for 100 per cent. financing for integrated schools. We accept and welcome that. We urged that on the Minister when the discussions were first opened. We fully support that initiative. However, we fail to see why the order should institutionalise discrimination against the Catholic school system in such a way that the 85 per cent. limit on finance remains intact. That is a serious defect and the Government should rectify it as soon as possible. If they cannot do so immediately they should set a target of time during which they will remedy that to make it 100 per cent. If the position deteriorates, the bishops will take the Ministry to court under the terms of the Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973. That would be detrimental to the Government's credibility, to the credibility of the education system and to the commitment to establish equality between the two traditions, to which the Government have given their endorsement explicitly in the Anglo-Irish Agreement and on several occasions before and since the Act.

This is an important order, and hon. Members have said that it should have been discussed in a devolved assembly in Northern Ireland. It is an insult to the people of Northern Ireland. All their representatives, from every opinion in the Unionists, the SDLP and the Democratic Unionists, are opposed to the order, to its contents, to the manner in which it has been introduced and to the Government's failure to meet legitimate concerns. The degree of unity that the Government have managed to achieve among so many disparate Northern Ireland Members holds out great hope for the future of Northern Ireland. They all agree that they dislike the Tory Government's proposals and the English ideas being imposed on Irish people in the North of Ireland.

We shall accept the invitation of our hon. Friends in the SDLP and of other Northern Ireland Members to reject the order.

1.5 am

Dr. Mawhinney: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I welcome the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) to our debates. I did not agree with everything that he said, although I admired the vigour with which he said it, especially as I am suffering as he is this evening.

The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) and both Labour party spokesmen spoke of the advantage of devolved structures. The hon. Member for Antrim, North said that it would be a happier arrangement. I agree with him and I hope that we shall soon move to that happier arrangement. Nothing would give me greater pleasure than to welcome the hon. Gentleman or any other Northern Ireland Member as my successor as Minister with responsibility for education.

The question of resources was raised by both Opposition spokesmen. I am pleased that the hon. Member for Wigan implicitly said that he supported the reforms, but that they would need additional resources. We have already identified £30 million of additional resources especially for this proposal. He will have noted that the education budget for next year has been raised by 10·5 per cent. I hope and expect to be in a position before Christmas to announce how that money will be disbursed. There will be a substantial increase, in addition to the £30 million, set aside specifically to resource the introduction of education reform. I hope that he feels that I have fully met his point.

Mr. Alton *rose*——

Dr. Mawhinney: I gave way a great deal in my opening speech, and I wish to deal with some of the points raised.

The hon. Member for Wigan also raised a question from the Irish National Teachers Organisation about regulations on rates of teachers' salaries. It is a serious point. Under the 1986 order, statutory responsibility for determining teachers' salaries rests with the Department.

That also includes such matters as promotion allowances and increments. Under the new arrangements, we believe that those matters should become the responsibility of the boards of governors, because they will be legally responsible for the schools. I assure the hon. Gentleman, INTO and other teacher unions in Northern Ireland that, although the order gives us power to make regulations to that effect, we shall not do so until there has been full consultation with the teacher unions. I hope that that satisfies the hon. Gentleman.

The hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) will not, I hope, think it too damaging if I say that he made a most thoughtful speech. He aired a number of genuine concerns of the people of Northern Ireland, and they are precisely the sort of concerns that we shall seek to address in implementing these reforms. I assure him that we will handle with sensitivity the very issues that he raised.

The hon. Gentleman said that good Ulster schools have always provided a broad and balanced curriculum, and he is right about the good Ulster schools. However, as a former teacher and an expert in education matters, he also knows that too many schools in Northern Ireland have not offered their pupils a broad and balanced curriculum.

For example, the hon. Gentleman knows that secondary schools in Northern Ireland have a higher proportion of girls stopping science at the end of the third form than anywhere else in the Kingdom, and that is not acceptable. Many schools are not doing any technology at all when we are trying to train them for employment of whatever sort in the world into which they will be moving. It is precisely because we are trying to achieve a broad, balanced and coherent curriculum from the age of five through to 16 that we are introducing the curriculum proposals.

The hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) mentioned the membership of the Northern Ireland Curriculum Council and the Northern Ireland School Examinations and Assessment Council. We formed the judgment that teachers had to be members of those because they were at the chalk face. They were the people who were best equipped to be involved in those organisations. I am speaking from memory, but I believe that at least 50 per cent. of the membership of those two organisations are teachers, and that is what the hon. Gentleman wanted. They are there because they have experience and expertise in their own right and are recognised as having such by their peers, which is more important than being so recognised by someone such as me.

The hon. Member for Antrim, East said that removing the 27:73 arrangements would affect rationalisation. The hon. Member for Antrim, North pointed out that we have always had rationalisation in Northern Ireland. Schools have been closed over many years as pupil numbers have fallen and people have moved to different parts of the Province. Rationalisation will continue to take place as now, affected by parental choice, although perhaps more so in future.

I can give the hon. Gentleman the assurance that he was seeking on isolated rural schools. I have already entered into arrangements with the education and library boards and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools in identifying a number of isolated rural schools which each of them believes should, if possible, have an assured future, subject to parental choice. We shall do that by ensuring that the curriculum made available in those schools is sufficient for the children there. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will welcome that assurance.

I am not in the business of trying to indoctrinate young people, and neither are the Government, in terms of education for mutual understanding. That is precisely what it says—mutual understanding. I am not seeking to change people's beliefs. I am not seeking to infringe people's consciences. I am happy to give the hon. Member for Antrim, North that assurance. I am sure that he will join with every other hon. Member in affirming that it is important that our young people should have as balanced an understanding of the community in which they live as possible. That may expose them to the fact that there are beliefs other than those that they hold. But it is in no sense an attempt to cause them to change those beliefs, much less to force them to change those beliefs. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will welcome that assurance.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Will the Minister give way?

Dr. Mawhinney: No, I have only two minutes left.

I want to assure the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) that we look positively at assessment. We shall be following the line taken in England and Wales. We have said many times that we are not seeking to erect hurdles over which children will have to jump who will be disadvantaged if they cannot do so. Rather we are seeking to encourage them fully to achieve their potential, and I hope that at least on that point we are in agreement.

Enrolment will be a matter of choice for parents. Schools will not be in a position to make selection unless they are oversubscribed. That is a crucial point. Children will be able to go to schools chosen by their parents. *[Interruption.]* That has always been the case.

The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh also referred to integrated education. It is available because parents have said that they want that option to be open to them. The hon. Gentleman may not like that, he may say that that is whimsy, but it happens to be the answer to his question. It is not discriminatory. The capital provision for integrated schools will be the same as for controlled schools. If maintained schools wish to change the structure of their governing boards, they too will qualify for the 100 per cent. capital grant.

I commend the order. It will have the effect that the Government intend. It will raise education standards in our schools. It will increase parental choice and involvement in the education of their children. We owe it to the children of Northern Ireland. I have every confidence that the order will achieve those objectives.

It being three hours after the motion was entered upon, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to the Order [8 December].*

The House divided: Ayes 88, Noes 18.

Division No. 19] **[1.15 am**

AYES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Alton, David
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowis, John
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Burns, Simon

Burt, Alistair
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Fallon, Michael
Forman, Nigel
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodlad, Alastair
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hind, Kenneth
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Lawrence, Ivan
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Mans, Keith
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Paice, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Stern, Michael
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John M. Taylor and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

NOES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Beggs, Roy
Cryer, Bob
Dixon, Don
Flannery, Martin
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
McNamara, Kevin
Mallon, Seamus
Meale, Alan
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Stott, Roger
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wilson, Brian

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. William Ross and
Mr. Eddie McGrady.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 23rd November, be approved.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

MEDICAL PROFESSION

That the draft Human Organ Transplants (Unrelated Persons) Regulations 1989, which were laid before this House on 15th November, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.—*[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

Question agreed to.

County Down Fishermen

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

1.26 am

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): Last week, when the decision was made to have an Adjournment debate on the fishing industry in County Down in Northern Ireland, I was overjoyed because there has been a problem for our fishermen in Portavogie, Kilkeel—I am glad to see the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) here—and Ardglass. Little did I know that by this time tonight I would have the flu. My temperature is somewhat high, so the level of debate will be somewhat low. I want to make it clear that this is only an opening shot. The fishing industry has faced this problem for six or seven years and seems to be going through yet another stage in the ever-developing negotiations between the United Kingdom and the Isle of Man.

The fishing industry in Northern Ireland employs about 1,600 people in County Down—about half on the boats and the other half in processing. The largest section of the industry is involved in the fishing of nephrops, especially in Portavogie. Just as every fifth child born in the world is Chinese—so if one has five babies, it is likely that the fifth is Chinese—if one has a prawn cocktail in London, one in every four of the prawns will be from Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland produces 25 per cent. of United Kingdom prawns.

The nephrops and other fish that come into the County Down ports are caught either in the north Irish sea or in the Manx fisheries. Some 70 per cent. of the value of the catch in Portavogie, which has almost 70 boats, comes from waters three to 12 miles around the Isle of Man. That fishing limit is the subject of this debate. If Northern Irish fishermen lost their ability to fish there, dramatic damage would be caused to the economies of Kilkeel, Ardglass, Portavogie and the south and east coast of County Down, where there are no alternative sources of employment.

The matter first became controversial in 1983 when the Isle of Man Government appointed a commission to prepare a report. On page 10, the report recommended:

> "The future of a successful fishing industry in the Island will depend upon the Island Government having sole control of the fisheries within the territorial sea around the Island."

It meant, of course, within the 12-mile limit around the island. On page 12, the report made one of the most controversial of the many proposals. It said:

> "Manx vessels should receive priority in licence allocation."

Licence allocations would be made by the Isle of Man Government and they would discriminate in favour of Manx fishing boats and against those from Northern Ireland.

That prompted what must be a rare event in this House. Two Adjournment debates on the same subject took place in the same week. The first was on 29 November 1983 and the second was on 1 December 1983. In the first, the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department stated:

> "Their immediate concern is to strengthen the measures of fish stock conservation which currently apply there."

That was the reason given by the Manx authorities, according to the Under-Secretary. All they were concerned about was to improve conservation. He went on to say that the Isle of Man Government hit "on the rawest of nerves"

and that there would be

"an element of discrimination to favour Manx fishing vessels."—[*Official Report*, 29 November 1983; Vol. 49, c. 861.]

In the subsequent Adjournment debate two days later, the former right hon. Member for South Down, Mr. Enoch Powell, asked

"what consideration the Manx authorities have offered Her Majesty's Government in return for any agreement to extend the Manx fishery control limits in the way suggested?"—[*Official Report*, 1 December 1983; Vol. 49, c. 1099.]

He meant the extension from three to 12 miles. There was, of course, no reply to that question.

We begin to see that there was some form of cover-up. We find the Manx authorities saying that they want control of the fishing limits so that they can give priority to their fishing fleets against the interests of Northern Irish fishermen—and incidentally those of the fishermen from the west coast of England and Scotland. Alternatively, when challenged, they say that it is not to do that, but to improve conservation. We must ask tonight in what way the level of conservation that is applied to these waters by the United Kingdom authorities is inadequate. If it is not inadequate, there is no need for the question to arise as to whether it would be wise to transfer these matters to the Manx Government.

After that, there was a gap of about four years in which nothing happened, and the matter seemed to have come to a standstill. There was relief throughout Northern Ireland, in Scotland and in England until in 1987 the Government presented a Bill, now the Territorial Sea Act 1987. Section 4 provides

"for the short title, commencement and extent of the Bill and includes provision authorising the making of Orders in Council extending the provisions of the Bill to the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man subject to any necessary exceptions, adaptations or modifications".

That means that the fishing limits of the Isle of Man can now be extended by an Order in Council. It is regrettable that yet again in a debate on a Northern Ireland matter we should be talking about Orders in Council. That Order in Council has never been presented to the House, but we now have reason to believe that behind our backs preparations are being made suddenly to present such an order to the House.

In the debate on 14 May 1987, the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs gave this guarantee to the House in his opening speech:

"I assure the House that I remain determined that the arrangements for conservation and management of fisheries in those waters should not, in any way, be to the detriment of the fishermen in the United Kingdom, and I include Northern Ireland in that."—[*Official Report*, 14 May 1987; Vol. 133, c. 442.]

That was a very firm assurance, and we wish to hear it repeated tonight.

After that the subject once again became quiescent. Fishermen in Scotland and on the English and County Down coasts settled down. There was no concern until this year, when on 10 October, the *Isle of Man Examiner*, the local newspaper in Douglas, ran a story headed

"Island finally gets 12-mile fish limit".

It went on to quote none other than the chief Minister, Mr. Miles Walker, who said that there would soon be an Order in Council. He said:

"We have every reason to believe that the United Kingdom will make the Order in Council to extend the limit to 12 miles"

before Christmas.

That prompted me to table a question to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food about the 12 mile limit around the Isle of Man. The reply came:

"The 1987 Territorial Sea Act made provision for a 12-mile territorial sea for the Isle of Man. Fisheries and other Departments have been in discussion with the Isle of Man as to how this should be put into effect.

About 15 per cent. of Northern Ireland fishing industry's take is caught within 12 miles of the Isle of Man."

As I said, fishermen's organisations in Northern Ireland would strongly dispute that figure. The reply continued:

"As well as ensuring the United Kingdom's responsibilities in relation to the implementation of the common fisheries policy were fully met, any arrangement made would clearly have to safeguard the interests and traditional rights of all fishermen within 12 miles of the Isle of Man."—[*Official Report*, 15 November 1989; Vol. 160, c. *331*.]

That seemed somewhat reassuring—until a few days later, on 22 November 1989, the Isle of Man Government began sending out to fishermen a letter from their Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. I have a copy, although I shall leave out the name of the fisherman who received it. It is headed:

"Permit to Fish within Manx Territorial Waters."

It says that his permit

"will no longer be in force after 31st December 1989. After this date, you will NOT be authorised to fish in the sea for sea fish within the territorial waters of the Isle of Man. The Department will consider duly completed applications for authorisation after this date."

The letter's publicity in the press in the Isle of Man created tremendous alarm among the fishing fleets, so I tabled a second parliamentary question to the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, asking him

"what fishing limits around the Isle of Man have been agreed for the period commencing 1 January 1990."

The reply was:

"The present three mile limit around the Isle of Man will apply on 1 January 1990."—

no change—

"Consideration, including in relation to fishing, on how the provisions for a 12 mile territorial sea around the Isle of man contained in the Territorial Sea Act 1987 might be implemented is in hand."—[*Official Report*, 4 December 1989; Vol. 163, c. *112*.]

The subject is therefore being discussed quietly behind the scenes. Although we have an assurance that, in the interim, from 1 January 1990, there will still be a three-mile fishing limit around the Isle of Man, we now have confirmation in black and white that shortly a 12-mile territorial sea around the Isle of Man will be agreed with the Manx authorities.

It is important that the fears of fishermen in the ports I have mentioned are allayed as quickly as possible. We must know something about the state of these talks. What progress has been made? We must know what the time scale is and have presented to fishermen a draft of the order for their consideration and discussion before it is presented to the House as an Order in Council and pushed through, as so many are, without our having a chance to amend it.

This is a matter of great importance to us, whether we be Catholic or Protestant, Unionist or Nationalist. It affects fishermen throughout County Down, in Cumbria and the south-west coast of Scotland. Our task is to restore their confidence and to give them a guarantee that they will see a document that will ensure their historic rights within the three to 12-mile limit before any order is presented to the House for debate.

1.41 am

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Maclean): I sympathise and commiserate with the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) on managing to conduct his Adjournment debate when he is suffering from the ghastly effects of Shaghai 'flu. Perhaps he will extend the same sympathy to me, as I feel that I am coming down with the same bug. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will reciprocate my commiserations.

I shall try to make clear what is happening. The matter which the right hon. Gentleman has raised is of great concern. As my colleagues have said in several parliamentary answers recently, Parliament passed the Territorial Sea Act in 1987 which extended the breadth of territorial waters adjacent to the United Kingdom from three to 12 miles. The provision to do the same for the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands was not implemented immediately.

Implementation is not a simple matter because it may involve transferring jurisdiction over rights on the exploitation of the sea bed or of other marine resources and the ability to try criminal acts within 12 miles of the shore. Implementation has therefore been the subject of discussion between the Isle of Man, the Home Office and Government Departments with an interest in, for example, oil, coal and mineral extraction. We have also discussed fisheries. The right hon. Gentleman will appreciate that fisheries are a special issue. We are dealing basically with a hunting industry catching migrating natural resources. We are dealing with important traditional rights in fishing grounds from which some United Kingdom communities, including those in County Down, take some or all of their catches. We are dealing with obligations to Irish, French and Belgian fishermen who have traditionally fished these waters as well. We are also dealing with ensuring that any measures are compatible with the common fisheries policy —with all our Community obligations, the need to manage fisheries and the need to manage them in a non-discriminatory manner.

Officials have therefore explored whether, if the territorial sea is extended to 12 miles around the Isle of Man, the essential features I have just outlined can be safeguarded. There has been no secrecy, no conspiracy and no cover-up. So far officials have been exploring the possibilities, and Ministers have yet to take decisions.

Let me also be clear that we are fully cognisant of the importance of the fishery to all our fishermen. In Northern Ireland, fisheries within 12 miles of the Isle of Man represent up to 15 per cent. of the value of landings in Northern Ireland. The important fisheries are nephrops worth £600,000; cod and whiting, each worth £360,000; and herring worth about £235,000. In any one trip, about half the 150 boats involved will go within 12 miles of the Isle of Man.

In Scotland, the catches of scallops and queens are worth just under £1·5 million, with a further £500,000 earned by herring, whiting and nephrops. This fishery is very important to about 45 boats, and to Kirkcudbright, where the fish and scallop processor is a major local employer.

For Wales, the dogfish catch of about £150,000 and scallops of more than £30,000 are important; and for fishermen landing in England, more than £300,000 worth of fish are caught around the Isle of Man, with the autumn fishery for dogfish and the spring fishery for cod being particularly important.

Looking to the wider international scene, Belgian, Irish and French fishermen have rights to the demersal fisheries around the 12 miles. We are therefore conscious of the value of fishing to many communities whose fishermen go within 12 miles of the Isle of Man. I stress that we recognise the importance of ensuring that such fishing rights continue.

The sorts of measure which would be necessary would be ones which met our fundamental objectives. These are: first, traditional fishing rights of all United Kingdom fishermen would have to be safeguarded. We are only too conscious of the value of landings from catches around the Isle of Man, as I have already outlined to the House. Our second fundamental objective is that the agreed fishing rights of French, Belgian and Irish boats, encapsulated in the London convention of 1964, would also need to be safeguarded. Thirdly, any laws passed by the Isle of Man would have to be compatible with maintaining fishing rights, and compatible with EC and international law. I do not know how to stress that more strongly or more forcefully to the right hon. Gentleman, but it is a vital point. To meet such concerns, any fisheries law passed by the Isle of Man would have to be ratified by the United Kingdom Government. Thus, I can assure the right hon. Gentleman that we are not discussing a 12-mile exclusion zone for fishing.

So what would be the point of such a law? I shall digress to cover a constitutional point. As the House is probably aware, the Isle of Man is a dependency of the Crown and has its own legislature, judiciary and system of government. However, its legislation must receive Royal Assent from the Queen in Council. Its Tynwald is probably the oldest legislature in continuous session in the world. The United Kingdom Government are, nevertheless, responsible for defence and foreign affairs and have ultimate responsibility for the good government of the Isle of Man. The inclusion of fisheries in its extension of the territorial sea would enable the Isle of Man laws to mirror United Kingdom laws, as it has already done in respect of drug trafficking, serious fraud and other international matters. That would enable infringements of United Kingdom fisheries laws to be tried in Isle of Man courts, thus avoiding the need to have boats found offending necessarily having to be returned to the United Kingdom mainland to be tried for offences.

Mr. John D. Taylor: If such an event took place and a court hearing was held in which a United Kingdom skipper was involved, would he be restricted to employing an Isle of Man legal representative?

Mr. Maclean: That is not something that I can answer off the cuff. I suspect not, but I shall happily write back to ensure that the right hon. Gentleman has the exact legal opinion on that.

There is nothing sinister about this proposal. It has also been suggested that there will be new so-called conservation measures which will outlaw Northern Irish and other fishing boats. I stress as strongly as possible that this is not so. At present, there are no discussions about new conservation measures. The discussions are only about the feasibility of including fisheries in an extension of the territorial sea. If there were to be proposals on conservation, they would, as my predecessors promised as far back as 1983, require discussions with all interested or potentially affected parties. Even if we found a way to include fisheries in the 12-mile extension, this position would not change. We would still require the safeguard of ratifying any Isle of Man law on conservation measures before it could have effect, and we would require such consultations.

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): In view of the grave concern which has been so eloquently expressed, will the Minister state what time scale he envisages for the conclusion of the discussions and for a statutory reassurance to be given to the fishing people we represent?

Mr. Maclean: Perhaps I can deal with that point later. I do not have a particular time phase in mind. I do not think that negotiations must be concluded within a certain period. We want to ensure that things are absolutely right, no matter how long it takes.

The right hon. Member for Strangford quoted from an Isle of Man paper. It is purely coincidental that the discussions on a 12-mile extension were featured in the Isle of Man press some three months before three-year licences given by the Isle of Man to fishermen working within the existing three-mile territorial sea came up for renewal. These permits are renewed regularly. They relate only to the three-mile limit and do not extend to the 12-mile proposal. They are issued on a non-discriminatory basis without preference for Manx fishermen.

The United Kingdom and the Isle of Man already work closely together on fisheries management matters. The Irish sea herring fishery is already jointly managed by the United Kingdom Fisheries Departments and the Isle of Man. The Isle of Man participates in the management of the Irish sea fisheries as a member along with several representative fishing organisations on the area VII advisory committee. There is clearly already a good working relationship so that the many and complex issues of fisheries jurisdiction and management are well understood between us.

I give the assurance that the Government have no intention of abdicating their responsibilities for fishermen who have access rights in the area of possible extension. It is understood by the Isle of Man that territorial jurisdiction does not override legal and treaty obligations. The United Kingdom has responsibility for international relations off the Isle of Man and it has a duty to ensure that treaties and commitments are honoured. That is fully accepted by the Isle of Man. Traditional rights and Community and international obligations must be fully safeguarded. It is with these clear objectives in mind that Fisheries Ministers are examining the possibilities, and I can give the assurance that the House will be told as soon as we have reached our conclusions.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at five minutes to Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 14 December 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

ASSOCIATED BRITISH PORTS (No. 2) BILL *(By Order)*

Order for Third Reading read.

To be read the Third time on Wednesday 10 January at Seven o'clock.

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL (No. 2) BILL *(By Order)*

Order for consideration, amended, read.

To be considered on Thursday 11 January.

CARDIFF BAY BARRAGE BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Tuesday 19 December at Seven o'clock.

MOTIONS FOR UNOPPOSED RETURNS

Mr. Speaker: I call the First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means to move the nine motions for unopposed returns.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Return ordered,

of—

(1) the total number of Questions to Ministers or other Members which stood on the Order Paper, distinguishing those set down for oral, written priority and written answer respectively, the number of days upon which replies to Questions for oral answers were given in the House; and the total number of Questions for oral answer to which such answers were given in the House;

(2) the total number of Notices of Motions given for an early day;

(3) the number of Members ordered to withdraw from the House under Standing Order No. 42 (Disorderly conduct) showing separately the orders given in the House and those given in Committee; and the Members suspended from the service of the House under Standing Order No. 43 (Order in debate) or otherwise, distinguishing whether the offence was committed in the House or in Committee, the period of such suspension, the number of occasions on which more than one Member was so suspended having jointly disregarded the authority of the Chair, and the number of occasions on which the attention of the House was called to the need for recourse to force to compel obedience to Mr. Speaker's direction; and

(4) the number of public petitions presented to the House distinguishing separately those brought to the Table at the times specified by Standing Order No. 133 (No debate on presentation of petition).—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

CLOSURE AND ALLOCATION OF TIME

Return ordered,

Respecting—

(a) applications of Standing Order No. 35 (Closure of debate) during Session 1988-89:

(1) in the House and in Committee of the whole House, under the following heads:

1	2	3	4	5	6
Date when Closure claimed, and by whom	Question before House or Committee when claimed	Whether in House or Committee	Whether assent given to Motion or withheld by the Chair	Assent withheld because, in the opinion of the Chair, a decision would shortly be arrived at without that Motion	Result of Motion and, if a Division, Numbers for and against

and

(2) in the Standing Committees under the following heads;

1	2	3	4	5
Date when Closure claimed, and by whom	Question before Committee when claimed	Whether assent given to Motion or withheld by the Chair	Assent withheld because, in the opinion of the Chair, a decision would shortly be arrived at without that Motion	Result of Motion and, if a Division, Numbers for and against

and

(b) applications of Standing Order No. 28 (Powers of Chair to propose question) during Session 1988-89:

(1) in the House and in Committee of the whole House, under the following heads:

1	2	3	4	5
Date when Closure claimed, and by whom	Whether in House or Committee	Whether claimed in respect of Motion or Amendment	Whether assent given to Motion or withheld by the Chair	Result of Motion, and, if a Division, Numbers for and against

and

(2) in the Standing Committees under the following heads:

1	2	3	4
Date when Closure claimed, and by whom	Whether claimed in respect of Motion or Amendment	Whether assent given to Motion or withheld by the Chair	Result of Motion, and, if a Division, Numbers for and against

and

(c) the number of Bills in respect of which allocation of time orders distinguishing where appropriate orders supplementary to a previous order) were made under Standing Order No. 81 (Allocation of time to Bills), showing in respect of each Bill—

(i) the number of sittings allotted to the consideration of the Bill in Standing Committee by any report of a Business Sub-Committee under Standing Order No. 103 (Business sub-committees) agreed to by the Standing Committee, and the number of sittings of the Standing Committee pursuant thereto; and

(ii) the number of days or portions of days allotted by the allocation of time order and any supplementary order to the consideration of the Bill at any stage in the House or in committee, together with the number of days upon which proceedings were so taken in the House or in committee.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

DELEGATED LEGISLATION

Return ordered,

of the number of Instruments considered in Session 1988-89 by the Joint Committee and the Select Committee on Statutory Instruments respectively pursuant to their orders of reference, showing in each case the numbers of Instruments subject to the different forms of parliamentary procedure and of those within the Committees' orders of reference for which no parliamentary procedure is prescribed by statute; setting out the grounds on which Instruments may be drawn to the special attention of the House under Standing Order No. 124

(Statutory Instruments (Joint Committee)) and specifying the number of Instruments so reported under each of these grounds; and of the numbers of Instruments considered by a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c., and by the House respectively, in Session 1988-89, showing the number where the Question on the proceedings relating thereto was put forthwith under Standing Order No. 101(5). —*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

PRIVATE BILLS AND PRIVATE BUSINESS

Return ordered,

Of the Number of Private Bills, Hybrid Bills, Bills for the confirmation of Orders under the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936, and Bills for confirming Provisional Orders introduced into this House, and brought from the House of Lords, and of Acts passed in Session 1988-89, specifying also the dates of the House's consideration of the several stages of such Bills;

Of all Private Bills, Hybrid Bills and Bills for confirming Provisional Orders which in Session 1988-89 were reported on by Committees on Opposed Bills or by Committees nominated by the House or partly by the House and partly by the Committee of Selection, together with the names of the selected Members who served on each Committee; the first and also the last day of the sitting of each Committee; the number of days on which each Committee sat; the number of days on which each selected Member served; the number of days occupied by each Bill in Committee; the Bills of which the Preambles were reported to have been proved; the Bills of which the Preambles were reported to have been not proved; and in the case of Bills for confirming Provisional Orders, whether the Provisional Order ought or ought not to be confirmed;

Of all Private Bills and Bills for confirming Provisional Orders which in Session 1988-89 were referred by the Committee of Selection to the Committee on Unopposed Bills,together with the names of the Members who served on the Committee; the number of days on which the Committee sat; and the number of days on which each Member attended;

Of the number of Bills to confirm Orders under the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936, distinguishing those proceeded with under section 7 and under section 9 respectively; specifying, in the case of Bills proceeded with under section 9 against which petitions were deposited, whether a motion was made to refer the Bill to a joint committee, and if so whether such motion was agreed to, withdrawn, negatived or otherwise disposed of; and stating for each joint committee to which a Bill was referred the names of the Members of this House nominated thereto, the first and last day of the committee's sitting, the number of days on which each joint committee sat for the consideration of the Bill referred to it, the number of days on which each Member of the committee served, and whether the committee reported that the Order ought or ought not to be confirmed;

Of the number of Private Bills, Hybrid Bills, Bills for the confirmation of Orders under the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936, and Bills for confirming Provisional Orders withdrawn or not proceeded with by the parties, those Bills being specified which were referred to Committees and dropped during the sittings of the committee;

And of the membership, work costs and staff of the Court of Referees and the Standing Orders Committee.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

PUBLIC BILLS

Return ordered,

Of the number of Public Bills (other than Bills to confirm Provisional Orders and Bills to confirm Orders under the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1986) distinguishing Government from other Bills, introduced into this House, or brought from the House of Lords, during Session 1988-89, showing: (1) the number which received the Royal Assent, and (2) the number which did not receive the Royal Assent, indicating those which were introduced into but not passed by this House, those passed by this Hose but not by the House of Lords, those passed by the House of Lords but not by this House, those passed by both Houses but Amendments not agreed to; and distinguishing the stages at which such Bills were dropped, postponed or rejected in either House of Parliament, or the stages which such Bills had reached by the time of Prorogation.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

SITTINGS OF THE HOUSE

Return ordered,

of the days on which the House sat in Session 1988-89, stating for each day the day of the month and day of the week, the hour of the meeting, and the hour of the adjournment; the total numbers of hours occupied in the sittings of the House; and the average time; showing the number of hours on which the House sat each day, and the number of hours after the time appointed for the interruption of business and specifying, for each principal type of business before the House, how much time was spent thereon, distinguishing from the total the time spent after the hour appointed for the interruption of business.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

SPECIAL PROCEDURE ORDERS

Return ordered,

of the number of Special Procedure Orders presented in Session 1988-89, the number withdrawn; the number annulled; the number against which Petitions or copies of Petitions were deposited; the number of Petitions of General Objection and for Amendment respectively considered by the Chairman; the number of such petitions certified by the Chairman as proper to be received and the number certified by them as being Petitions of General Objection and for Amendment respectively; the number referred to a Joint Committee of both Houses; the number reported with Amendments by a Joint Committee, and the number in relation to which a Joint Committee reported that the Order be not approved and be amended respectively; and the number of Bills introduced for the confirmation of Special Procedure Orders.

Of Special Procedure Orders which, in Session 1988-89, were referred to a Joint Committee, together with the names of the commons Members who served on each Committee; the number of days on which each committee sat; and the number of days on which each such Member attended.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

STANDING COMMITTEES

Return ordered,

of (1) the total number and the names of all Members (including and distinguishing chairmen) who have been appointed to serve on one or more of the Standing Committees showing, with regard to each of such Members, the number of sittings to which he was summoned and at which he was present; (2) the number of Bills, Estimates, Matters and other items referred to Standing Committees pursuant to Standing Order No. 102 (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.), or Standing Order No. 103 (Standing Committees on European Community Documents) considered by all and by each of the Standing Committees, the number of sittings of each Committee and the titles of all Bills, Estimates, Matters and other items as above considered by a Committee distinguishing where a Bill was a Government Bill or was brought from the House of Lords, and showing in the case of each Bill, Estimate, Matter and other item, the particular Committee by which it was considered, the number of sittings at which it was considered (including, in the case of the Scottish Grand Committee, the number of Meetings held in Edinburgh, pursuant to a motion made under Standing Order No. 95(3) (Scottish Grand Committee)) and the number of Members present at each of those sittings; and (3) of the membership, work costs and staff of the Chairmen's Panel.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

SELECT COMMITTEES

Return ordered,

of statistics relating to the membership, work costs and staff of Select Committees (other than the Standing Orders Committee).—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Oral Answers to Questions

NORTHERN IRELAND

Intergovernmental Conference

1. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the recent meeting of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference.

3. **Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what issues were discussed at the last meeting of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference.

10. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last held discussions with Ministers of the Government of the Republic of Ireland; and what matters were discussed.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Peter Brooke): The joint statement issued following the last Intergovernmental Conference held on 30 November has been placed in the Library. Discussions included the political situation in Northern Ireland, security co-operation and economic co-operation.

Mr. Winnick: Has there been, or is there likely to be, any discussion at the conferences of the remarks made by the Secretary of State on 3 November? This is the first Northern Ireland Question Time since his controversial remarks on what might happen once terrorist violence comes to an end. We all deeply mourn the latest tragic murders of two soldiers. Does the Secretary of State agree that the setting up of the Anglo-Irish parliamentary body will be a step further towards closer co-operation and discussion between the Irish Republic and ourselves?

Mr. Brooke: In answer to the hon. Gentleman's first question, there was brief and informal discussion of that matter. On his second question, I believe that the parliamentary group could do nothing but good.

Mr. Corbett: Given that the Secretary of State has committed himself to more Ulster Defence Regiment patrols being accompanied by the Royal Ulster Constabulary, what steps has he taken to achieve that and how often has it happened?

Mr. Brooke: We have had a longstanding commitment to increasing RUC accompaniment of patrols, whether of the Regular Army or of the UDR. We have set up a working group, working inside the Northern Ireland Office and in collaboration with the security forces, and a similar working group at official level with the Irish, to discuss the modus operandi for adding to the accompaniment. It has been remarked that greater accompaniment has been seen.

Mr. Hunter: As one who is becoming increasingly disillusioned about the Anglo-Irish Agreement, may I seek reassurance, in the light of continuing opposition in Northern Ireland and no discernible decrease in terrorism, on what is being achieved? Are not the value, effectiveness and even morality of the agreement open to serious question?

Mr. Brooke: I can only speak with particular vividness of the working of the agreement and the conferences since I became Secretary of State. During that time, we have had four meetings, three of which lasted a considerable time. They have provided a great opportunity for me and for my right hon. Friend the Minister of State to establish a good working relationship with our colleagues in the Government of the Republic on which we have been able to draw informally between the workings of the conference.

Mr. Peter Robinson: Does the Secretary of State recognise that many people in Northern Ireland and outside believe that it would be appropriate to move towards an alternative to the Anglo-Irish Agreement? Has the Secretary of State a sense of justice and fair play such as to cause him to consider whether it would be wise to hold an event in which one participant, the Social Democratic and Labour party, would have a head start, while the other, the Unionists, could be locked in the pavilion? Will he cause such an event to be called so that negotiations can take place and attempt to ensure that all meet on a fair and equal basis, with the Anglo-Irish Agreement not being operated during that period?

Mr. Brooke: To use the hon. Gentleman's vivid metaphor, it goes without saying that it would be impossible to have a game or a match unless all sides were on the field. If all sides were on the field, talks would take place.

The Government have always said that they will operate the agreement sensitively in the interests of bringing about talks. The arrangements that we have reached with the Government of the Republic for meetings of the conference in the first half of 1990 will make it possible for there to be uneven intervals between the conferences.

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: During the conference, was there any discussion about the electricity interconnector, the improvement of roads in border areas or Northern Ireland's railway problems and the sabotaging of railway lines?

Mr. Brooke: I shall answer the hon. Gentleman in reverse order. On the most recent occasion, 30 November, we discussed co-operation in the context of the railway. We set an agenda for conversations at the conference during 1990, including cross-border co-operation, economic development and approaches to the Community. I do not think that we discussed the hon. Gentleman's first point on 30 November.

Mr. Gow: Will my right hon. Friend reaffirm that it is the Government's policy to maintain and strengthen the union between Great Britain and Northern Ireland? As it is the Government's policy that there should be no assembly in Scotland, on the ground that a Scottish assembly would injure the union, why does my right hon. Friend persist in advocating an assembly in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Brooke: My hon. Friend asks a teasing and tempting question. He knows that it has been the Government's policy for a significant time to move towards the transfer of power to local politicians in Northern Ireland.

Mr. McGrady: Under the auspices of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, will the Secretary of State consider setting up a cross-border panel of economists to examine the implications of the Single European Act in 1992? Such a panel could look into the problems of harmonisation of value added tax, fiscal rates and a common currency for the island of Ireland and report to him on possible ministerial action both north and south.

Mr. Brooke: It has taken us a little time in the working of the conference to set in motion the conversations that we are currently having about the Community. The hon. Gentleman's suggestion would be somewhat more ambitious than what we have already secured, but it is always sensible to have objectives that go beyond the immediate business. We will have plenty of time in 1990, and I will certainly remember the hon. Gentleman's suggestion. I make no comment about the value of the hon. Gentleman's suggestions, but I will remember them as we move to the second half of 1990.

Mr. McNamara: First, may I congratulate the Secretary of State on, over the past two days, successfully uniting all Irish parties—Catholic, Protestant and dissenter—to vote against the Government's policies? That is a significant act of unity on which the Government should be congratulated.

Secondly, as the Anglo-Irish Agreement is turning its attention from some important security matters, which were highlighted by the tragic event yesterday, to other more co-operative matters, would it not be in the interests of the people of Northern Ireland, the Republic and all parties concerned if the Government's position papers on the various economic and social matters were to be published by the respective Governments so that there could be an informed debate on those important issues throughout the island of Ireland?

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's mock congratulations, and I return the compliment. I heard that his party would go into the Lobby last night with the SDLP. The fact that 18 people from several political parties managed to assemble suggests that Labour Members were not present in force.

On the second part of the hon. Gentleman's question, we are making early progress on cross-border matters relating to the Community. It would be too early to take the step which the hon. Gentleman suggests, but I will bear it in mind.

John Francis Green

2. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will raise at the next meeting of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference the possibility of the publication by the Irish Government of the Garda report on its inquiry into the death of John Francis Green, referred to by the Minister of State for the Armed Forces at *Official Report*, column *817* on 29 November.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. John Cope): No, Sir.

Mr. Dalyell: Is the Minister aware that it is over 20 years since I went to Harold Wilson and James Callaghan to ask them why they imagined that they would be more successful than Strafford or Cromwell, and to plead with them not to send Scottish and English troops into Ireland? The answer was that the troops would be out by Christmas —Christmas 1969. Given that the Army is there, would it not be much better to be absolutely frank and to tell all that is known of the truth of John Francis Green?

Mr. Cope: In answer to the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question, I was not aware of the advice that he gave to the Prime Minister of the day 20 years ago, or of the Prime Minister's response.

In answer to the second half of the hon. Gentleman's question, we are, of course, as frank as we can possibly be in matters of this kind, but the hon. Gentleman must understand that there are operational considerations. On the specific allegations contained in the book referred to in the question, the hon. Gentleman is asking for the publication of a Garda report to the Irish Director of Public Prosecutions. We would not publish such a report in this country and the House would be astonished if we did. It would be even more exceptional for us to ask the Irish to do so. Investigations have been conducted on both sides of the border and in co-operation between the two police forces. I am satisfied that the allegations have been thoroughly investigated and reported to both Directors of Public Prosecutions.

Health Services

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the effect which Irish Republican Army terrorist actions have on the provision of health services for the population in Northern Ireland.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Richard Needham): Any terrorist crime that maims or kills adds to the cost of care and therefore reduces resources in other parts of the National Health Service.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I welcome that frank admission by the Minister because we are often told that we are spending undue amounts of money in Northern Ireland. Will he join me in paying tribute to the specialists, doctors, nurses, the professions supplemental to medicine, the ambulance workers and the ancillaries for their tremendous work throughout the long years of terrorism?

Mr. Needham: Of course, Sir. That goes without saying. In Northern Ireland we have one of the finest Health Services not only anywhere in the country, but anywhere in Europe, and we are deeply indebted to those who work in it.

Mr. Stott: I support what the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) said about the Health Service in Northern Ireland. The Minister will be aware that all the catering services of the Western health board have been privatised to a company called Gardner Merchant. Can he confirm that Anderson house, a former maternity unit that is now closed, is being used as free office space by that company? Is he further aware that Gardner Merchant is using telephones and stationery supplied by the Western health board? Is he aware that an environmental health investigation into the kitchens at three hospitals found dirty dishes left lying around overnight, floors not cleaned, meals arriving up to one hour late, staffing being halved and junior doctors in Altnagelvin hospital complaining about the standards of hygiene? Is not privatisation doing more damage to the Health Service in Northern Ireland than the terrorists ever could?

Mr. Needham: The original question referred to IRA terrorism and its effect on the Health Service. I can understand the hon. Gentleman wishing to make his political points, but they are hardly in line with the question.

On the point about competitive tendering, clearly we should encourage anything that reduces costs in one area in Northern Ireland and can lead to more spending on direct health care. Although Northern Ireland has been slower going down that road than elsewhere in the country, as the hon. Gentleman is fully aware, £1·3 million can now be saved by the Western health board and go directly to improved patient services.

Mr. Bellingham: Is the Minister aware that it is always possible to find isolated examples of standards being below par? Can he confirm that expenditure on the NHS in Northern Ireland per head of population is much higher than elsewhere in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Needham: It is higher than elsewhere in the United Kingdom because we have a higher incidence of disease and poverty there. Since 1979, the amount of money that we have spent on the Health Service has increased from £690 million to over £1 billion. That is a real increase of over 20 per cent. We can be justifiably proud of our record.

Security

5. **Mr. William Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

7. **Mr. Molyneaux:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the security situation in Northern Ireland.

9. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the latest security situation.

12. **Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the security situation in the Province.

Mr. Brooke: Since my predecessor answered a similar question on 22 July, 23 people have been killed in Northern Ireland in incidents directly related to terrorism. They included 12 civilians, six regular soldiers, a part-time member of the Ulster Defence Regiment and four members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary. From the beginning of this year until 30 October, 360 people have been charged with serious terrorist offences in Northern Ireland and large quantities of lethal weapons, ammunition and explosives have been recovered, in both Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic.

I am sure that the whole House will join me in condemning the horrific attack in Derryard last night and in extending sympathy to the families of the soldiers killed or injured. We pay tribute to the courage and resolution of all members of the security forces, who have never flinched in their determination to protect the ordinary decent people of Northern Ireland, prevent terrorist activity and bring terrorist criminals to justice.

Mr. Ross: Did yesterday's carefully planned murders in Northern Ireland convince the Secretary of State that there must be no ambiguity about the need to bring about the total military defeat of the IRA? He did not mention that in his answer. Does he accept that if that military defeat is to be brought about, the IRA must be convinced that it will not succeed in detaching Northern Ireland from the United Kingdom? Does he further accept that only action will convince the IRA of the Government's firm intention, and that a major step would be to begin treating Northern Ireland, in local government powers and legislative matters, as though it were fully part of the United Kingdom? That is an action which he could put in hand straight away and which would be very telling to the IRA.

Mr. Brooke: The Government's intention remains to defeat terrorism in all its forms by the concerting of military, social, economic and political policies. Those policies are designed to protect the right of the people of Northern Ireland to decide their future. In that sense, I freely give the commitment that the hon. Gentleman seeks. In the latter part of his question, he went a little wide of the security question.

Mr. Molyneaux: Out of respect for the dead and consideration for the bereaved, should we not stop claiming great improvements in security co-operation in the frontier region, particularly in the aftermath of yesterday's events and other similar incidents in which it is clear that the mobile strike forces of the IRA can assemble in the Irish Republic, carry out their dastardly deeds and return to a safe haven unhindered and along roads that have been illegally reopened in the frontier region?

Mr. Brooke: I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman shares my confidence in the commissioner of the Garda and the efforts of the Garda to follow up the dastardly crimes that were committed yesterday. I appreciate the frustration, particularly of people in the border areas, about the ability of terrorists to cross the border and return to the Republic. [HON. MEMBERS: "They go both ways."] I agree that there are crossings in both directions. That is a matter which I have already brought most vividly to the attention of the Irish Government and I shall do so again on the next occasion.

Mr. Riddick: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that Martin Galvin, the Noraid representative in America, was involved in the illegal reopening of the Lacky bridge crossing over the weekend? Will he further confirm that the IRA terrorists who so callously murdered the two soldiers yesterday used that crossing to escape from Northern Ireland? Does he share my hope that Americans who might be tempted to support Noraid, believing it to be an innocuous organisation, will cease to give it help and support now that Martin Galvin has revealed Noraid for what we all know it to be?

Mr. Brooke: Mr. Galvin is said to have taken the action that my hon. Friend describes, but to ascribe more importance to Mr. Galvin than he warrants is unhelpful. I am not sure that my hon. Friend is correct in his analysis of the operational question, but I appreciate his main point.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: Will my right hon. Friend reaffirm that the Government will never give in to or be influenced by the terrorists? If those 421 British soldiers who have been killed in the Province since 1969 are not to have died in vain, should not the Government be able to prove that the Province is better governed now than it was previously? Should we not have the proper legislative procedures in this House to deal with Northern Ireland legislation which are so clearly lacking? Should we not put before the leaders of the Northern Ireland parties political initiatives to give them a say, in the Province, in the affairs of their Province?

Mr. Brooke: I wholly reiterate the commitment that my hon. Friend sought in the first part of his question. He asked about good government within Northern Ireland. I am confident that many who live in the Province would point to improvements that we have been able to effect across the life of the Province in recent years, and I hope that that will long continue. My right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House and I are always happy to discuss the procedures of the House, but my hon. Friend's question on that goes a little wide of the specific question that I was asked.

Mr. Ashdown: May I congratulate the Secretary of State on his sensible comments several weeks ago which caused such a furore? Will he take it from me—I have had personal experience in three anti-terrorist campaigns—that he is right to say that the Army alone cannot defeat the terrorists? It is up to the Army to hold the reins and to maintain law and order while politicians achieve the solutions that defeat the terrorists. Is it not the case that politicians in Northern Ireland would better serve their nation if they showed more imagination and flexibility in achieving a political solution and less synthetic anger about what seemed an entirely sensible statement on the position in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his observations. At the time to which he refers I was asked a question and I sought to answer it straightforwardly. He raised the wider consideration of political advance. I concur with him that the defeat of terrorism will involve political, social and economic developments as well as military effort.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Will the Secretary of State confirm that all right-thinking people in Northern Ireland salute the memory and gallantry of Lance-Corporal Michael Paterson, aged 21, and Private James Houston, aged 22, of the 1st Battalion of the King's Own Scottish Borderers who were murdered savagely yesterday, and that our thoughts are with the other soldier who has been seriously injured? Will the Secretary of State comment on the remarks of the local Church of Ireland rector, who said:

> "There seems to be complete apathy from the authorities. There seems to be no determination to see this violence at an end. I have tried talking to the Northern Ireland Office. They just will not listen."

Will the Secretary of State tell the House whether he confirms three statements which were reported largely in Northern Ireland newspapers? First, on 4 November, he said:

> "The IRA could not be militarily defeated"—

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is Question Time. We should not have comments on statements of others.

Rev. Ian Paisley: There were two other statements in which the Secretary of State said that the IRA would not win and that the Government would seek to defeat the IRA.

Mr. Brooke: I am most appreciative of the terms in which the hon. Gentleman couched his remarks about the two soldiers who were killed yesterday. As I said earlier, they died in defence of ordinary, decent people in Northern Ireland. The hon. Gentleman quoted Mr. Hill, the Church of Ireland rector, who said in a statement that some aspects were technical matters which he did not understand. I pay tribute to the flexibility deployed by the Army on the border. The fire to the truck which made the original assault was returned from a patrol, not the vehicle checkpoint. The hon. Gentleman asked about my various observations. At no stage in the initial interview did I say that the IRA could not be defeated. I have consistently made it clear that if the IRA is to be defeated, all aspects of Government policy in reinforcement of the military must be deployed.

Mr. McNamara: Will there be a thorough review by the Secretary of State's Department and the Ministry of Defence of the security arrangements at border checkpoints as the IRA seems to feel that it has a particular weapon with which to deal with such checkpoints. I shall take the Secretary of State up on the subject of policy relating to Ulster Defence Regiment accompaniments by the Royal Ulster Constabulary. If the policy is to do that as much as possible, why cannot a record be kept of operational decisions when the policy has been implemented?

Mr. Brooke: We always seek to learn from any experiences that we have, and border policy is kept under constant review. I have noted what the hon. Gentleman has said. In the context of accompaniment, not just of the UDR but of the Army generally, it is recognised that for both operational and resource reasons there may be times when the patrol cannot be accompanied. The patrol will frequently have to go out because no RUC officer is available. One consequence flowing from our study is that we have significantly improved our statistics.

Religious Education

6. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he has taken to broaden religious education of children in Northern Ireland.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): The Government recognise the importance of religious education and have reaffirmed this in the provision of the draft Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 which was approved by the House last night. The order also provides for the drafting of a core syllabus for religious education, which will provide a valuable opportunity for represenatives of different denominations to co-operate in devising a syllabus containing the basic tenets of the Christian faith shared by the children of both communities.

Mr. Allen: Does the Minister agree that many of the world's leading religions—Christianity, Buddhism, Islam and others that my colleagues could mention—all practise highly civilising values if carried out in the true spirit of the religion? Will he condemn the use of Christianity, whether it be Protestantism or Catholicism, as a backstop to the bigotry which leads to so much discontent and death in the Province? Will he ensure that all religions are taught in religious education classes so that the community can learn the best from the culture and religions of other parts of the community?

Dr. Mawhinney: The hon. Gentleman is quite right to draw attention to the positive values which emerge from

Christian belief. I am pleased that the vast majority of people in Northern Ireland practise their Christian faith, of whatever denomination, in both the letter and the spirit of that faith. The hon. Gentleman is also right that some people use religion as a weapon, and I share his concern that that should not be the case, particularly in our schools. We seek commonality between our young people's views so that they may learn to build on that positive aspect of the Christian faith.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: Does my hon. Friend accept that many hon. Members welcome the opportunity of greater integration in education in Northern Ireland? We also welcome what he said yesterday when we debated the order on education in Northern Ireland. Does he agree that many parents would like to see those opportunities extended or at least would like to see greater co-operation between different denominations and different schools?

Dr. Mawhinney: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his kind remarks. I agree that an increasing number of parents in Northern Ireland wish to have the option of integrated schooling made available, but we shall not impose it. It will be for parents to choose, but the Government believe that parents have a right to that choice. The Government also recognise the importance of my hon. Friend's other point —that for the foreseeable future most young people will not be educated in integrated schools. For that reason, we are introducing new courses in education for mutual understanding, cultural heritage and a common history curriculum to try to achieve the aims that my hon. Friend and I share.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Does the Minister accept that there are sincere Christians in Northern Ireland who accept state provision of education but are concerned that some of the lessons may impinge on their understanding of biblical truth and therefore ask for the right to let their children opt out of such lessons? Will the Minister grant that freedom of conscience?

Dr. Mawhinney: I am aware of the cases to which the hon. Gentleman draws attention. I am also aware of the importance of ensuring that young people have a broad, balanced and coherent education. That is what we seek to achieve through the new curriculum.

Confidential Information

8. **Mr. Mallon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary; and what decisions were made concerning the prevention of confidential security information being made available to terrorist organisations.

Mr. Cope: I have regular and frequent meetings with the Chief Constable and other members of the security forces. The subject matter of such meetings is properly confidential. I am, however, satisfied that appropriate measures to safeguard material that might be of use to terrorist organisations have been put in place by both the police and the Army.

Mr. Mallon: The Minister will be aware of the bizarre circumstances that led the police to carry out a search for illegal arms, ammunition and terrorist paraphernalia at one of their own stations, at Kells, County Antrim on 12 October 1988. Will he confirm that two police officers serving at Kells resigned from the force, three were transferred to other stations, and one, named McAuley, was charged with the possession of arms and ammunition illegally held on behalf of a Loyalist paramilitary grouping? Can the Minister say whether the investigation carried out by Mr. Stevens involved interviewing the two officers who resigned and the three who were transferred? Was McAuley interviewed and, more importantly, were all the police officers who served at Kells during the two years prior to that date also interviewed?

Mr. Cope: I can confirm that the RUC demonstrated its evenhandedness and its preparedness to consider anything that might have gone wrong in its operation in connection with the RUC station at Kells. Nothing was found in the RUC station at Kells that gave rise to any doubt. As the hon. Gentleman says, certain officers resigned and so on. The Stevens inquiry is looking into all aspects of collusion which are drawn to its attention, but I do not wish to comment on that until Mr. Stevens has completed his investigations.

Rev. Ian Paisley: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It relates to the supplementary question by the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon). The matter being discussed is currently before the Northern Ireland courts.

Mr. Speaker: If that is so, we should not proceed, but it is not within my knowledge.

Mr. Cope: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. There are certain charges pending, so in certain respects the matter is sub judice.

Rev. Ian Paisley: It concerns a constituent of mine.

Mr. Speaker: In that case, we should move on.

Mr. McNamara: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. What is your practice in these matters? Are you accepting points of order during Question Time or at the end of Question Time?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member well knows, and the House knows, that if a matter requires the immediate intervention of the Chair I must take the point of order —*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman may reflect that that is exactly what happens during debates at any other time.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

11. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the workings of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Brooke: There have been four meetings of the Intergovernmental Conference recently. At the last conference we discussed ways of furthering cross-border co-operation in economic and social fields and set in train a programme of work to develop plans in those areas.

Mr. MacKay: Would my right hon. Friend agree that the Anglo-Irish Agreement has replaced megaphone diplomacy, by and large, with informed, low-key discussions between the two Governments on matters of mutual interest and concern? That must surely be in the interests of all who live in Northern Ireland, in the rest of the United Kingdom and in the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Brooke: During the four months in which I have been involved with the Anglo-Irish Agreement I remember two occasions when megaphones were used—once by me and once by an Irish Minister. On the next occasion, we agreed that it would be more sensible to continue to operate through the conference, as my hon. Friend has suggested.

Mr. Hume: Has the question of funding Conway Mill been discussed in the Anglo-Irish Conference? Does the Minister recall a reply that he made to me on that question, when he said that they were not funded because of allegations of indirect or direct assistance to paramilitary organisations? Does the Minister accept that in the context of Northern Ireland those are serious and dangerous allegations? Does he recall my telling him that when I put the allegation directly to the organisers, they categorically denied it, and with all my experience of Northern Ireland I believe them. They also told me of their willingness to open the organisation's books to the Government, or to anybody nominated by the Government. In all fairness and justice, should not that offer be taken up?

Mr. Brooke: To the best of my knowledge, there has been no discussion of Conway Mill at any of the four conferences at which I have been present, but I congratulate the hon. Member on his ingenuity in reaching the subject of question No. 18. Policy on that issue—on which, as the hon. Gentleman said, I have already given him an answer—was determined by my predecessor, the present Foreign Secretary, and that policy still stands.

Rev. William McCrea: After four years of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, will the Minister tell the people of Northern Ireland and right hon. and hon. Members why the promise made to the people of Northern Ireland has not been kept? The agreement was brought into existence to bring peace, stability and reconciliation to the people of Ulster, yet in the House today the Secretary of State has given us a catalogue of murder, death and destruction.

Mr. Brooke: No one would be better pleased than I if the working of the conference, and the agreement, had produced total peace and stability, but there is no doubt in my mind that the co-operation that we have across the border with the Irish Government makes such a future more likely.

Mr. John D. Taylor: In view of the increasing disillusionment in the House with the Anglo-Irish Agreement and the awareness that there must be a way forward to a better alternative, is the Secretary of State aware of the Ulster Unionists' proposals that, during the heavy programme of the Dublin Government's European presidency, there will be an opportunity for a temporary gap in which talks could take place to bring about that alternative? When a reasonable proposal comes from the Ulster Unionists, the time has surely arrived for Dublin and the Secretary of State to do better than just saying no.

Mr. Brooke: I do not agree with the right hon. Gentleman's premise that there is disillusionment, but I can respond, as I responded earlier, to the spirit of the second part of his question. The Government are interested in interpreting and managing the agreement flexibly, with the idea that if there were an uneven gap between meetings of the conference in the first part of 1990, there would be an opening for talks if all parties agreed.

I am mildly surprised that the right hon. Gentleman referred to a reasonable suggestion from the Ulster Unionists as though that were unusual. I regard any suggestions that they make as reasonable.

Mr. Leigh: Under the workings of the agreement, has my right hon. Friend discussed the new Anglo-Irish parliamentary body? Does he consider it a good omen for Anglo-Irish relations that the Irish parties have sent such a strong team, including the former Taoiseach and Foreign Affairs Minister? Will he express the hope that Unionist Members will send representatives to work on the parliamentary body as there is nothing to be gained from remaining in the bunker and everything to be gained by talking?

Mr. Brooke: The more the British delegation to the group—the setting up of which I welcome—is fully representative of the House, the more effectively it will discharge its mandate.

Republic of Ireland

13. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what subjects he expects to discuss at his next meeting with representatives of the Government of the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Brooke: I expect the next meeting of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference to discuss a range of subjects, including security co-operation, relations between the community and the security forces, and cross-border social and economic co-operation.

Mr. Canavan: In view of the continuing concern of the Irish Government and, indeed, many people in this country about the case of the Birmingham Six and the fact that the recent change in prison category status seems to be a tacit admission by the British Government that the Birmingham Six are not, and never have been, members of the IRA, will the Secretary of State consult the Home Secretary and the Prime Minister with a view to getting the case reviewed or reopened to ensure that justice is done and is seen to be done?

Mr. Brooke: The case of the Birmingham Six is not a normal or natural part of the agenda, although I have to confess that the ingenuity of both Governments in working the agreement means that there are occasional references to subjects which lie outside the agenda. I have on a previous occasion brought the matter to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, arising out of a conversation at the conference.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Sir Hugh Rossi:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 14 December.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

This evening, a reception will be held at No. 10 Downing street on behalf of the Royal National Institute for the Blind.

Sir Hugh Rossi: Is my right hon. Friend aware that a great many people are dismayed at the threats by ambulance men to refuse to answer emergency calls except on their own arbitrary terms, despite the generous increased offer that has been made to them?

The Prime Minister: Yes. In some places the emergency service is working well, but in others the position is as my hon. Friend has said. The offer that has been made to the ambulance men is for increases of between 9 and 16·3 per cent. over a period of 18 months. For example, in London leading ambulance men and women have received an offer of a backdated increase of 12·1 per cent., with arrears of £957 already due. Qualified ambulance men and women with the extra medial qualifications—the paramedics—have received an offer of a 16·3 per cent. increase. For them, back pay already accumulated would be about £1,290. Those are good offers and one would hope that they would be accepted.

Mr. Kinnock: The Prime Minister knows very well that if she allowed the dispute to go to arbitration there would be an immediate and complete return to work by all ambulance staff. Why will she not let the matter go to arbitration, especially if, as she has just said, she thinks that the offer is such a good one? Why does she not have the confidence to let the matter go to a third party?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman has asked that question several times before. He knows full well that these matters are negotiated in the Whitley council and that there is no provision there for compulsory arbitration.

Mr. Kinnock: The Prime Minister said this morning that she would be "so pleased" if the ambulance dispute was settled by Christmas. When that would give her and the country such pleasure, why will she do absolutely nothing constructive to bring the dispute to a close?

The Prime Minister: The pay offers are between 9 and 16·3 per cent. With the backdating and lump sums which have already accumulated, they are good offers. I should have thought that the right hon. Gentleman would be sufficiently concerned that the emergency services are not operating well to urge the ambulance men to accept those offers so that normal service can be resumed.

Mr. Kinnock: Statements like that from the Prime Minister, who has the power to resolve the dispute, are meaningless. If she will get her right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health to tell the Health Service managers to send the dispute to arbitration, the dispute will end by four o'clock this afternoon. Why does not she do that?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman makes himself very clear. He is not prepared to urge the ambulance men to return to work despite an offer of between 9 per cent. and 16·3 per cent. and the fact that there are lump sums waiting to be picked up which vary between £650 for leading ambulance men and women outside London to nearly £1,300 for paramedics in the ambulance service within London.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Has my right hon. Friend noted the outstanding success of the water privatisation share issue, which has transferred the industry from state control to true public ownership? Will she join me in congratulating the millions of new shareholders who ignored the threats that their dividends would be confiscated and that the industry would be renationalised, as promised by the Labour party?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I gladly join my hon. Friend. The water privatisation has been extremely successful. People have been very willing to take up the good offers in the knowledge that privatisation will produce a much better service with improvements for drinking water, rivers and the environment generally. I gladly join my hon. Friend in congratulating my right hon. and hon. Friends on the way in which the share issue has gone through. I congratulate all those who will be shareholders for the first time, thus extending the property-owning democracy.

Q2. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 14 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Howells: Will the Prime Minister consider devolving power to the people of Wales in the early 1990s, as the majority of Welsh Members in this place are in favour of a Welsh Parliament? Will she ensure that the voice of Wales, as a nation, will be heard in Europe because we, the Welsh, believe that we should play a major role in the Community in the 1990s?

The Prime Minister: I saw the early-day motion in the names of the hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members. I seem to remember that this issue has come before the House before, and that the people of Wales voted overwhelmingly against having a devolved Assembly, and I see no reason to change that view. It seems that they think that they are well represented in the House and by the Government.

Q3. **Mr. Hugh Dykes:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 14 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Dykes: In view of my right hon. Friend's powerful efforts in this connection, and because of the dramatic meeting which took place yesterday, will she consider this afternoon sending an urgent message to President de Klerk asking for the immediate release of Nelson Mandela before Christmas?

The Prime Minister: I share my hon. Friend's pleasure at the meeting between President de Klerk and Nelson Mandela. I hope that Nelson Mandela will be released as soon as possible. I agree that it would be a great advance. It would help to bring an end to violence and to start negotiations on a South African constitution which will be fair to all people. I shall consider doing what my hon. Friend seeks.

Q4. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 14 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Clarke: In view of the steel industry privatisation, are the Government prepared to use their golden share in the interests of the work forces at Ravenscraig, Clydesdale, Dalziel and Imperial? In view of the outstanding productivity achievements of the workers at those plants, will the Prime Minister assure them and the Scottish people that their steel industry is safe in her hands?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman says, the steel industry is privatised. It has done very well under privatisation. The taxpayer has not had to stump up enormous subsidies for it. Indeed, it has contributed to the Treasury and thus to the social services. We should not consider using a particular share to frustrate any commercial decisions which need to be made. They must take their due and proper course.

Q5. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 14 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Brown: Has my right hon. Friend noted the promise in eastern Europe of one man, one vote—a promise that is now extending from the Volga, from the Oder and even more from the Danube? Is my right hon. Friend disappointed that that promise is not being fulfilled from the Mersey?

Mr. Speaker: Order. On reflection, I do not think that that is a matter within the Prime Minister's responsibility.

Q6. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 14 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Barnes: Has the Prime Minister seen *The Guardian* today—it may not be her favourite read—which shows that one of her advisers is again in trouble for secretly financing an extreme Right-wing secret newsletter, run by a former MI5 agent, which claims that Labour Members are Communist sympathisers? As I am one of those Members—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will hon. Members please put away their newspapers?

Mr. Barnes: As I am one of the hon. Members mentioned, and I am certainly honourable, will the Prime Minister disown that action and sack David Hart?

The Prime Minister: No adviser, employed either by me or by No. 10, is doing any such thing, as the hon. Gentleman well knows. People are free to write what they please—just as free as those who edit *Tribune*.

Q7. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 14 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Bowis: My right hon. Friend will be aware of the tragedy in Sri Lanka and the slaughter both within and between the communities of that wonderful country. Is she also aware of the need for all countries to support the Sri Lankan people in bringing the communities together? Is she aware of the Sri Lankan Government's request that English be restored as the common language? Will she give every aid to the Sri Lankans, especially through the provision of English language teachers?

The Prime Minister: I share my hon. Friend's concern about matters in Sri Lanka, which I discussed very recently with former President Jayawardene, who did so much to resolve problems in that country. I know that English is a great unifying language in that country, and we put in a great deal of money—about £500,000 per year—through the British Council for the teaching of the English language. We must exercise a certain amount of caution about where we put teachers until the troubles in that country are at an end.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 14 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Smith: Will the Prime Minister tell the House when she first knew about the deception perpetrated on the public, the taxpayers and the work force at Rover by the sweetners offered to British Aerospace by the Government? When did she first know? Is it not time that she, her Government and her ex-Ministers came clean with the public about the damaging way in which they handled that matter and about the damage inflicted on the industry and on my constituents?

The Prime Minister: I reject the premise behind the hon. Gentleman's question. I believe that his constituents and all those who work for Rover had a very good deal when it was sold to British Aerospace—*[Interruption.]* It was a good deal for the taxpayer, who had already had to spend —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister must be given a chance to reply.

The Prime Minister: The taxpayer had already spent £3 billion on supporting the company and might well have had to find a further £1·6 billion. It was a very good deal for the dealers' network and also kept the Honda link. It was a good deal for everyone concerned and that is precisely what Opposition Members cannot stand.

Mr. Churchill: Bearing in mind that the peoples of eastern Europe are discarding the discredited nostrums of Marxist Socialism, will my right hon. Friend redouble her efforts to ensure that Marxism never again gains a foothold in Britain?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. Socialism failed utterly in the Soviet Union and in eastern Europe as it had failed in Britain in the years before 1979.

Q10. **Mr. Boateng:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 14 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Boateng: What words of seasonal comfort does the Prime Minister have for people who will be using a rail network that is increasingly underfunded and understaffed and on which there is increasing concern about safety? What words of comfort has she for users and workers when she is cutting the revenue by some 25 per cent. and when there is every reason to expect further reductions in passenger safety and security? Does the right hon. Lady agree that that is not only no way to run a rail network, but also no way to run a country?

Hon. Members: Answer.

The Prime Minister: Of course I will respond to the hon. Gentleman's question. Under the success of our economy, the amount invested in British Rail and in London Underground will be higher than ever before.

Mr. Norman Tebbit (Chingford): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I take points of order after questions and statements.

Mr. Tebbit: It relates to Prime Minister's questions.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Gentleman knows that I take points of order after business questions and the statement.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): May I ask the Leader of the House to give us the business for next week and for the week when we return after the Christmas recess?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Sir Geoffrey Howe): The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 18 DECEMBER—Second Reading of the Broadcasting Bill.

Motion to take note of EC documents relating to package travel. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

TUESDAY 19 DECEMBER—Until seven o'clock Estimates Day (1st allotted day, 1st part). There will be a debate on class II, vote 2, so far as it relates to the accommodation and repatriation of Vietnamese boat people.

Motion on the code of practice for trade union ballots for industrial action.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

At ten o'clock the House will be asked to agree the civil and defence votes on account and the outstanding winter Supplementary Estimates.

WEDNESDAY 20 DECEMBER—Motion for the Christmas Adjournment.

Proceedings on the Consolidated Fund Bill.

THURSDAY 21 DECEMBER—Adjournment debates.

It may be for the convenience of the House if I indicate, in response to the hon. Gentleman's question, that subject to the progress of business, the business for the first week after the Christmas Adjournment will be as follows:

MONDAY 8 JANUARY—Until about seven o'clock Second Reading of the Pensions (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill followed by Second Reading of the Government Trading Bill.

TUESDAY 9 JANUARY—Second Reading of the Enterprise and New Towns (Scotland) Bill.

WEDNESDAY 10 JANUARY—Second Reading of the Aviation and Maritime Security Bill.

Motion on the Co-operative Development Agency (Winding-up and Dissolution) Order.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

THURSDAY 11 JANUARY—Opposition Day (2nd allotted day). There will be a debate on an Opposition motion. Subject for debate to be announced.

FRIDAY 12 JANUARY—Debate on the future of the multi-fibre arrangement on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

[Monday 18 December

Relevant European Community Documents

(a) 5382/89	*Package Travel, Holidays and Tours*
(b) 7996/89	*Package Holiday Travel*

Relevant Reports of the European Legislation Committee

(a) HC 15-iii (1988-89), para 1

(b) HC 15-xxxiv (1988-89), para 1 and HC 11-iv (1989-90), para 1

Tuesday 19 December

Estimates Day Debate: Relevant Documents

Second Report of the Foreign Affairs Committee Session 1988-89 on Hong Kong (HC 281)

The Government's observations on the Foreign Affairs Committee's Second Report Session 1988-89 (Cm. 927)

The Evidence taken by the Foreign Affairs Committee on Wednesday 13 December (HC 58-ii)—which is expected to be published on Monday 18 December.]

Dr. Cunningham: I am sure that the House is grateful to the right hon. and learned Gentleman not only for telling us about next week's business but for announcing the business for the first week after we return from the Christmas recess. I also welcome the fact that he has found time for the House to debate the multi-fibre arrangement, which is of great importance to right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House.

Is it true that the Secretary of State for Education and Science intends to announce next week his decision on capital allocations for our children's schools? I emphasise the words "our children's" as it is overwhelmingly the children of Opposition Members who attend state schools. Given the importance of that matter to all our constituents, and the fact that the Government have been able to provide more taxpayers' money for a single city technology college in Nottingham than for the entire state system in the county of Cumbria, will the Leader of the House arrange for an oral statement on that very important subject?

Is it the case that next week the Secretary of State for Transport will make a statement on the new financial objectives for 1990-93 for British Rail? Given that those new objectives are likely to eliminate all Government support for the operation of services in Network SouthEast, affecting millions of commuters, and that there will be reductions in Government support for provincial rail services, too, will the Leader of the House ensure that the statement is made in Parliament and that the House is given an early opportunity to debate its consequences for all our people as soon as the House returns from the Christmas recess?

As the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has indicated his intention to abandon Government policy on golden shares, and given the wide-ranging implications of that decision for many important and strategic industries, including aerospace, water and telecommunications, and the threat that that poses to many thousands of jobs in the British economy, will the Leader of the House find time next week for a statement by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on that subject?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman appreciates the decision to discuss the multi-fibre arrangement because such a debate has been requested by right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House for some time. We can at least make progress with that.

As to the hon. Gentleman's request for a statement on capital allocations in education, I cannot give him any information—except that he should disabuse himself of the idea that he speaks for "our" children. My right hon. and hon. Friends have as much interest in every sense in the working of the state education system. It is noticeable that a growing number of people of all classes and in all communities take a growing interest in the independent education sector.

On British Rail's objectives, I shall convey the hon. Gentleman's request to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. I am sure that it is his intention to

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make a statement to the House at the appropriate time. In doing so, he will doubtless repeat the point made this afternoon by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, when she emphasised the massive growth in capital expenditure in the rail as well as the road system.

As to the hon. Gentleman's request for a statement on golden shares, that goes beyond any reasonable ambition for next week's business programme. The hon. Gentleman will know that certain matters in respect of the Jaguar car company are being examined by the Select Committee on Trade and Industry.

Mr. Norman Tebbit (Chingford): Will my right hon. and learned Friend consider arranging an early debate on the affairs of Merseyside? If the Prime Minister cannot answer questions on Merseyside, it would be very convenient to have a complete afternoon's debate on it.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I fancy that my right hon. Friend, whose interest in the affairs of Merseyside is well founded, will have an opportunity to draw attention to some of the more remarkable events there if he intervenes in next week's Christmas Adjournment debate, and I hope very much that the matter will be ventilated in that context.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): When the House debates the Broadcasting Bill on Monday, do the Leader of the House and his right hon. and hon. Friends intend to support a motion in the name of the Leader of the Opposition proposing that the Bill be referred to a Special Standing Committee? I think that that would be widely welcomed, not only in the House but in the industry.

Will the Leader of the House also arrange for two statements to be made next week, one on the critical meeting of European Community Fisheries Ministers and the other on the rights of British passport holders in Hong Kong? The Government's failure to date to make an announcement on that subject is having a destabilising effect in the colony, and it would be scandalous if an attempt were made to slip out a statement over the Christmas recess. May we hear one before then?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot encourage the hon. Gentleman to expect a positive response to his first question. I shall, however, take note of his two requests for statements, and draw them to the attention of my right hon. Friends. I can give him no firmer assurance at present.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): When does my right hon. and learned Friend expect to be able to tell the House what the Government have decided about the possibility of introducing a Bill following Tuesday's debate on war crimes? If they decide to introduce such a Bill, will my right hon. and learned Friend and the Patronage Secretary bear it in mind that many of us will feel that, as we were allowed a free vote on Tuesday, we should be allowed one on the Bill?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing the matter to my attention. The House certainly expressed its view by a substantial majority on Tuesday, although my hon. Friend will recollect that the debate in the other place took a slightly different course. The Government are considering what form of action would constitute an appropriate response to both debates, and we shall certainly take account of what my hon. Friend said.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Without asking the Leader of the House to comment on the General Medical Council's inquiry into the sale of kidneys, may I ask whether he is aware that that inquiry highlights the acute shortage of donors and the fact that people are dying for the lack of kidneys? Does he agree that it underlines the urgent need to debate the possibility of an opting-out system for kidney donors to replace the present inadequate opting-in system, and may we have such a debate next week?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for showing proper respect—as always—by acknowledging that I cannot comment on the case now before the General Medical Council. As for the underlying problem that he mentioned, I shall certainly bring it to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): Will my right hon. and learned Friend give us a little more information about the Vietnamese debate? Is it intended that we should come to a decision, or merely discuss the matter?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The debate on the Estimates next week will be allowed to continue for a full three hours, and we shall see how the matter stands at its conclusion.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): In view of widespread reports that the Government intend to change the law to allow about 150,000 people from Hong Kong into this country, will my right hon. and learned Friend allow a debate on the matter as soon as possible? If such proposals are announced, they will represent a complete reversal of everything that the Government said before the passing of the British Nationality Act 1981, and will cause anger in the west midlands.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend will no doubt recall that there have been many statements on the position of Hong Kong and its relationship to this country in respect of such matters, which have also been the subject of a report by the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs. That underlines the extent to which the House pays attention to these matters and it is clearly right for my right hon. Friends to keep the House fully informed of developments on that front.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): With regard to the ombudsman's impending report on the Barlow Clowes scandal, will there be an oral ministerial statement next week about the Government's response to the report? Can the Leader of the House say on what date the statement is likely to be made?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As I think I have told the House before, the Government are very well aware of the importance of this matter. The Department of Trade and Industry has now commented to the ombudsman on his draft report. We understand that it has been printed and that it is expected to be published before the Christmas recess. The Government undertook to reconsider the whole question once the Parliamentary Commissioner had reported and we shall make our conclusions known at the same time as the report is published. Given the imminence of that, I cannot even state a specific date for a statement.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): In his response to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), the Leader of the House clearly recognised the timing difficulties of ensuring that a statement on the Council of Fisheries Ministers could be made in the House before the Christmas recess. Although we all hope that there will be such a statement we should not wish to deter negotiations. What alternative facilities could the Leader of the House make available to hon. Members representing fishing constituencies to ensure that we are fully advised of all the decisions reached at the Council, as this is a matter of critical importance to our constituencies?

On the Broadcasting Bill, has the Leader of the House noticed early-day motions 195 and 196, and can we expect a clear statement on Gaelic broadcasting——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady knows of the rule that only one early-day motion may be printed in *Hansard*.

Mrs. Ewing: Then I refer to No. 196.

[That this House calls upon Her Majesty's Government to recognise the contribution of Gaelic language television in fostering and extending knowledge of Gaelic culture throughout Scotland, to acknowledge the progress made in recent years by such bodies as Comunn na Gaidhlig and to provide for the proper funding of Gaelic television programming in the Broadcasting Bill, currently before the House.]

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand the choice made by the hon. Lady in that respect. The Government are considering the proposals that have been submitted by the various interested parties for an increase in the amount of Gaelic television programmes and we shall announce our decisions as soon as possible.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food are well aware of the importance of fisheries matters—not only within Scotland—and they will seek to inform the House as nearly as possible to the usual ways, following the conclusion, whenever that may be, of the proceedings in Brussels next week. I shall bear in mind the point that the hon. Lady made. I hope that it will be possible to follow more or less the normal pattern.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): May I draw the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend to early-day motion 73, which deplores the barbaric slaughter and consumption of about 4 million dogs a year in South Korea?

[That this House expresses its deep abhorrence at the practice in South Korea of the inhumane slaughtering and eating of millions of dogs every year; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to make the strongest representations to the South Korean President and Government to desist from this barbaric practice forthwith.]

Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the motion is supported by many hon. Members of all parties throughout the country? May we have an early debate on the matter to bring some pressure to bear on the South Koreans to behave more humanely?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am by no means sure that I can offer the prospect of an early debate, but I can tell my hon. Friend that the Korean Government are well aware of the concern in this country about the way in which dogs are reared and slaughtered for human consumption there.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): I believe that live television showed part of Northern Ireland Question Time today. That is an improvement on the way in which Northern Ireland is usually handled, with debates usually stuck on late at night. Would it be possible for European matters, which are dealt with in a similar way, and Northern Ireland matters to be given time in the House when many hon. Members are here to discuss the issues?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am afraid that I cannot offer an instant comment on the instant broadcasting of Northern Ireland proceedings this afternoon. The hon. Gentleman will know that the management of European questions was one subject of a recent report by the Select Committee on Procedure, and the Government are considering it with care.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): May I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for his intervention, which he announced earlier this week, to sort out the case of constituents waiting to see the Line of Route?

On Barlow Clowes, if the report is not published before the Christmas recess, will my right hon. and learned Friend make absolutely certain that there is an oral statement in the first week after the recess?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have already said that printing should proceed to allow the report to be published before the Christmas recess. I also said that we shall make our conclusions known at the same time as the report is published. That should meet my hon. Friend's latter anxiety. I am glad that I was able to meet his earlier anxiety, and I express my appreciation for his gratitude.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Will the Leader of the House give an assurance that no Vietnamese people will be forcibly returned to Vietnam until the House of Commons debates the matter next week?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I repeat precisely the sentence at the end of the speech by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary earlier this week.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): As Back-Bench Members had 45 minutes at midnight on Monday to discuss the European budget, does the Leader of the House think it fair, again very late next Monday night, to debate the package tours order, which he knows raises important constitutional questions about the powers of the Commission and the rights of the House? Does he honestly think that it is not an insult to democracy for vital issues affecting the powers of the House of Commons and affecting every person in Britain to be discussed by a bunch of sleepyheads in the early hours of the morning when few people are listening?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I appreciate my hon. Friend's continuing interest in this matter. He will know that the issue is expected to be discussed at the Internal Market Council on 22 December. He would be the first to express

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anxiety if the House had no opportunity to discuss the matter before that consideration takes place. I am sure that it is right for the debate to be held early next week. The time at which it takes place is one matter to which the report of the Select Committee on European Legislation is relevant.

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): The Leader of the House will be aware that the Director General of Oftel has missed a good opportunity to control pornographic telephone services. Indeed, his statement last Friday opened the door to even more. Is there no possibility of a debate and an amendment to the telecommunications legislation to get rid of such odious services?

Sir. Geoffrey Howe: I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern about the first point. The best prospect that I can offer of a debate in the near future is either the debate on the Christmas Adjournment or the debate on the Consolidated Fund.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): My right hon. and learned Friend will be aware of the political movement in central Europe. Every day it brings up new and further headlines. Is he aware that Hungary has applied to join the 23 nations of the Council of Europe? Should not these matters be brought forward in a debate of political content and apart from debates on the European Parliament?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I think that my hon. Friend will find that that important point was discussed in the debate a couple of weeks ago on East-West relations. He will know that arrangements have been made for observers from many countries of central Europe to attend Council of Europe proceedings.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): As the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill, which is currently going through the other House, will, by the time it reaches us, have alternative clauses and one part or other amended, will the Leader of the House give an assurance that the Second Reading in this House will be free of whipping? Will any amendment concerning the vital clause dealing with genetic research be considered by a Committee of the whole House or by a small Standing Committee upstairs?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I should need to reflect carefully on the hon. Gentleman's precise points. He will understand that it is our intention to bring the Bill before the House as Government legislation, but to allow a free vote on consideration of the alternative clauses as they now appear on the Bill. No decision has yet been reached on how that can best be brought about.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): My right hon. and learned Friend will be aware that the first anniversary of the appalling tragedy of Lockerbie approaches. Does he agree that next week would be an appropriate time to have a debate not just to establish the latest developments of the investigation into Lockerbie but to congratulate the Government on the appointment of Air Vice Marshal David Brook as the Government's first national emergency adviser, and give Back-Bench Members an opportunity to press for a freephone 0800 landline number for national emergencies so that families of victims can get information from one centralised point?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend will find an opportunity of raising those matters when the House debates the Second Reading of the Aviation and Maritime Security Bill on 10 January, shortly after we return.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): I recognise that the Leader of the House is anxious to improve the way in which the House conducts its planning of business. Can he tell us at this stage when the House will take its Easter recess?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: After some discussion, I can help the hon. Gentleman to some extent. We hope that the House will be able to rise for the Easter recess in the week ending Friday 6 April, rather than the following week. I hope that hon Members will be able to make their arrangements on that basis. We should then return at some stage in Easter week itself.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The House knows that we have another important statement this afternoon. There will be an opportunity to ask questions on the Christmas Adjournment, so I shall allow business questions to continue for a further five minutes—[HON MEMBERS: "Oh!"] Order. We have a heavy day ahead of us—.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Will my right hon. and learned Friend do his utmost to ensure that we have a full debate on Europe as soon as possible, especially so that the attitude and policy of the Opposition can be clarified? If the Opposition are wholeheartedly in favour of Delors 2 and 3, they should state so unequivocally so that people know where they stand. But if they are not wholeheartedly in favour, they should stop sniping at the British Government for not rushing headlong into economic and monetary union.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand my hon. Friend's desire to secure some clarification of the Opposition's attitude to this and to many other questions. However, I am afraid that I cannot offer him as many opportunities as his question deserves.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Will the Leader of the House soon be in a position to tell us that the next time the House considers legislation affecting Northern Ireland, it will be in the form of a Bill, not an Order in Council? Will he bear in mind the fact that yesterday evening we were given three hours to consider the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order whereas the similar Act for England had a Second Reading, 200 hours in Committee and four days on Report? Democracy is not really being applied to Northern Ireland.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand the hon. Gentleman's tenacity in returning to this question, as he and his colleagues have on a number of occasions, but I cannot offer him any generally acceptable response at present.

Mr. James Cran (Beverley): Will my right hon. and learned Friend consider holding another debate next week on the 1990 European Communities budget to supplement the charade this week, when we had a one-and-a-half-hour debate, of which 45 minutes was taken up by Front-Bench spokesmen and only 45 minutes was left for Back-Bench members to discuss 29 budgetary items and a considerable amount of expenditure? Does he agree that a supplementary debate is required if our constituents are not wholly to misunderstand what this House is about?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Although I cannot promise my hon. Friend the debate that he wants, I understand his point and will reflect upon it with my right hon. Friends in relation to the future management of similar questions.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the Leader of the House assure the House that there will be a statement next week on educational capital expenditure? A planted written question is not good enough, bearing in mind the fact that in a city such as Bradford there are 600 temporary classrooms and the average allocation for each year is equivalent to that for the single city technology college which is entirely irrelevant and superfluous to Bradford's needs? I advise the right hon. and learned Gentleman that several schools in my constituency and elsewhere are in desperate need of permanent extensions and that the temporary classrooms are so badly in need of repair that they are having to be replaced. Should we not have a statement in the House so that we can raise these issues and press the relevant Minister on them?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot offer the hon. Gentleman an assurance that there will be a statement on that topic in the week ahead. However, he can reflect on the fact that expenditure on education is running at a higher level per head than at any time in history.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): Would it be possible on Tuesday to debate, first, the implications of the boat people policy for Britain's relations with Vietnam in terms of diplomacy, trade and economic development and, secondly, to expose the hypocrisy on this subject of people and organisations who, 20 years ago, campaigned in the streets and campuses of this country for a Communist victory in Vietnam?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I dare say that my hon. Friend will have an opportunity to expand on that important point if he catches your eye in next week's debate, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ted Leadbitter (Hartlepool): Will the Leader of the House accept the importance of the plight of hostages everywhere? Will he consider the need for a debate on that subject, even though the matter could be raised under a number of heads in the House? If we cannot have such a debate next week, perhaps he will provide a later opportunity for hon. Members to air the sensitivity of the matter. As some hostages have been held for so long, it is time that the voice of the House was heard.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's wisdom in underlining the sensitivity of the matter. That needs to be done on every possible occasion. I am sure that the whole House agrees on the importance to the families of hostages and to all hon. Members of securing the early release of people held hostage anywhere and in any circumstances. All that I can do at this stage is to join the hon. Gentleman in underlining how seriously the House views the matter. He can raise the matter during debate next week. I cannot promise anything beyond that.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Following the point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), will my right hon. and learned Friend consider whether next week's debate on Merseyside and the interesting activity in Birkenhead and St. Helens could be extended to include Teesside so that we can discuss interesting events in Hartlepool? Is he aware that interesting allegations have been made about the replacement of the present Labour Member for Hartlepool by a new candidate?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand my hon. Friend's fascination with that subject. The causes of interest in the matter are so diverse that I cannot offer the prospect of a debate on all of them.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): Will the Leader of the House examine the report published last Friday by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution on the levels of PCBs, dioxins and furans in Britain? Of the 78 sample points, 12 demonstrated serious local contamination. Will he arrange for a statement to be made as soon as possible on why the levels are so high? Is he aware that some of those 12 sample points were in Wales?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman has raised a matter of some technicality. I confess that I cannot disentangle all the acronyms that he mentioned. I shall look at the report as soon as possible and reflect on the point that he made.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have already moved on beyond the point that I mentioned, but I shall allow business questions to continue for another three minutes. Hon. Members whom I have not called will be given some precedence if they wish to participate in the debate on the motion for the Christmas adjournment.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): May we have clarification of why the junior Health Minister rubbished the findings of the Government's medical officers of health about the health risks associated with sugar? It seems that the Government are not interested in public health and health education, but that the profits of their allies come first. Was the Minister's cover-up a sweetener for the sugar industry?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Every time the hon. Gentleman asks for a debate, his request is so long that he almost achieves one.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Will the Leader of the House reconsider his reply about a debate on democracy on Merseyside? For many years he was a Member for Merseyside and it would be nice to have a debate that included explanations from Tory Members of why there are practically no Conservative Members in Merseyside seats. There are now no Conservative Members in Liverpool and last time the right hon. Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker) won her seat by only 200 votes. Do Tory Members who raised the matter suggest that the people of Merseyside do not understand democracy? The people of Merseyside understand it very well and are using their democratic powers to ensure that the Conservative party is a spent force on Merseyside.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the opportunity of making a point in exactly the opposite direction. When I was adopted as candidate for Bebington, west of the Mersey, and the hon. Gentleman was adopted for Liverpool, Walton, the nine seats of the city of Liverpool elected six Conservative and three Labour Members, and there was a Conservative Member for Walton. At that time Merseyside was a great deal more prosperous than it is today.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: After the statement.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order before the statement, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No. After the statement.

Mr. Skinner: You allow others to do it.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is abusing this place.

Mr. Skinner: No. I am not abusing this place.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that I take points of order after statements.

Mr. Skinner: Not for everyone.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. Short: Mr. Speaker, please——

Mr. Speaker: No. Not even please. The hon. Members——

Ms. Short: But Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take points of order after the statement in the usual way.

Ms. Short: You said that you would take points of order after questions.

Traffic (London)

4.6 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Cecil Parkinson): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about new initiatives to relieve traffic congestion in London. My proposals are being published today, together with separate consultation papers setting out my provisional conclusions on the four London assessment studies. I am placing copies in the Library.

The economic boom of the 1980s has had a dramatic impact on London. Population, employment and incomes have all grown and demand for transport has exploded. There is every indication that this trend will continue. We must provide for planned commercial and residential development, and proposals for the transport systems will in turn be an essential element in the development plans which the London boroughs are preparing.

Last month, I announced our plans to transform London's public transport systems. Over the next three years, London Regional Transport plans to invest a further £2·2 billion on modernising and upgrading its systems. That includes work on the extension of the Jubilee line to docklands. Subject to further work, I expect that a Bill for a new line to relieve congestion in central London will be deposited next year. Network SouthEast plans to spend a further £1·2 billion over the same period to improve its services for London's commuters.

It is clear that public transport will always play the key role in moving people in and out of central London, but congestion on the roads must be tackled too. We are improving the quality and capacity of trunk roads wherever possible, but we must make the best use of existing roads. Our aim is to keep traffic flowing as freely as possible. The discussion document I am publishing today brings forward new proposals for traffic management and parking control.

First, I propose a 300-mile priority route system—red routes. Stopping, loading/unloading, and parking will be severely restricted. A pilot scheme will start next summer to establish the best way of implementing the proposal. I shall begin the necessary discussions with local authorities and the police immediately.

Secondly, a consistent and businesslike approach to the management of these major routes is essential. I propose legislation to establish a traffic director to ensure the coherent development and operation of the red routes. The traffic director would not replace the existing highway authorities, but would have a co-ordinating role on these routes, with appropriate reserve powers.

Thirdly, I strongly believe that the fixed penalty level for illegal parking on the red routes and possibly elsewhere in London should be increased. The Government will consult representative organisations on possible legislation and the appropriate level of fine.

Fourthly, new traffic management guidance will aim to ensure that yellow lines are strictly confined to places where they are needed. Drivers must be convinced that where there are such restrictions they are needed and will be rigorously enforced.

Fifthly, effective enforcement of traffic and parking regulations will be a key element. The police and traffic wardens will remain responsible for enforcing parking bans. The role of the traffic wardens will be enhanced. They will be given powers to authorise removals and wheel clamping. Local authorities would take on the control of parking at meters and residents' bays, allowing traffic wardens to concentrate their efforts on the red routes and the more serious offences.

We also need to go on improving the road system. We already have a substantial programme in London. This is geared mainly to upgrading the north circular and improving access to docklands and east London. One of the most notorious bottlenecks is the Blackwall tunnel, so I am announcing today my decision to add to the programme a scheme for a third tunnel. There will also be a review to see whether another crossing is needed between the Blackwall tunnel and Tower bridge.

The four assessment studies have been detailed and intensive studies. They have looked at a range of public transport, traffic management and road improvement measures on a comparable basis. They show that public transport improvements are needed but cannot by themselves solve the traffic and environmental problems, however much we invest in the rail systems. Road improvements are necessary to increase the efficiency of the system, to reduce accidents, and to take traffic out of residential areas.

The consultants looked at a large number of options. They have narrowed these down to two or three recommended options in each area. Most of the major new roads that they considered have been eliminated. Even so, they have recommended some schemes which I do not consider should be pursued further. These have been ruled out. I am prepared to go forward only with the new road schemes that will bring significant overall benefits, taking full account of the environmental effects. I have selected for consultation a number of ideas for new public transport projects and a limited number of new road schemes, mostly to improve existing roads.

New proposals for the transport systems in London will be vital to securing environmental improvements and creating opportunities for new development. In preparing proposals my Department will therefore work closely with the Department of the Environment, local authorities, transport operators and the police.

Copies of the consultants' reports will be available at public libraries and town halls in the study areas, and will be sent to representative local organisations. Free leaflets setting out the consultants' main findings and recommendations will be circulated widely, together with a statement of the Department's initial views. This will set out clearly the options that have been rejected and those on which comments are invited.

It is now nearly 18 months since the consultants first published their options. There has never before been such wide and open consultation on transport studies. But I am conscious that it has caused great uncertainty. I am now determined to end the uncertainty, to reach early decisions and to remove the threat of blight as quickly as possible. I am therefore asking for comments by 28 February.

Any schemes entered into the national road programme will have to go through the full statutory procedures which provide for public inquiry. The amount and timing of any additional expenditure would be for decision in the public expenditure survey in the usual way.

These proposals, together with those for the Jubilee line, the central London rail study and the massive investment in Network Southeast, show that this Government have a balanced approach to London's transport problems. The measures that I am announcing today, together with those that I have brought forward in recent weeks, will give our capital city the improved transport system that it deserves and I commend them to the House.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): At the outset, may I say that I appreciate that fact that the Secretary of State gave me these reports at 2 o'clock rather than at 3 o'clock, which is the normal time? That helped a little, but the reports are somewhat complex and he will appreciate that it would not be proper to make judgments on the details of the scheme at this stage.

The statement confirms the sensitivity of the Government and the Secretary of State to the importance of transport. I welcome some of the limited steps towards intervention by the state, which in the past the Secretary of State has labelled as being eastern European in approach. No doubt the new views of the new Secretary of State for the Environment in the Cabinet and his attitude towards the car has concentrated the right hon. Gentleman's mind. Will the Secretary of State confirm that after 10 years of praising the values of the free market, the Department of Transport now seems to be learning to speak the language of planning, co-ordination, integration and even red routes, which have more to do with the blue rosettes of the local elections and the general election which are around the corner?

As the Secretary of State knows, he received a delegation from Wandsworth, which has produced plans rejecting most of the ideas in his paper. Wandsworth is a Tory council which wants more public transport, not a road solution. If anything is clear from the statement, it is that it is fundamentally about what we all know the Department of Transport is always involved in—a basic road solution to a transport problem.

We have had statements from the Secretary of State and various bodies such as the central London rail study and the east London rail study, and we have had plans for the Channel tunnel. Next week we are to get British Rail's new corporate plan. Is it not time that we had a strategic body co-ordinating transport in London, such as those which exist in every other capital city in western Europe? That is the only way to deal with the major problems facing those cities. Does the Secretary of State agree with my calculation, after looking at the reports, that the adoption of all the preferred schemes would cost £7·3 billion and involve the demolition of 2,470 homes?

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): Who worked that out?

Mr. Prescott: This is a statement about the Secretary of State's preferred routes. If the hon. Gentleman cares to read it, he will find that what I have said is true.

Has the Secretary of State discussed with the Treasury whether the resources would be made available to meet such commitments? Does he remember the Prime Minister giving similar assurances about who would pay for environmental improvements to the high-speed rail link just before the elections in Kent last year? Kent may have retained a Tory council, but the Channel tunnel link is in one hell of a mess.

Will the Secretary of State tell the House how much of the £2·2 billion invested in LRT and the £1·2 billion investment in British Rail, as set out in his statement, is provided by the Government? Is it not the case that public transport in London receives less financial support from

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the Treasury than ever before, and that the amount is lower than for any other European city? Will he confirm that next week when he sets British Rail's new financial targets he intends to cut the last £150 million of financial support for Network SouthEast? Is it true that the targets will make London the only city in Europe whose rail network receives no financial support at all from Government?

The Secretary of State claims that public transport, traffic management and new roads must all be judged on a comparable basis. Can he explain why the Department has assumed in the studies that rail, tube and bus fares will be increased by 46 per cent. in real terms over the next 10 years for commuters in the south-eastern and London regions?

We all know that the Department of Transport is obsessed with new roads. Can the Secretary of State explain the extraordinary claim in his statement that major new roads improve the environment? The first effect of the roads will be to knock down thousands of houses and they will increase the number of cars in our cities. The will also increase environmental damage and the levels of gases in our city and those gases are already at twice the international limits. The building of such roads flies in the face of the Prime Minister's statement in the House that she intends to reduce exhaust gases which are contributing to the problems of the ozone layer. It is more to do with rhetoric than fact and that is evident when we examine the statements made by the Secretary of State. Will the Secretary of State explain to the House how much growth in road traffic he expects in the next 10 years, and what effect it will have on pollution levels and the other consequences to which I referred?

Finally, on red routes, although we welcome the new initiatives to reduce congestion, can the Minister answer two relevant questions? First, given that only 2 per cent. of people who park illegally ever pay the fine, what measures will he take to increase and improve enforcement levels? Secondly, what assurances about access can he offer to people who live and work along red routes?

The Secretary of State's statement is one of the first examples of what we can expect from the Department of Transport. His language may change, but the Department's priorities do not, and the statement will do little to relieve Britain's and London's great transport problems.

Mr. Parkinson: If the House were to judge my statement and the hon. Gentleman's reaction to it, it would draw the conclusion that the rhetoric was in his remarks and the practical proposals were in mine. The Government have a totally balanced approach to transport problems, as we have shown through our proposals to the House.

The hon. Gentleman talked about public transport. We shall be spending more money than ever before on the national roads programme, in the three years starting next April, but in the same period we shall also spend more money on public transport, and the biggest ever road programme will be exceeded by the biggest ever rail and tube investment. I am extremely sorry that the hon. Gentleman cannot do the arithmetic and see that for himself.

The hon. Gentleman talked about demolition, and that is a serious issue. Under the studies as originally set out, more than 10,000 homes in London were threatened, and that has caused enormous uncertainty. As a result of combining our reaction with the publication of the proposals, the threats have been removed from more than 85 per cent. of those houses, and I suspect that that figure will be reduced substantially by the end of the consultation period, which for that reason we want to keep as short as possible. We are removing uncertainty with this statement.

The hon. Gentleman has often talked about investment and resources. I have told him time and again that under the previous owners—the Labour GLC—subsidies were increased and investment was reduced. Under the present Government, subsidies have been reduced and resources have been made available for huge increases in investment. We think that producing a better system is the right priority.

At a time when the use of the tube system at peak hours has increased by 35 per cent. and off peak by 85 per cent., it seems extraordinary that Opposition Members persistently argue the case for subsidy rather than investment. Why subsidise a service which is already hugely in demand, and for which people demonstrate that they are prepared to pay a reasonable price? The increase in fares is a figment of the hon. Gentleman's imagination. No proposals of any kind exist to increase fares by 46 per cent. during the next 10 years. I simply do not know where that figure was dreamed up. It does not feature in any documents that I have seen, and there are no such proposals.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned red routes. I accept that he has not had time to absorb all the proposals, but the discussion document makes it clear that transferring some of the responsibilities to the boroughs will relieve police and traffic wardens of a substantial part of their existing duties and leave them to focus on the enforcement of restrictions on red routes and on parking offences which break the law and are criminal.

Finally, I agree with the hon. Member that these proposals have substantial implications for people who live or have shops on red routes. That is why we propose substantial consultation.

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): Is my right hon. Friend aware that he is to be congratulated on the massive increase in investment in public transport that he has announced, which reflects economic success and is in marked contrast with what the Labour Government did? Is he aware that the existing traffic management schemes in, for example, the Aldwych, to the south of Westminster bridge and last week in St. George's road have on the whole been disastrous in that they have been completely counterproductive? Will he seriously consider whether his Department should take over control of transport in London so that we can have a more unified system?

Mr. Parkinson: We do not think that London's experience under a strategic authority is a great recommendation for strategic authorities. We had one—the GLC—and the House, with one or two notable exceptions, was glad to see the back of it and has no wish to recreate it. We believe that traffic management schemes have an important role to play. We have been impressed by improvements as a result of new traffic control systems in places such as Hanger lane—the so-called SCOOT system.

Some 120 independent junctions are controlled by it at present, and we plan to increase that number to 700 over the next five years.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Will the right hon. Gentleman accept my conditional welcome for his announcement? He has obviously backed off from the original proposal, which was to have a network of new roads. That is welcome. I also have a conditional welcome for red routes and an increase in fixed penalty fines, which I believe will be vital. A worrying consequence of that is that there may be fewer yellow lines. I ask the Secretary of State not to go too far in that direction because other roads need protection from unthinking parking.

Having done half a U-turn, the Secretary of State should do the other half. All the opinion surveys show that the vast majority of people in London do not believe that there should be more roads. Rather they believe that there should be less traffic. We need to decrease the supply of traffic, not to increase the supply of roads. In that context, will the Secretary of State consider, seriously and urgently, the possibility of further restraining trafic coming into London, including the possibility, which he said that he would consider, of a central London licensing system which would discourage people from driving into London? He knows that traffic has increased during the past decade.

Mr. Parkinson: We do not propose to reduce the number of yellow lines substantially. We are saying that they should be there only if they will be enforced. Not enforcing them discredits the system. We are saying that boroughs should examine their systems and that if they do not or cannot enforce yellow line restrictions, they should not discredit the system, and that where they exist they should be rigorously enforced. We think that that is a more sensible approach.

We have to recognise that the public are quite capable of making a choice if given a choice. That is why road traffic commuting has fallen by 11 per cent. and rail traffic commuting has increased by 25 per cent. We are putting very large sums of money into ensuring that people have a choice. If the hon. Gentleman examines the assessment studies with his usual care, as I am sure that he will, he will see that most of the proposals feature extensions of public transport. There are fewer road proposals and more public transport proposals, but we have to recognise that there is still a demand for road movements, and that is what we are catering for.

Mr. John Moore (Croydon, Central): I warmly congratulate my right hon. Friend on his statement, especially on the assessment conclusions that he has produced for those who have a constituency interest in this matter. I congratulate him on the balanced way in which he has put together a package of proposals combining substantial investment in public transport with excellent conclusions on red routes.

Perhaps I may include you, Mr. Speaker, the most distinguished Member of this place, as you are not able to speak on behalf of your constituents in Croydon, North-East, in welcoming wholeheartedly, for yourself and myself and our constituents, the clear decisions that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has taken—this is made clear by his conclusions on rejected schemes—which will remove the blight and the difficulties that many of our constituents have suffered for 18 months or more? I thank my right hon. Friend for listening so carefully to the representations that have been made throughout Croydon—Croydon, North-East, Croydon, North-West and Croydon, Central——

Sir William Clark: And Croydon, South.

Mr. Moore: And Croydon, South, of course. I thank my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for acting so decisively on behalf of all the Croydon constituencies.

Can I—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): He is trying to get him——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman is a former Secretary of State for Transport.

Mr. Skinner: So what?

Mr. Moore: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend specifically on keeping the remaining consultation period very brief. There was an extensive period of consultation throughout the London area.

Mr. Parkinson: I thank my right hon. Friend and you, Mr. Speaker, for your welcome, through my right hon. Friend, for the decisions. I accept that in Croydon, in particular, there has been tremendous uncertainty and blight. I hope that today's announcements will remove most of that and that we can, as my right hon. Friend said, keep the consultation period brief. We have substantially narrowed the range of options to be considered because we recognise that there are still nearly 2,000 families who feel threatened. We do not think that we should prolong their uncertainty.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): I have no doubt that the Secretary of State will recognise that we have a transport crisis in London. The capital is dirty and congested and traffic is moving slower than it was in the days of the horse and cart. This is due basically to lack of investment. Plans have been available for four or five decades to solve the problem, but nothing has been done.

Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that the basic need is public transport? It is the only way to get the capital going. Yet the Government are reducing the public contribution to public transport. The right hon. Gentleman says that there is more investment, but it is not Government money—it is permission to borrow, which increases fares. The right hon. Gentleman is saying that there is not enough public transport and too many people want to get on it, so he will solve the problem by pricing people off public transport by increasing fares. That is the only way in which he is getting investment, and it is the wrong approach. Why does the right hon. Gentleman not put proper investment into public transport, which is the only way to get London moving again?

Mr. Parkinson: I will give the hon. Gentleman three figures which show that he is talking nonsense. In the past five years, the number of commuters coming into London on Network SouthEast has increased by 25 per cent. The number of people using London Underground at peak times has increased by 35 per cent. The number of people using London Underground off peak has increased by 85 per cent. During that time subsidy has been falling and

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investment has been increasing. If the hon. Gentleman studies the figures he will realise that he is drawing entirely the wrong conclusions from the facts.

Sir Barney Hayhoe (Brentford and Isleworth): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his decision to spend more money on investing in public transport than on roads will be greatly appreciated by all those who are concerned with transport problems, as will his determination to make better use of existing roads by having better traffic management? He is to be commended heartily for those decisions.

I wish to be more specific and to raise a constituency issue in Chiswick. The removal of the threat of a major road being constructed along the line of the railway from Kew bridge to Barnes will be seen as a most welcome Christmas present. It is extremely good news for thousands of my constituents who have campaigned against that old proposal, which I hope is dead and will be buried for ever more.

I remain unconvinced about the need for massive new investment in urban roads in London, but careful consideration will be given to the proposed road tunnel from Chiswick to Wandsworth. We shall examine carefully its effect upon the local environment where it goes into the ground in my constituency—that is, if the tunnel is ever built—and its effect on local housing. By and large, however, my right hon. Friend deserves many congratulations on his statement.

Mr. Parkinson: I thank my right hon. Friend for his reception of the proposals. He has been a great defender of his constituents' interests. I am glad that he realises that the very radical proposal for the tunnel is worthy of further consideration, and I look forward to receiving his comments and those of his constituents.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): May I congratulate the Secretary of State and the Government on at least recognising, at long last, that there is a transport crisis in London? Londoners know that fact to their cost, on a daily basis. They have had to live with it for years. They also know the reasons for the crisis—first, the Government's failure over the past decade adequately to invest in public transport infrastructure and, secondly, the abolition of what was the only strategic transport planning authority, the Greater London council. That authority found itself in great difficulties because of the Government's hostile reactions when it wanted to invest in London Regional Transport.

Despite what the Secretary of State said about the level of investment, is he aware that while British Rail will receive £605 million per year from the Government for investment purposes, the rail system in West Germany receives £4·8 billion per year? That is the only way to deal with our crisis. The Government have created the crisis, yet they come to the House and expect us to be grateful to them for a few packages of measures designed to deal with the crisis that they created. It is too little and it is almost too late——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The House is dealing with questions on a statement. There will be opportunities on the Christmas Adjournment motions to deal with the more detailed debating points.

Mr. Parkinson: Until four years ago, London Transport was under the control of the Greater London council. If there has been a failure in investment during the past decade, for the first six years the hon. Gentleman was party to that failure. During the period since we took over the control of London Transport, investment has increased substantially and we now have the biggest investment proposal that London Transport has ever had, amounting to more than £2·2 billion in the next three years.

As I said earlier, there has been a substantial increase in the number of passengers. That has clearly produced a substantial increase in resources. That is how, with a reduction in the subsidies, London Transport still finds itself in a better position to invest.

Sir. John Hunt (Ravensbourne): Is my right hon. Friend aware that most reasonable people will warmly applaud his statement, which I am sure will bring both relief and reassurance to most people in London? Does he realise the amount of unnecessary anguish created for many of my constituents, and for others in Croydon and elsewhere, by the premature publication of a large range of various options, most of which have since been abandoned? Will he ensure that in future the faceless planners and consultants will not be let loose on London's traffic problems in the way that has happened on this occasion?

Mr. Parkinson: That practice was a feature of transport planning a few years ago. I remember a time in my constituency when seven possible routes for the M25 were declared, which meant that seven areas were blighted. The idea that there should be open discussions, with every conceivable option put on the table, although well intentioned, actually causes enormous alarm and concern. It is for that reason that we have accompanied the publication of the final assessment studies with our decisions on which of them will be pursued. That has relieved more than 85 per cent. of the people who felt threatened of the threat that caused them such concern. We want to reduce the number still further. That is why I hope that all colleagues will urge the boroughs to co-operate in keeping the period of consultation sensibly short.

Mrs. Rosie Barnes (Greenwich): Does the Secretary of State accept that three particular proposals will be welcomed in my constituency—first, the third bore of the Blackwall tunnel, which will relieve severe congestion; secondly, the commitment to the extension of the docklands light railway, which will help to link homes and people in Greenwich with jobs in docklands; and, thirdly, the abandonment of complicated schemes through Blackheath village which would have devastated it, about which there will be great relief? At the same time, however, will the right hon. Gentleman reconsider the balance or emphasis between private and public transport with a view to the future of London's roads and the increasing number of people turning to cars? Whatever modifications are made, congestion will probably continue for the next decade. The inclusion of south-east London on the tube network would be greatly appreciated and I should be grateful if the routing of the Jubilee line to include Greenwich could be further considered.

Mr. Parkinson: I thank the hon. Lady for her remarks. I think that all hon. Members will agree that south London is badly served by the Underground. As she knows, the ground there makes tunnelling difficult and that is why most of the tube network is concentrated in north London. I have no decision about the Jubilee line, but I too like the prospect of it going south of the river to the Greenwich peninsula. That, plus an extension of the docklands light railway to Lewisham, which is another possibility, would link that part of south London into the Underground system. That is badly needed and would contribute a great deal to the relief of congestion.

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest): Does the Secretary of State accept that what he has announced today is extremely welcome, but that there is still concern in my constituency about the ludicrous journeys that many of my constituents undertake to get into London from the east —journeys which frequently average just above walking pace? I understand why the Department has chosen to reject, for example, the major widening of the A10 and the new road across Hackney marshes down the Lea valley, but at the very least one of the pilot projects for the new red routes should be either Commercial road or East India Dock road where congestion is at its worst.

Mr. Parkinson: We have not yet settled which will be the trial stretch. We have been considering the A1, the A21 and the south circular, but I will add my hon. Friend's suggestion to the list. As I am sure that he and other hon. Members know, the Department controls about 220 of the 300 miles, but the other 80 miles are under control of the boroughs. We hope for co-operation from the boroughs so that we can speedily implement the announcement that I have made today.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): The proposals contained in the remaining two options of the east London assessment study for a tube line from Chelsea to Hackney and the extension of the east London line to Dalston will be welcomed by Hackney's residents, and they would be even more welcome if they were combined with proposals for more public transport? Am I right in thinking on road traffic proposals that words designed to smooth and massage will be more environmentally damaging than the document admits? I shall reserve my constructive criticisms until I have consulted my local residents, beginning on Sunday.

Mr. Parkinson: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his remarks. We want a proper consultation exercise and we look forward to receiving considered views from him and his constituents.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): Does my right hon. Friend agree that commuters to London from my constituency in Kent face some of the worst journeys in the morning rush hour and in the evening? Will he accept that to halve the width of many of the inadequate routes from the south-east by the use of bus lanes makes no sense whatever, that to clamp wheels on those strategic routes is nonsense, and that the ripping out of parking meters in central London, which will merely add to the churning effect of traffic desperately looking for somewhere to park legally, is not at all helpful?

Mr. Parkinson: It was because we were aware of the difficulties for north Kent commuters that in September I announced and approved the orders for £257 million worth of new rolling stock, the improvement and lengthening of 63 stations and a new signalling system on the north Kent line. We shall be looking carefully at the use of clamps on red routes, but I think that towing away would be a much more appropriate sanction.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): The Secretary of State will be aware that thousands of people in Hackney will be pleased and grateful that at least some of the major road schemes which threatened to plough through my borough have been turned down and I am sure that he will want to join me in congratulating the thousands of assiduous campaigners without whose energetic and imaginative lobbying of hon. Members on both sides of the House the roads would not have been turned down. Will the right hon. Gentleman bear in mind that one of the problems identified by the surveys is that there is still no tube station in Hackney, the only London borough without a tube station? When the right hon. Gentleman considers proposals for a Chelsea to Hackney line, will he bear in mind that any Secretary of State who succeeded in bringing a tube station to Hackney would live for ever in the hearts and minds of the people of Hackney?

Mr. Parkinson: Who could resist such an invitation? I agree that the public have made their views known in an effective way and I hope that the hon. Lady will accept that the Government have responded to the arguments put forward. I look forward to the in-depth studies on a Chelsea to Hackney line, which has many things going for it. It could be linked with Chingford and relieve some of the pressures to which other hon. Members have referred this afternoon. I note what the hon. Lady said and I thank her for the way she said it.

Sir William Clark: The very fact that my right hon. Friend has now ended the 18 months uncertainty and removed 85 per cent. of the blight on property, is welcome. I have received more than 3,000 letters against the south London assessment. It seems that somebody in the Department simply took a map of Croydon and started drawing lines on it with a felt pen, blighting a great deal of property. I welcome the fact that some of that uncertainty has disappeared, but if the options that have been cancelled had been considered carefully before the original document was produced it would have been clear that they were impractical. Option 9, through Sanderstead, affected my constituency and that is why I had so many letters from my constituents. Will my right hon. Friend give me a categorical assurance that option 9 is not now to be pursued and that, consequently, all those property owners in Sanderstead, the sellers and the rest, will now be free to sell the rest of their properties, something that they have not been able to do for the past 18 months?

Mr. Parkinson: I can give my hon. Friend the assurance that he seeks. Option 9 is a dead duck.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Was the reference in the Minister's statement to the environment and green sites a token afterthought? Has he not already given prior private assurances to some Conservative Back Benchers that some of the roads will be in tunnels? How does that compare with the rejection and sabotaging of tunnelling in Labour areas such as Leyton, despite the fact that it was to be

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financed privately? Is there not a phrase for that approach —political corruption? Will the Minister now scrap the environmentally scarring M11 link road?

Mr. Parkinson: The hon. Gentleman is working himself up to a fine but totally spurious state of anger. If he will examine the proposals as they affect the area that he assiduously represents, he will find that there are substantial public transport options designed to help. There is no question of the consultants, in considering the alternatives that they—not the Department—put forward, being told to look after one area at the expense of another. The consultants were asked to examine solutions for London, and their recommendations are the result.

Sir George Young (Ealing, Acton): Is my right hon. Friend aware that most Londoners will consider the proposals a realistic and balanced response to the growing pressure on London's transport network due to the capital's booming economy? Far from being a road-dominated solution, as suggested by Opposition Members, the exciting feature of the documents published today is the fresh ideas that they contain for new investment, after many decades, in British Rail and London Regional Transport.

Is my right hon. Friend aware of the enormous pressure on the Central, District and Piccadilly lines in west London, and on the wave of support for the proposals in the documents for a new tube line from Queen's Park to Ealing Broadway and from Shepherd's Bush, through Turnham Green, to Richmond?

Mr. Parkinson: One of the myths that Opposition Members do their best to promote is that the Government are hostile to public transport. They are not.

Last year saw the highest level of investment in British rail for 25 years, and this year's expenditure also represents a substantial increase. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) that the documents contain several interesting and novel ideas for extending the Underground and for light transit systems in different parts of London.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Is the Secretary of State aware that many Islington people will be extremely angry at the road-building plans envisaged in the consultative documents in respect of the east London assessment study? They will be angry that the threat of destruction still hangs over the Parkland walk and over part of the Holloway road. They will be angry also at the so-called major junction improvements envisaged for Highbury corner and for the junction of Hornsea road with Holloway road. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the last thing that the people of Islington want is more roads and traffic? Instead, they want more money invested in better public transport to reduce the level of commuter motoring and the number of heavy goods vehicles flowing through the borough.

Mr. Parkinson: On a point of detail, the Parkland walk proposals have been abandoned, so there is no threat to Parkland walk.

We welcome comments and consultation. If the hon. Gentleman will examine the documents, he will discover that the part of London that he represents is the subject of public transport as well as road proposals. Many people believe that it is time for the Government to grasp the nettle and deal with the problems around Archway and Holloway road. Many people also resent the fact that the planning process has been deliberately disrupted on a number of occasions to prevent important decisions from being taken.

Mr. Matthew Carrington (Fulham): My right hon. Friend will be aware of how welcome is his strong commitment to investment in London Underground—and in particular in my constituency, in respect of the proposal to undertake a proper study of the Chelsea—Hackney line, which would greatly improve the Underground service to south-west London.

I regret that the western environmental improvement route is still included in the assessment studies, but that proposal is made more acceptable by the inclusion of a proposed new river crossing. Is my right hon. Friend aware that it is also vital that if the new road goes ahead there should be a strong and purposeful commitment on the part of the Department to encourage environmental improvements along its route, to minimise the effects of traffic noise, fumes and vibrations on the local residents?

Mr. Parkinson: I thank my hon. Friend. As he knows, there are opposing points of view to his own in respect of the new river crossing. People on the Wandsworth side of the river are not so enthusiastic about the prospect—in fact, they are very unenthusiastic about it and think that the road should link up with Wandsworth bridge. Nevertheless, I thank my hon. Friend for recognising that the studies represent a combination of road and public transport, and that the two together can make a real contribution to solving the present problem.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, Finsbury): While welcoming the abandonment of some of the initial major road-building proposals in the original east London assessment study, I wonder whether the Secretary of State accepts that there remain proposals in his own consultation exercise that will possibly involve road widening, bigger roads and the creation of new roads in my constituency, with associated destruction of constituents' homes? Is not the fundamental flaw in the Secretary of State's statement his imposition of an absolute limit on the ability of public transport of itself to solve London's traffic problems? Does he accept that my constituents want a real investment of resources in public transport, not new or bigger roads destroying their homes?

Mr. Parkinson: We have retained road-building schemes only where we believe that the benefits exceed the costs—the costs being human as well as financial. We expect those proposals to be hotly contested, and we want to hear the public's view of them before arriving at a decision. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will encourage his constituents to let us have their views ahead of 28 February so that we can arrive at a sensible decision based on the views expressed.

There is no possibility of public transport solving the whole of London's traffic problems. Many of the journeys made in London are not from the periphery to the centre but across London, and it is not possible for London Transport to carry that traffic. The Government accept, and my statement recognises, that the majority of

London's travellers will use public transport, but we must acknowledge that that job cannot be done without a better road system.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): As three of the assessment studies converge on Battersea, may I, on behalf of its residents, give a triple welcome to my right hon. Friend's very sensible dismissal of the vast majority of the schemes that would have affected my constituents' houses? I note that his preference is for public transport backed up by sensible improvements to existing roads. Will he at least consider sympathetically the idea of disposing of the remaining road schemes, including the weir scheme, and putting them not into a filing cabinet from which they can be produced again, but into a dustbin from which they cannot? If the scheme is to go ahead at all, it should be put in a tunnel and left there.

My constituents greatly welcome the red routing scheme but look forward also to schemes for traffic calming, so that people can not only travel but co-exist with others who do.

Mr. Parkinson: My hon. Friend has been an ardent advocate of red routes, along with two or three of my other colleagues. I hope that he is pleased that his advocacy has paid off.

As to the remaining road schemes, I realise that the proposal for cut and cover under Clapham common will provoke a substantial amount of comment. We look forward to seeing how the public react to those proposals —which would at the same time restore vast areas of the side of Clapham common to pedestrian ways. Therefore, those proposals could bring benefits as well as problems. We look forward to hearing the considered views of my hon. Friend and of others.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on grasping the problem so soon after coming to his present office. I hope that his announcement will dispel much of the misleading speculation about the routing of new roads, which was a cause for concern to many old people across the whole of London. I believe that the Department should produce a stategy for London, rather than a mark 2 GLC or something of the kind. I hope that while undertaking his consultations, my right hon. Friend will not forget that the Government must act to prevent the unco-ordinated digging of holes in the roads, which so often causes traffic jams.

Mr. Parkinson: As my hon. Friend knows, we have proposals for legislation which we hope to bring forward next year. That legislation will not only bring about better co-ordination between the utilities, but produce income from them for use of the lanes. We believe that the financial incentive for the job to be done promptly and quickly represents one of the best ways of removing the problem to which my hon. Friend refers.

Mr. James Arbuthnot (Wanstead and Woodford): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the M11 link road will considerably reduce traffic congestion in my constituency, although I share the regret expressed by the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) that more of it is not in tunnels?. Does my right hon. Friend realise that the building of this road has been delayed for 25 years—since I was in short trousers?

Will my right hon. Friend also comment on the level of compensation involved? Does he agree that if the level is too low it may represent a false economy, whereas a higher level will prompt my constituents to clamour for the development to be speeded up?

Mr. Parkinson: I am not sure that the Treasury would ever allow any Secretary of State to have so much money that people clamoured to be allowed to sell their houses to him. I recognise, however, that the building of the link road has been delayed for a long time, and I want the consultation process to be completed as quickly as possible so that we can get on with the appropriate plans.

Sir William Shelton (Streatham): Will my right hon. Friend accept my congratulations on his statement? Will he also accept that the arrival—after so many years—of an underground line to Streatham, and the reinforcement of the underground line to Balham, will come as the best Christmas present that my constituents could possibly have? They will be very grateful.

I shall wait to hear my constituents' views on the proposed relief road around St. Leonard's, and the proposals for Clapham at the junction of Cavendish road. I fear, however, that the Clapham scheme will not be acceptable, because the problem could be easily dealt with by means of a roundabout—as I have said time and again in the past two years.

I believe that the pedestrianisation of Streatham high road is a plus, but that the loss of houses is a minus. I hope that my right hon. Friend will listen to what is said by my constituents when I have their answer.

Mr. Parkinson: Of course I will. My hon. Friend has been very active in promoting his and his constituents' views on our proposals, and I have no doubt that he will continue to do so during the consultation period. We look forward to hearing what he has to say.

I should make one thing clear. I am not giving anyone any Christmas presents. These are proposals, and they have some way to go before they become schemes— although I hope that my hon. Friend will agree that they constitute a major step in the right direction.

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his eminently sensible approach to London's traffic problems. How soon does he expect the bulk of the red route schemes to be operative, and will the London boroughs now be able to keep the fines that will be levied?

Mr. Parkinson: As the House knows, my hon. Friend was the arch mover of the red route scheme, on which I congratulate him. It was the Adjournment debate that he initiated which first interested me in the subject.

We expect the trial stretch to be in action by next summer, for a period of about six months. The pace at which we can move after that will depend on the extent to which the boroughs co-operate, as they own about 80 of the 300 miles involved. We believe that they will be co-operative, and we shall start working with them tomorrow to make the scheme a reality. I cannot give my hon. Friend a more definite date, however.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): As one who has been particularly critical over the past 12 months of the way in which my right hon. Friend and his colleagues prolonged the uncertainty about the proposals, may I take this opportunity to thank him for the trouble to which he and his office have gone to ensure that all of us who will be

[Mr. Roger Sims]

affected have been supplied with the reports, as quickly as possible? Clearly they will require a good deal of digestion, and, more to the point, our constituents will want to digest them too. To remove any possible doubt, however, will my right hon. Friend confirm that option 5—the additional motorway south of the south circular road—is also a dead duck?

Mr. Parkinson: I thank my hon. Friend for his opening remarks. Getting the studies published, and doing the work necessary to eliminate proposals that were unacceptable, has been an enormous task for the Department and our officials have worked tremendous hours to get the information out as quickly as possible to enable us to proceed with consultation.

I would not wish to be specific, but I am pretty certain that the answer to my hon. Friend's question is yes.

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Robert Atkins): It is.

Mr. Parkinson: I am told that the answer is yes.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): I welcome my right hon. Friend's judicious approach to these difficult issues. May I ask him to bear in mind that, in residential areas of Greater London, it is better to concentrate on improving existing roads and enforcing existing traffic regulations? Is he aware that at any one time only 400 traffic wardens are available for the whole of Greater London? If we are to enforce the regulations, is it not time we rectified that omission?

Mr. Parkinson: One of the objectives of our proposals is to relieve traffic wardens of some of their present duties, and to allow the boroughs to perform them. I apologise to my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) for not answering his earlier question. The boroughs will be able to keep the fees from parking meters that they install and monitor.

Our aim is to extend the duties of traffic wardens to give them more authority; they will be allowed to authorise removals and clamping. We believe that those added responsibilities will lead to more job satisfaction and hence —we hope—to better recruitment.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): I thank my right hon. Friend for his careful and considered approach. May I also mention the refreshingly candid and helpful attitude of the Minister for Roads and Traffic, my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins)? It makes a nice change.

Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the road options are options, not proposals? I hope that he did not intend to say the opposite earlier. This bears out the observation by my hon. Friend the Member for Ravensbourne (Sir J. Hunt) that options are treated as proposals by the general public until a denial is issued. The term "option" causes a good many difficulties, and we must stress that these are not proposals as yet.

I welcome the extensions to the tube lines and light railway. May I encourage my right hon. Friend to put as many as possible of the lines underground, especially in environmentally sensitive areas? May I also point out that any widening of the south circular road on the scale that may have been envisaged would be entirely unacceptable to my constituents, as it would take place right in the middle of my constituency?

My constituents would countenance a tunnel from Wandsworth to Chiswick only if it were fully underground, and did not come up in one of the green open spaces in the centre of my constituency. They would, however, welcome some of the proposals, so long as all of the tunnel is underground and the south circular road is de-trunked, as well as major environmental benefits being observed.

Mr. Parkinson: I thank my hon. Friend. If I used the word "proposal" I apologise—I meant "option". These are options which are being placed before the public, and we look forward to hearing my hon. Friend's comments.

I note what my hon. Friend said about public transport. I know his views about the possibility of the tunnel's emerging at Rocks lane and linking up with it, and I have taken that point into account. I am sure that it will be made to us again in the course of the consultations.

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): We in Lewisham welcome the end of the uncertainty that has surrounded the proposal for so long. The recommended option, however, involves the destruction of some 300 houses in the borough, and a considerable increase in the volume of traffic. We shall, of course, want to study the proposals in detail, but such a move is unlikely to prove acceptable to people living along or near the route. Will my right hon. Friend assure us that the process of public consultation will be genuine, and that he will take local views into account when making his final decisions?

Mr. Parkinson: I can give my hon. Friend a categorical assurance on that point. I recognise that his constituency has the substantial problem that many houses are threatened there, although the number has been limited substantially by our proposals. The consultation will be genuine and we shall listen carefully to what my hon. Friend and his constituents say.

Mr. Gerald Bowden (Dulwich): My right hon. Friend will be aware of the anxiety expressed by my constituents in Dulwich, especially those who live along the south circular road by Dulwich common and of their fear that the volume of traffic and danger that exist at present would be increased if there were any road widening scheme. I urge my right hon. Friend to take note of the "do minimum" option, which would receive widespread support from my constituents and from myself.

Mr. Parkinson: I thank my hon. Friend for his remarks. The option that involves a tunnel under Dulwich common would have as a by-product the turning of part of what is now the south circular into a local road, thus relieving many residents of traffic, which is an enormous problem for them now. We shall listen to what my hon. Friend and his constituents say.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. Friend consider the employment of community traffic wardens where the police and the existing traffic warden service cannot cope in keeping residential areas clear of cars in no-parking areas, which is the suggestion of one of my constituents? Will my right hon. Friend accept that although new measures to enforce proper parking will be welcomed, there is a tremendous shortage of parking places in my constituency, especially during the day when many people who come to work in the area park their cars in residential areas, thus making it impossible for residents to park anywhere near their own homes? Can we have some proposals for an increase in parking places?

Mr. Parkinson: I thank my hon. Friend for his remarks. The document proposes that the boroughs would take over the management of parking areas and would employ the wardens or contract out the service. They would do the job in the way that they chose. Part of the proposed duties of the new traffic director will be to promote a code of conduct for parking and we shall issue notes of guidance on parking provision. The new traffic director will, as part of his job, encourage the boroughs to adopt more uniform standards.

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on rejecting the idea of driving a road down the Lea valley which would destroy Walthamstow marshes, an area of age-old marshland which is much loved by the people of Walthamstow. If the Chelsea-Hackney line is built with a branch for Chingford, I ask that Walthamstow marshes should not be used as an engineering depot or as a dumping ground for those works.

Mr. Parkinson: I note what my hon. Friend says and we shall take that into account when we consider the Chelsea-Hackney line.

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): Further to the points that were made by my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), will the Secretary of State confirm that the options in the studies were tested against a fixed base and that in that base there was an assumption that the fares on public transport would increase by 46 per cent. in real terms by the year 2001, whereas motoring costs were assumed to increase by only 10 per cent. in real terms over the same period? Will he, therefore, retract his statement that road and rail were compared on an equal basis?

Is the Secretary of State aware that a recent Gallup survey of Londoners in five boroughs showed that 82 per cent. of respondents were in favour of a reduction in the use of cars in London because of their adverse effects on the environment? Will he, therefore, acknowledge that Londoners are likely to reject the road-building options in favour of public transport options and traffic restraint? Will he be prepared both to accept such a public judgment and to provide public money to support the public transport proposals?

Is the Secretary of State aware that the road-based options that are still recommended by his consultants have already been rejected by the London boroughs that would be affected, including the Tory-controlled borough of Wandsworth which recommends a 15 per cent. reduction of road traffic, a greater commitment to traffic-calming measures and a major investment in public transport?

Mr. Parkinson: I thank the hon. Lady for her questions and I shall write to her. I have been assured that the studies were conducted on what my officials told me this morning was a "comparable basis". I asked that specific question because it has been alleged that the assessment is always tilted in favour of roads and I wanted to be sure that the studies had been carried out on a comparable basis.

The Gallup survey detected a wish for a reduction in the number of cars by the electors in five boroughs. It was interesting that when a question was put about road pricing at the same time and when Londoners were asked whether they would be prepared to pay to see a reduction in the use of cars, the answer was a pretty firm no. People do not want cars, but they have no plans to get rid of their own. They want other people to stop using the roads.

I have already made it clear that all the proposals will have to earn their place in the public expenditure programme. We had a good outcome this year which is why we shall be spending £6 billion on public transport projects and £5·7 billion on the national road programme. We do not overestimate the attitude to roads and the part that roads may play in solving London's problems, but we do not underestimate the need to improve our road provision. We see an improvement in rail, underground, local transit systems, buses, which have not been mentioned today, and cars, with all of them playing their part in relieving London's congestion.

Consolidated Fund Bill

5.17 pm

Mr. Speaker: I have a short statement to make about arrangements for the debate on the motion for the Adjournment which will follow the passing of the Consolidated Fund Bill on Wednesday 20 December.

Hon. Members should submit their subjects to my Office not later than 10 pm on Monday 18 December. A list showing the subjects and times will be published later that day. Normally, the time allotted will not exceed one and a half hours, but I propose to exercise a discretion to allow one or two debates to continue for rather longer, up to a maximum of three hours.

Where identical or similar subjects have been entered by different hon. Members whose names are drawn in the ballot, only the first name will be shown on the list. As some debates may not last the full time allotted to them, it is the responsibility of hon. Members to keep in touch with developments if they are not to miss their turn.

Moreover, I remind hon. Members that on the motion for the Adjournment of the House on Thursday 21 December, up to 10 hon. Members may raise, with Ministers, subjects of their own choice. Applications should reach my office by 10 pm on Monday next. A ballot will be held on Tuesday morning and the results made known as soon as possible thereafter.

Points of Order

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have a point of order first from the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt).

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I take you back to column 1005 in yesterday's *Hansard*? The House and the country are used to the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) making wild statements and having them corrected by the Leader of the Opposition, and I do not want to be accused this afternoon of being a stooge for him. However, I must draw to your attention, Mr. Speaker, the wild and unsubstantiated statements of the hon. Member for Dagenham. He stated that he took "the first opportunity" to notify me that he intended to raise a point of order yesterday.

That was a piece of paper placed on the Members' Board at 2.49 pm. I had left the House of Commons at 8.30 in the morning with my colleagues on the Select Committee on the Environment to visit a sewage works in Brighton and we were not able to return to the House until after 6 o'clock. The hon. Member for Dagenham took little, if any, opportunity to contact me. He did not ring my office and he showed no courtesy whatever. The hon. Gentleman——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We know what the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) said. Will the hon. Member for Langbaurgh please raise his point of order with me? What is it?

Mr. Holt: The hon. Gentleman said that I had withdrawn my question. You know, Mr. Speaker, because you have now checked, that I did not withdraw my question. I have the answer here, so I could not have withdrawn my question.

Further, the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) also misled the House. I do not believe that he did it on purpose. He suggested that local authorities do not

"collect information on the basis of the colour or the ethnic origin of citizens."—[*Official Report*, 13 December 1989; Vol. 163, c. 1006.]

If they did not do so, they would not be able to tell central Government how to allocate money for the rate support grant. They load it in favour of authorities with a large number of ethnic people. As my constituency does not do so, we lose millions of pounds as a consequence. I hope, Mr. Speaker, that you will now rule that my question was in order.

Mr. Speaker: I certainly will deal with the hon. Member's point of order. I promised yesterday that I would reflect further upon this matter. I remain of the view that the Table Office was correct in accepting the question tabled by the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt). As he has said, in the calculation of the present rate support grant and the forthcoming revenue support grant, among other things, account is taken of the social index based on people or households the heads of which are first-generation immigrants from the new Commonwealth or from Pakistan. I can confirm therefore that there was a correct basis for his question.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Arising out of the information that we have received from the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt), one thing is certain, and that is that yesterday he was down in the political gutter, but we did not know that he came out covered in sludge. [HON. MEMBERS: "Cheap."] His question was cheap. It was offensive to many people.

Mr. Speaker: It was in order.

Mr. Skinner: I did not say it was not. Obviously some people like it. I cannot say that I do. *[Interruption.]* My point of order is about something entirely different. That was just in passing—en passant.

Earlier, during business questions, several Labour Members were not called. I am not talking about myself —I can carry it—but some of my hon. Friends were not able to be here. I can be here, and I can represent them as a shop steward or whatever. Those hon. Members were not called at business questions. I want to get one or two things straight. We——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Getting one or two things straight is taking time from an important debate. The trouble with acting as shop steward on behalf of hon. Members is that it takes time from other hon. Members who have a legitimate interest in two important debates. The hon. Member must put his question briefly to me, and if it is a matter of order for me I will endeavour to deal with it.

Mr. Skinner: Well, the point is that, invariably at business questions, if you decide to cut questions short because of a statement or for any other reason, the chances are that it will almost certainly be Labour people who are kept out. However, today there was a statement to follow, which took an hour. About 20 or 30 Tories and a few Labour people stood up. You adopted a different practice. You allowed every Tory Member to be called. When you get more Tory MPs standing up, there is a tendency for them to be called. When you get more Labour people standing up at business questions——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Skinner: Now that——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have had enough of this. The hon. Gentleman has been the chairman of a different body. He knows the obligation to be even-handed in the chair. The whole House knows that I am very reluctant to curtail business questions because I am well aware that it is the one opportunity in a week for hon. Members who may not previously have been called to put a question to the Leader of the House. However, I must have regard, as the hon. Gentleman in his other capacity must equally have regard, for other business before the House. Since on Wednesday there will be an opportunity on the Christmas Adjournment motion to raise these matters, I thought it fair today to have regard for other hon. Members who have indicated their wish to take part in the important fisheries debate and the debate on the other items on the Order Paper.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will recall that, during Prime Minister's Question Time, I asked a question which, upon reflection, you decided was not in order. I fully accept that you have difficult decisions to take on questions that fall into that grey area. You and your predecessors have had to say to an hon. Member that his question might not be in order. Although the last word or two of my question might be construed by one or two hon.

Members to be party political, the bulk of my question was directed to the Prime Minister to elicit her view on democracy gaining ground in eastern Europe. I should have thought that the country and the House would have wanted to hear her views on that development. I recognise that you have a duty to protect——

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman had left it at that, he would have been perfectly in order, but he went on to ask for the Prime Minister's views about what was going on in the constituency of Birkenhead.

Mr. Brown: I never mentioned that word.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have had an opportunity of looking at the *Hansard* report. The hon. Gentleman can do that tomorrow. I think that he will find that what I am saying is correct.

Mr. Brown: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Banks.

Mr. Banks: I refer to the point of order that was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). It is well known that you are fair and impartial in the way that you apply the rules of the House, but, just in case you make an error, you have someone who reminds you who has asked a question and when. Will you advise the House on whether you think that it is courteous for hon. Members on both sides who come in here, perhaps not as often as they should, ask a question, particularly during business questions, and disappear immediately afterwards? Do you agree that that is discourteous to the House and to you?

Mr. Speaker: I have absolutely no hesitation in agreeing with what the hon. Member has said.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wonder whether you can inform the House that if, for example, any hon. Member raised the victimisation of and attack on the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) following his courageous stand against the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister would not be able to answer that question because it is not within her responsibility, but she would be able to take part in a debate about such victimisation?

Mr. Speaker: That is a hypothetical matter.

Brogdale Fruit Station

Mr. Roger Moate (Faversham): I beg to seek leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, to discuss a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the announcement today of the closure of the Brogdale fruit station and the future of the national fruit collection."

This is the first possible moment to bring this matter to the House, as the Government's decision was announced by written answer at only 3.30 pm today. The future of the national fruit collection is a specific matter and it is of the utmost importance to the House and to the nation. Indeed, it is of international importance. The reason it is so important is that the fruit growing at Brogdale forms the largest collection of temperate fruits in the world and it is of international renown. There are more than 2,000 varieties of applies there, including varieties dating back to mediaeval and Roman times. His Royal Highness Prince Charles's recent recognition of the importance of this collection has reinforced everybody's determination that it should be retained and encouraged.

Today's decision by the Government to close Brogdale and to try to re-propagate at another site is bad and precipitate, and it contradicts assurances given in the House of Commons. On 6 April this year, the Leader of the House, answering at Prime Minister's Question Time —she was absent at the time—gave an assurance on the Floor of the House that, as the local Member, I would be included in the consultation process. My contacts with the Government on this matter have been a travesty of consultation. It adds to the urgent case that I am making for a debate but it gives me no pleasure to say that, after nearly 20 years in this House, I have never been treated as badly as I have on this issue, whether by Labour Ministers or Conservative Ministers.

Further evidence of why a debate is now urgent and appropriate is a letter dated 11 December, in reply to my letter dated 22 October, in which the Minister states that the Ministry was still in discussion with other interested parties, including my local authority, Swale borough council. Like many people, including experts, that council has expended a great amount of time and effort on producing proposals for a new national fruit centre, which would be locally funded.

However, all that has been swept aside because, instead of still being in discussion, at 3.30 this afternoon the Government announced their decision to embark on this foolish and costly exercise of moving the collection. That will take between five and eight years, involve some risk and unknown costs and appears to us to be a totally unnecessary and bad exercise—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has used up his time.

Mr. Moate: My point is simply this, Mr. Speaker. It is not too late to stop this foolish decision if the House of Commons is given an opportunity for debate—

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the announcement today of the closure of the Brogdale fruit station and the future of the national fruit collection".

[Mr. Speaker]

As the House knows, under Standing Order. No. 20 I have to announce my decision without giving my reasons to the House. I have listened with care to what the hon. Gentleman has said, but I regret that his application does not fall within the requirements of the order and I cannot submit his application to the House. However, he may have other opportunities for raising the matter next week.

BILL PRESENTED

AVIATION AND MARITIME SECURITY BILL

Mr. Secretary Parkinson, supported by Mr. Secretary Hurd, Mr. Secretary Waddington, Mr. Secretary Rifkind, Mr. Secretary Wakeham, and Mr. Patrick McLoughlin, presented a Bill to give effect to the Protocol for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts of Violence at Airports Serving International Civil Aviation which supplements the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Civil Aviation; to make further provision with respect to aviation security and civil aviation; to give effect to the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Maritime Navigation and to the Protocol for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Fixed Platforms Located on the Continental Shelf which supplements that Convention; to make other provision for the protection of ships and harbour areas against acts of violence; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 11.]

European Community (Fisheries)

[Relevant document: Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food's un-numbered explanatory memorandum of 13 December 1989 on the Fisheries Agreement between the European Community and Greenland.]

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) and his hon. Friends.

5.30 pm

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Gummer): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of the proposals described in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food's un-numbered Explanatory Memorandum of 12th December 1989 and Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum of 13th December 1989 on Total Allowable Catches and Quotas for 1990, its un-numbered Explanatory Memorandum of 13th December 1989 on the Reciprocal Fisheries Agreement between the Community and Norway for 1990, European Community Document No. 9888/89 on fishery guide prices, and of the Government's intention to negotiate the best possible fishing opportunities for the United Kingdom fishing industry for 1990 consistent with the requirement for conservation of the fishing stock.

I must first record the fact that the late arrival of these proposals has been most inconvenient for the House and Ministers. The House as a whole must record its dissatisfaction at the fact that once again, for the purposes of their negotiations, the Norwegians have pressed the arguments nearer and nearer to Christmas so that it is difficult for this House properly to consider these important matters. I am grateful to the authorities of the House, to the Select Committee on European Legislation and to spokesmen of all parties for their understanding, but I still believe that it is more difficult for us to have a proper debate because of the way in which the negotiations are carried on.

Indeed, it is made worse when we are faced with the conclusions of those negotiations with Norway. The Commission will find it extremely difficult to explain to Ministers how, at a time when we have reduced the total allowable catches offered to the fishermen of the Community below—as far as we can find out—the recommendations of the scientists, it has found it possible to do a deal with Norway which increases the proportion of the fish available to Norwegian fishermen.

Although it is difficult to second-guess people who have been carrying out negotiations, it is also difficult to see how the Commission can substantiate the claim that this is a proper outcome to the negotiations with Norway, although in these negotiations the Norwegians have considerable cards in their hands and start from a strong position. I do not under-estimate the negotiators' difficulties, but in trying to explain to English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish fishermen that they will have to accept considerable reductions in their fishing opportunities, it will not be possible to explain why, at the same time, the Norwegians will have proportionately greater opportunities; although we know that the Norwegians have severe problems in the fisheries that they control in their northern waters.

We are discussing documents that are not complete, but which are based upon the best evidence that we have. I thank the House for its forbearance.

It is right that we should start by pointing to the fact that important communities in the United Kingdom depend upon fishing. For them, fishing is not only a matter of livelihood and support for the whole economy of their community: it is also of great emotional importance because that is why their community is there. One thing that makes this an issue on which many hon. Members of different parties can coalesce is our recognition that those communities, which are represented by hon. Members of all parties, have a particular call upon us. The real problem is that they are communities of people who hunt for a natural product and whose future depends upon its availability and their opportunity to catch. If such an industry finds that, from year to year, that availability falls, it is bound to be caused considerable worry about the future. None of us should under-estimate what that means.

It is perfectly possible to point to the fact that in most cases the income from those opportunities has increased over the past 10 years. There is no doubt that it has increased in both money and real terms. I should not wish anybody to think that I do not recognise that, apart from in the present year, in those terms the fishing industry has done better year on year. However, the psychology and the fear of a reducing opportunity are not cancelled out by the experience of receiving a higher price for the smaller amount of fish that can be caught.

None of us must under-estimate the position in those fishing communities, which has been made worse by the fact that, in 1989, for the first time for some years, the volume of catches, which has reduced by 11 per cent., has not been offset by an increase in prices, which have risen by only 9 per cent. in total. Therefore, to some extent we have a reversal of the continuing trends and an increase in the fear and concern in those communities.

Last year the fishing communities saw significant cuts in their North sea cod and haddock quotas. Now they face another year of cuts and are beginning to feel that the benefits promised are always for tomorrow, never for today. Therefore, we must consider what we can do in the context of the scientific advice with which we are presented.

We have a real problem here. This industry is not like any other, because its catching opportunities depend upon the fish that are available. What we do today will have enormous effects upon what we do tomorrow. One cannot distinguish between the demand for conservation at sea and the demand for terrestrial conservation. I should find it extremely difficult to demand that the Brazilians are restrained in their treatment of their rain forests, while insisting that our fishermen should have the right to fish as many fish as they like, irrespective of the effect on the stock —*[Interruption.]* The problems that we face—I know that the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) agrees with me on this—are, first, that the statements by the scientists are extremely worrying this year. Secondly, in most stocks we do not seem to have benefited from the conservation measures that we have now had for the past eight years. Thirdly, the Commission is asking us to take even lower figures than those that are strictly necessary according to scientific judgments.

We must face three matters clearly. First, the position with regard to stocks is serious, particularly in the North sea. There is no doubt about that. Even those who would like to be as flexible as possible in interpreting the scientific advice must accept that fact. Therefore, I could not countenance proposing figures at the negotiations which are outwith the scientific advice. There is no other firm base on which to stand. If I offer anecdotal evidence from the experience of Scottish, Welsh, Irish or English fishermen, I shall only be countered by similar disadvantageous anecdotal evidence from the Dutch, Germans and Danes with whom we negotiate. We must have a serious agreed base for discussion. The best scientific advice is the only base upon which anyone concerned with conservation can stand.

Secondly, why is it that, despite all the conservation measures, there has been no upturn in stocks in many areas? As Minister responsible for fishing, I have expounded the reason for that for some years in fishing negotiations. While the Community accepted a total allowable catch in line with what the scientists suggest, Community fishermen illegally overfished as much again. Only recently have we begun to bring such overfishing under control. That was done by the international police force pioneered by Britain and supported by both Conservative and Opposition Members, who felt that it was a proper area of Community competence.

Overfishing does not prove that TACs and quotas have failed. Policing is only just beginning to overcome a willingness to cheat throughout the Community. We need to make sure not only that TACs and quotas work but that they are complemented by other conservation measures to make them more effective. It is self-evident that a TAC and quota system which ensures that large numbers of immature fish are cast out in order to meet the demands of the quota is not proper conservation. That is why I honour and recognise the suggestions put forward by the Scottish Fishermen's Federation. I hope that we can encourage them to go further and to accept considerable changes.

We must face the fact that conservation measures that work mean significant changes in fishing techniques. They cannot be entirely comfortable, and hurt no one. If that was possible, we should have agreed such measures a long time ago. Hon. Members who travel around their constituencies telling fishermen that, if they accept a certain package of conservation measures, they need not worry, do considerable damage to the future of the fishing industry. Conservation is a tough thing to achieve, particularly in circumstances where stocks have fallen so low.

It is wrong to suggest that conservation measures remove the need for TACs and quotas. We need both. People who suggest otherwise are selling the next generation, indeed the fishermen of the next few years, down the drain for current political advantage. I hope that those concerned with the future of fishing will care for its future not just in this year and the next but in the next 10, 15 or 20 years.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): If the emphasis on fisheries and conservation is to move towards technical measures—which some of us have supported for many years—is the Minister maintaining that TACs, which he says have failed during the past eight years, must be kept at the same low level, and not abolished? Is he saying that quotas must be held at an insupportably low level if new conservation policies are implemented?

Mr. Gummer: I am pleased with that intervention. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has been keen on conservation measures for some years. If that is so, I am surprised that those conservation measures were not mentioned in the Scottish National party manifesto for the last election. I am pleased that he has corrected the

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impression that it gave. I have not only believed in them but fought for them year in, year out, without the support of many of the fishermen who are now prepared to ask for them.

When I ask for absolute straightness with fishermen, I mean that we must tell them that TACs cannot be increased merely because we hope that conservation measures will have effect. TACs can be increased only when the conservation measures will have had effect. Otherwise, we shall be in exactly the same position as when we had to stop all herring fishing, and nearly destroyed that industry. I shall not be the Minister who does that. I am determined to fight for fishermen and the future of fishing, which means being prepared now to say that conservation measures must march hand in hand with TACs and quotas. The moment that we see that the measures are working, we can increase TACs and improve quotas.

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington) *rose*——

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian) *rose*——

Mr. Gummer: This is a short debate. I shall give way only twice more.

Mr. Townend: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the situation on the east cost is disastrous? The quota system has failed and the time for prevarication is over. For several years, my fishermen have asked for considerably larger mesh sizes, a ban on industrial fishing, larger landing sizes and the closure of breeding and spawning grounds in a large part of the area. If that action is not taken in the next 12 months, the industry will die.

Mr. Gummer: I am sympathetic with much of what my hon. Friend says and has said in the past. I was about to announce not only that we have already put to the Commission a series of proposals to improve conservation, but that I have asked for a major package of proposals to be prepared for the next stage in pressing them for conservation. One of our problems is that we constantly lead in our demands for conservation measures. So far, we have not attracted sufficient support from some sections of the industry or, more importantly in terms of voting, from our colleagues in the European Community.

There is one piece of relatively good news to announce to the House today. The case that we have pursued in the European Court of Justice on Spanish quota hoppers appears to have been decided. I say that it appears to have been decided because I have received merely the report of a judgment rather than a full judgment. It gives grounds for cautious optimism. Although we failed in our contention that fishermen who claim part of the British quota should be resident in this country, we gained almost every other point. That will enable us to do a good deal more than some had feared about non-British fishermen who have their own quota in some other country taking fish on the British quota. That was unacceptable. At a time when TACs are as tight as they are, it is an affront to British fishermen if their small quota is partly taken by people who already have a quota which has been negotiated over many years and is meant to reflect their historic fishing rights. It does not mean that they can add to their quota by pinching the quota of others. That is why we have taken such a strong line. I am sorry that we have not won everything, but we have won a sufficient amount at least to make a significant effect on that.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Gummer: I must tell my hon. Friend that I should not give way. I said that I would give way once more, but I should reserve that for a Member of the official Opposition because then I shall have shared out interventions fairly well. That is a quota operation which I think is right.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and I shall attend the Council on Sunday night and Monday morning and the argument will probably proceed through Monday, Tuesday and perhaps Wednesday. Clearly, major issues are involved.

I am pleased to announce that the Commission has recognised the need to retain the security which comes from the common fisheries policy. That was of crucial concern to British fishermen north and south of the border. Relative stability is a crucial issue for Britain. We fought hard and won a reasonable deal from the common fisheries policy, and we have accepted the way in which it shares out fish. But we cannot have some new mechanism for sharing out any other fish stocks which are found. That would always be to our disadvantage. Therefore, we welcome the Commission's intention to deal with the Greenland fish as we believe the common fisheries policy dictates—according to relative stability—thus ensuring that we have our fair and proper share of that fish.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Will the Minister assure the House that, over the weekend and on Monday, he will resist Spanish demands for a share of the west coast of Scotland cod allocation, given that Spanish fishing firms have no history whatever of fishing in those waters?

Mr. Gummer: I give the hon. Gentleman a categorical assurance that I have no intention of allowing the present sharing system of the common fisheries policy to be changed. I shall oppose resolutely any suggestion, either now or at an interim date when a review is possible, to change the way in which we treat various parts of the waters of the Community. I can give the hon. Gentleman the further assurance that we have sought allies in that and believe ourselves to be well supported by our neighbours, who also feel that this hard-fought share should not be upset by those who have no historic claim on our waters and who have sought to take from us quota which is rightly ours and certainly not theirs.

I am determined to fight for the highest possible TACs consonant with scientific advice. I hope that the whole House will support me when I say that it would be wrong for a country—I say a country, not a Government—committed to conservation to ignore the scientific advice and demand more fish than is safe for next year and the year after. I am adamant that we shall not move from that scientific advice. We should seek to give ourselves as much fish as possible, consonant with that advice.

Therefore, I shall oppose strongly the Commission's proposals which give less fish than scientists have suggested it is possible for us to take. When we are squeezed as hard as we are, it is unacceptable to suggest that we should squeeze still further. Because we have a high proportion of many of these stocks for historic reasons and because of our negotiating successes, it means that, if our allocation is pushed below what the scientists demand, our suffering is proportionately greater.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Gummer: I promised not to give way again because it was necessary to use up as little time as possible. I have given way once to the Government side, once to the official Opposition and once to the non-official Opposition. I shall not be driven to divide blue whiting from whiting. There is a grey problem in that. [Hon. Members: "That is absurd."] It is extremely difficult to give way in the circumstances, but if no hon. Member takes it as a precedent, within the scientific advice I give way.

Mr. Wallace: I am extremely grateful to the Minister. May I assure him that we on these Benches support what he has just said about not going beyond what scientific advice allows? Can he say whether he will seek compensatory increases in precautionary TACs not dependent on scientific advice to make up for the limited TACs for haddock and cod?

Mr. Gummer: That was a helpful and useful extension of the debate, and I am glad that I gave way to the hon. Gentleman. The answer is that that depends on the precautionary TACs. Where there is a relatively widespread view that a precautionary TAC is not unreasonable, it would be wrong to change it. Others seem to be shots in the dark without much basis, so they might be varied in either direction without any real knowledge.

Where it would be safe to do so, I shall seek the best possible deal. I am not sure whether I would want to do that in recompense for a tough TAC somewhere else. I would do so because I believed that we must provide the maximum possible fishing opportunity which is proper for a Government and an Opposition who are committed to conservation.

I have already said that the first main issue that we shall face is relative stability. It seems that the Commission is committed to that, but we shall have to fight hard to keep it. The second is the fight for TACs at the highest possible level consonant with our conservation aims. The third relates to the Hague preference. I shall seek to invoke the Hague preference because TACs have fallen so low and the quotas that depend on them will cause real hardship in several fishing communities. Hon. Members can rest assured that I shall fight for that as hard as possible, but they must know the arithmetic and that we have a limited number of friends on that. Nevertheless, I believe that we must fight and that it is right to do everything possible to gain that.

The next priority concerns western mackerel. We have a problem which it would be wrong to ignore. Our rightful insistence on relative stability means that we cannot easily explain why it is necessary to take into account the fact that shoals of fish move. Although the relative stability is based on lines drawn on a map of the sea, it may be that the lines related to movements of fish, which have since changed.

Therefore, it has always been our view that, by relative stability, we mean stability in the stocks as they were at the time. If they have moved to some extent, it is not unreasonable marginally to change the way in which those lines are drawn. That is why we put the western mackerel issue before the Council and why we successfully obtained some help last year. Whether we can obtain the same amount, or any, this time will depend on some tough negotiations.

We want to see major changes in the proposals put to us by the Commission. TACs and quotas are not enough, but we do not accept that we can do without them. Further conservation measures will be essential if we are to begin to see the day dawn in which the stocks begin to grow not just occasionally, but much more widely. There must also be major changes if the Commission's commitment to conservation is to be believed and it is not to be suspected of seeking to achieve other aims by the negotiations carried out.

Therefore, the House will wish me to be able to say to the Commission and my colleagues in the European Community during the discussions and debates of the next few days that the House recognises the difficulties placed on us by the shortage of fish, but demands that the maximum opportunities must be provided for fishermen of the Community, and therefore for the fishermen of these islands. We shall fight to do that and shall need the wholehearted support of the House if we are to have some chance of obtaining an answer which can be accepted by today's fishermen and protects the future livelihoods of tomorrow's fishermen.

6.1 pm

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): I agree with much of what the Minister said. He seems to realise that Britain's fishing communities face a crisis. If the proposals are carried out they will cause immense hardship, mass unemployment and destroy many fishing communities. The purpose of this take note debate is for the Minister to listen to the views of right hon. and hon. Members from both sides of the House. I am sure that he will get the message that he must go and fight for the fishing communities, fishermen and fishing generally. He has our support on that.

I also share the Minister's view—I think that I speak for the House—that it is most unsatisfactory, although not of his making, that the EC has not been able even to consult the individual legislatures about quota proposals until this late date. It will not be until the middle of next week—12 days before they become operative—that the Community's fishermen know the quota for the coming year. That is unsatisfactory and I hope the Government will take the opportunity to press for it to be changed. There are difficulties with the Norwegians, but we must fight to change that unsatisfactory state of affairs.

I suspect that most of this debate will centre on the North sea because the species most at threat live in that vicinity. But other seas around us are equally affected. The quota reductions of sole and whiting in the Irish sea will have a major effect on the western part of Britain. It is essential that we retain as high a proportion as possible of the Channel cod available, and I hope that the Minister will press for that.

We must turn our eyes from our near coasts to the far seas and to the lack of access to distant waters. The north Norway quota is down this year by 47 per cent.—75 per cent. less than it was two years ago. I am advised that this

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means that it is only viable for two of our 15 vessels available to work that sector. That is ridiculous and unacceptable.

I heard what the Minister said about Greenland. As he knows, under the 1983 agreement, the allocation for Greenland waters was based on historic fishing. It is important for the Minister to reinforce that point, on which we have allies in the EC. I hope that he will not give way one inch on those waters.

The main and most contentious issue is the North sea. The House knows that the proposals agreed between the Norwegians and the EC led to a massive reduction in quotas of about three of the principal stocks. Haddock is down by 39 per cent.—taking into account the swaps—cod is down by 24 per cent. and saithe by 30 per cent. Those figures need examination. I agree with the Minister that we should press for the highest sustainable scientific figures. The figures that I gave were reached in negotiations with the Norwegians. The European Commissioners were not effective in those negotiations and the results have been absolutely disastrous. For whatever reason—it is beyond me—the Commissioners do not appear to have played any of their bargaining cards. I hope that the Minister will press the Commission on that.

Why have we not raised the herring issue? We have a guarantee—a zonal attachment—of 25 per cent. Why have we not received that? Why has not the Commisson played the mackerel card? What about the north Norway access linked to the Greenland shrimp? If the Minister goes to Europe and argues these points, he will have the support of the House.

We are talking about uncharted waters, but we should seriously consider asking the Commission to go back to Norway and, even at this 11th hour, start renegotiating with it, even if that means that we operate temporarily on limited quotas on a monthly basis in the early new year. I hope that the Minister will take that on board because we have wasted all our bargaining chips in the negotiations.

There is also agreement that there is a problem with declining fish stock in the North sea. We may disagree about the figures, but we all agree that the scientists have discovered this problem. I took the trouble to familiarise myself with the way in which the scientists work and I was staggered by the quality and intensity of their research. I understand that they measured that 160,000 haddock were landed at Aberdeen alone last year. They have such figures going back to 1960. They cannot explain why there is such a variation of spawning stock, but it exists and this year it is particularly critical.

The scientists say that there is a problem with the declining fish stocks. I represent a fishing constituency and my fishermen have been telling me anecdotally for a couple of years that they cannot find fish. I noticed reports in the Sunday papers about Bridlington fishermen spending a full day at sea and returning with two cases of fish. We all agree that there is a problem and a need for radical reassessment.

I agree with much of what the Minister said about conservation and I am pleased that he said it because it widens our approach. In the past, many people in Europe have adopted what is commonly known as the one-club approach—we are familiar with it from the Government's handling of the economy. However, I shall try to be less contentious. We have relied too much on TACs and quotas. Of course, they are necessary but we need other measures, too.

I talk to fishermen in my constituency and I know from my experience that there is horrific pollution in the North sea. We have been dumping far too much industrial waste there and it is having an effect on the fish. I get complaints from my fishermen about fish that are obviously suffering from the effects of pollution, and we have many reports of fishermen on the east and south coasts suffering from dermatitis.

In a recent parliamentary answer to me the Minister gave what I thought was some reassurance. He will know that at the ministerial meeting held in London on 24 and 25 November the signatories to the Oslo convention agreed that they would phase out by 31 December 1989 the dumping of industrial waste in the North sea. However, they said that an exception would be

"inert materials of natural origin or other materials which can be shown in the competent international organisations to cause no harm in the marine environment".

In his answer the Minister said that he hoped that within two years he could phase out industrial waste licences and that we could stop dumping toxic industrial waste in the North sea. I hope that the Minister is quite specific about that and will stick to what he said. I see that he nods his assent. We must do all that we can to stop the dumping of any industrial waste except the most inert material in the North sea.

The other issue affecting the depletion of stocks is research. It is incumbent on us to maximise the use of a declining catch and we should aim to add value to our fishing industry when we can. We tend to speak about fishermen but we all know that they provide a livelihood for fish processors and many other people employed in associated industries. For the life of me I cannot understand why the Minister persists in his obsession about making massive cuts at Torry fishing research station in Aberdeen, which is probably the premier fishing research station in Europe. I hope that even at this late stage the Minister will have second thoughts about that because it is crazy to cut the budget by one third and to axe 18 vital schemes. I visited that station, accompanied by my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran), and I have heard about schemes which seek to maximise the use of fish and add to their value. I hope that the Minister will bear in mind the fact that such work is in the public interest.

Fishermen increasingly talk to me about conservation. The vice-president of the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations, Derek Heselton, lives in my constituency and is a good friend of mine. He told me at the weekend that his ambition is to see his son follow him into the industry. He recognises that if there are no fish there will be no future for his son and the next generation of fishermen. Many people are in that position and they recognise the problem. I compliment the fishermen in the north-east of England on their voluntary ban on twin rigs for prawn trawlers. That is a step in the right direction.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Teeed): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for drawing attention to the voluntary conservation efforts of fishermen in the north-east of England. He will be aware that in managing and working to their quota specifically and carefully, they were in the end penalised because fishermen in other areas had gone beyond their allocation. That meant that fishermen in the north-east of England were denied the right to fish the quota that had been allocated to them.

Dr. Clark: The hon. Gentleman will not be surprised to learn that that matter has been brought to my attention. I do not wish to trespass into area disputes at this time because I know that many hon. Members want to participate in the debate.

I urge the Minister to look more closely at prawn fishing. Does he agree that there should be TACs for prawns? Such a step would be supported by fishermen in the west of Scotland and the north-east of England. Prawn fishermen face the danger of a knock-on effect; as fishermen are driven out of other grounds, they may enter prawn grounds.

Not only fishermen in the north-east of England are affected. We have had a report from the Scottish Fishermen's Federation containing a whole package of conservation measures to which the Department recently published its response. I hope that the Minister will press our case very hard when he addresses the Fisheries Council. I think that he hinted at that, and I hope that he will take encouragement from our support.

We have to take many radical measures on conservation and must face the prospect of bigger mesh sizes and extension pieces. We may even have to face the issue of discards. We talk about difficult negotiations with the Norwegians, but they do not have our problems with discards. Discards count against quotas. It may be unpalatable, but the Norwegians and the Canadians do it and we do it north of 62 deg. latitude. There is no reason why we should not consider that as part and parcel of conservation. We should think seriously about landing round cod and round haddock because landing them is not the best way to maximise the value of our fishing industry.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): When the Select Committee on Trade and Industry published a report about 10 years ago on the British fishery industry, it drew attention to the disruption of quotas by discards and said that we were not getting a true record. Ten years have gone by and that warning has not been heeded.

Dr. Clark: Once again the hon. Gentleman seems to have been ahead of his time. I am glad that he agrees with me on that matter. Another issue that we might have to face is industrial fishing.

My final point relates to a fundamental disagreement between the Opposition and the Government. I talked about a one-club approach, but perhaps that was not the best analogy. We might say that we are trying to solve the problem while firing on three cylinders when we should be firing on all four. For some reason the Minister refuses to countenance one of the best weapons in his armoury and I suspect that that is because it costs money. It is the weapon of decommissioning. The Minister and the House know that by 1992 we have to reduce our capacity by 22 per cent. Yet the industry grew by 16 per cent. last year. That is the enormity of our task in the next two years. The sooner the Minister comes to the House with proposals for a proper decommissioning scheme, the better. I understand the Minister's reluctance, because he was responsible for the last scheme, and had his knuckles rapped by the Public Accounts Committee and the National Audit Office for it. But a new scheme need not have the same weaknesses.

I hope that the Minister will come to the House with such proposals, because the only way that we can reduce the number of vessels—it may have to be by up to 400 vessels—is by having a proper decommissioning scheme. I hope that when the scheme is introduced, because it will have to be introduced, payments will go to the employees working in the industry as well as to skippers and owners.

The facts are there, and we all understand the seriousness of the problem. The Minister is listening to the voice of the House, and I hope that he will hear the message that he has to fight for the British fishing industry, which is in a state of crisis. The industry knows it, and we know it. The time has come for us to take some bold steps. I suspect that the key is decommissioning. That is the one thing that the Minister has not argued for.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. Now that we are well into the season of good will to all men and women, I urge right hon. and hon. Members to demonstrate that good will by making short speeches. Many hon. Members wish to be called in the debate.

6.21 pm

Mr. Robert Hicks (Cornwall, South-East): As a preface to my remarks, I welcome the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Minister and the comments of the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. D. Clark), about the timing of the publication of the draft proposals in relation to the Fisheries Council meeting and the commencement of the new fishing year. We face the same problem every year and, inevitably, it is raised in the House. Unfortunately, very little has been done about it in the past, but I hope that my right hon. Friend will be more successful on this occasion. I am a member of the Select Committee on European Legislation, and I know that we have only just received the European Commission's draft proposals. That makes it difficult for us to undertake our function and responsibilities to the House.

I appreciate the fundamental problems facing United Kingdom Ministers. As my right hon. Friend said, fish stocks are declining, we have a surplus catch capacity and we have to deal with over-fishing in some areas. As a consequence, we have to have restraints if we are to maintain effective conservation measures and safeguard the viability of our fishing industry.

I wish to make three points about the effects of the draft proposals, if they are implemented, on the south-west of England because fishing is an important component of our regional economy. First, there is a proposal that the total allowable Channel cod catch should be reduced, and that will be reflected in the United Kingdom quota. I hope that my right hon. Friend will consider the background to the situation carefully, as many hon. Members believe that it is essential that we retain at least the figures that we had in 1989.

I am not trying to contradict the scientific advice that we have received, but the Commission has suggested that the cod TAC should be reduced to 21,500 tonnes. I hope that the Minister will defend our position robustly and ensure that the United Kingdom quota is upheld. Closer examination of the scientific evidence shows that it is variable and I hope that the Minister will argue in favour

[Mr. Robert Hicks]

of the higher of the parameters rather than accept the Commission's proposals. The least that my right hon. Friend can do when he responds this evening is to give the House a commitment, at this preliminary stage, that when there is a variation in the scientific evidence we will argue for the higher parameter, although the Commission has suggested a lower figure.

We expect that there will be a reduction in the TACs in the Channel for plaice and sole. On paper they may not seem to be of major proportions, but over the years the figures have been constantly reduced, so the overall situation is becoming worse. I hope that there will not be a need for any alteration in the figures for the south-west's mackerel catch. We have enjoyed stability in that area in recent years, and I hope that that will continue.

My second point is that we need greater flexibility in the application of quotas, and I do not think that any other hon. Member has touched upon that this evening. In the south-west there was considerable evidence that the circumstances had changed compared with this time last year when the TACs and quotas were negotiated. It seems that a major renegotiation of TACs and quotas was required so that we could achieve a modest increase halfway through the last fishing year in the cod quota that the south-west is allowed, and there is ample scientific evidence and local knowledge to support that.

Due to the shortage of time, I shall not spell out the reasons why we should reconsider conservation measures as a total package, but it is no good singling out one or two specific aspects each year. We must consider increasing mesh sizes. The present situation is ludicrous, as many small fish are caught and subsequently killed. Small fish not only represent future fish stocks, and the viability of the industry, but the future livelihood of fishermen. I hope that the Minister will include that in the package of conservation measures that eventually emerges.

Time prevents me from mentioning in any detail any other equally significant subjects—for example, licensing smaller vessels and the need for fleet reductions. That requires a financially attractive and effective decommissioning scheme, as the hon. Member for South Shields suggested.

In conclusion, I emphasise that the fishing industry is of great importance to the regional economy of Devon and Cornwall. Looe is the principal fishing port in my constituency, and it now supports more than 50 fishing vessels, a significant increase since 1979. In the past two years alone, £1 million has been invested in landing facilities, introducing a fish market and a packaging scheme. Larger sums have been invested in our fishing vessels. I want that momentum to be maintained. We look to my right hon. Friend the Minister to safeguard our interests in Brussels during the forthcoming negotiations.

6.30 pm

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): I frequently pursue a slightly different tack from other hon. Members, and I do not apologise for doing so again today. The reason is that I have the pleasure to represent a constituency with special and distinctive problems.

There is not just one crisis in the fishing industry in the United Kingdom because there is not just one fishing industry. Fishing differs radically between England and Scotland, and within Scotland from east to west coast. There are many dimensions to the industry.

I wish to emphasise the special nature of the difficulties that confront fishermen in my constituency and on the west coast of Scotland as a whole. It is a fragile area. In social and economic terms, its communities live a fragile existence. Time does not permit me to dwell on that, but I hope that it is obvious to the House.

We are not over capacity in the Western Isles, at least as regards our main fishing effort, which is directed towards prawns. We do not have the same problems and constraints as other sectors of the Scottish industry have had for the past decade. Indeed, our fleet has diminished during the past decade. The reduction has been among larger boats.

Another example of the special nature of fishing in the Western Isles is our attitude to total allowable catches. There are many criticisms of TACs. They can be only one of the tools used for conservation and to achieve sustainable stocks. Many criticise the Government for underestimating the amount of fish in the sea, but we tend to fear that they have overestimated the amount in our area, particularly the amount of prawns in the Minch. Although we believe that there is a possibility that TACs are too high in the Minch area, I shall make no final judgment about that, but merely observe that it shows our different attitude. One fear is that so much scientific research has gone into the North sea, and latterly the sand-eel controversy, that not enough has gone into the west coast fisheries to discover the true stocks of prawns so that we might establish a sustainable yield.

I emphasise that we are dealing with a distinctive style of fishing but, despite our specialness, we are constantly caught up in the general crisis that affects the national fleet. For example, some years ago, the European Commission, recognising the fragility of the west coast area, decided to award it a higher percentage grant than was available in other parts of the United Kingdom for the construction of new fishing vessels. Hardly a penny of that theoretically high grant arrived because of overcapacity in other parts of the United Kingdom.

A fisherman in my constituency is going after crabs and lobsters and wants to build a new boat with Vivier tanks to be able better to service the markets. He presents no problem in terms of catching capacity but has been denied the funds that the EEC wants to give him because of overcapacity elsewhere.

There must be urgent and tough measures to reduce national capacity. When my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) spoke of the need for a decommissioning scheme, he emphasised the need for a proper scheme. It must not miss the target. It must not vacuum up the small boats and small fleets and leave the large ones untouched.

There is a second way in which we are being caught up in the national crisis. We are suffering from increasing fishing pressure. Boats from the east coast, confronted with reduced quotas, come to the west coast to try to earn a living. We get caught up because of the pressure on prawns and white fish. We fear the drastic quota cuts that appear to have been agreed for cod and haddock on the east coast because we believe that one result will be a less favourable solution of the haddock quota on the west coast. We fear that boats from other areas will fish off the west coast, as they may fish against two quotas whereas we may fish against only one. Boats from the east coast could come over to the west, reduce the quota there, leaving nothing for local fishermen in the latter part of the year, and then return to the east, where we may not go, and finish their quota during the remainder of the year. That problem must be tackled. Such issues may seem rather detailed, but we must remember some of the special facets.

I realise that time is short, but I must say something about the amendment that I tabled. I understand why it was not selected, but in it I tried to convey what I have attempted to say in my speech—that we must recognise the very different nature of fishing fleets in different areas. Fish are obviously a finite resource. That is the crux of the problem. Whatever arrangement we arrive at, it obviously cannot be a laissez-faire free-for-all. There has to be controlled management. Because of my appreciation of the different types of fishing done in different areas, I believe that that management would be best organised at local level.

Some organisation of local management and local control is needed as we move into the 1990s and a new common fisheries regime. The fishermen whom I represent look to what has been achieved in the Shetland box, for example. They believe that something along those lines is needed round the Western Isles. That sort of approach will achieve the most benefit for the national interest, and that is the maximum sustainable yield of fish from the west coast area at the lowest cost to the Exchequer. Management regimes do not necessarily cost any money but they achieve the maximum benefit to the community in terms of jobs and downstream processing. That is why the fishermen in my constituency look to the Government to ensure the early introduction of some form of local managment scheme.

6.40 pm

Sir Michael Shaw (Scarborough): I shall not take up the interesting speech of the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) save to say that I agree that we must remember that the fishing industry comprises many local industries, many of which have special features. I represent two fishing fleets that have individual characteristics. Whitby and Scarborough both have long traditions. They have their own communities and they have a living to earn. By tradition they have handed down their boats and knowhow from father to son, from generation to generation. The situation this year is so serious that their livelihoods are endangered unless something can be done rapidly to restore security.

I recall the debates of 1983 which led to the House agreeing to the common fisheries policy. I remember the hopes that we all had for stability and prosperity in fishing as a result of that agreement. It was a good agreement. There were advantages to the United Kingdom and its fishermen, as there were to the fishermen of other member states. Alas and alack, things have not worked out as we hoped. What went wrong? I have argued ever since I became a Member of this place, often on the basis of arguments advanced by the fishermen in my constituency, that the scientists are wrong and that the fishermen know better. Scientists may be wrong occasionally, but not always. They could not have got it wrong every year since the agreement was made.

Quotas have been agreed upon and then ignored. Inspection systems have been inadequate to achieve their purpose. Looking back, I believe that the scientists were right on the whole and that the system has not been used properly. There has been a considerable breaking of quotas by many member states. None of us is perfect, but we have tried to adhere to the rules. Now that the quota system is being more efficiently policed and inspection has improved, we face the consequences of the earlier years of the agreement when it was so often and so heavily broken. Now there is a a lack of fish.

That brings me to the negotiations which my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food must enter next week. We have been fortunate ever since the agreement was reached in 1983 to have been represented by Ministers—my right hon. Friends the Members for Worcester (Mr. Walker) and for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling), and now by my right hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer)—who have respected the fishing industry and fought hard on its behalf. They have not always been as successful as we wished because others had to be considered in the negotiations, but we must have an agreement for the North sea. If not, the future will be disastrous for anyone who wishes to make a living from it.

I know that my right hon. Friend will do his level best at the meeting next week and that he will seek some important answers from the Commission. The Commission has produced quota figures lower than those presented to us by our scientific advisers. We are faced also with a late agreement with Norway. It is unfortunate that no reasons have been given. As others have asked, do we need to ratify the Norwegian agreement straight away? That is a good question. Should we not insist that the Commission, which has made such a rotten job of it so far, returns to Norway to engage in some more arguing to some purpose? If it chooses not to do so, let us hear from it why it came to such a poor agreement with Norway.

What should my right hon. Friend be seeking? I agree that he should be looking for the maximum that can be justified by scientific advice. Without using that advice we have no foundation on which to base our arguments. There will have to be strong reasons—these have certainly not been advanced so far by the Commission—why we should not accept scientific advice. We should seek every possible way of tightening quality observance and the policing of catches.

We must continue to improve our methods of conservation. The effect of the conservation measures of today does not become apparent until several years have passed. The measures are designed to benefit those who fish in the future. Therefore, we must press again for the various measures that have been urged by right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House, including those that determine mesh sizes. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) said, various matters have been urged strongly by representatives of fishing.

If national quotas are set for any species, they should not be allocated merely to the various regions of the United Kingdom. I hope that the individual regions will fish with fixed quotas and enforceable penalties. The fishermen who are represented by the hon. Member for Berwick-up-Tweed (Mr. Beith) and I have suffered because of the failure to operate such a policy. That must not be allowed to happen again.

The fishermen in my constituency are greatly concerned about the future as a result of the proposals being made by the Commission. But I have confidence that my right hon.

[Sir Michael Shaw]

Friend will do his level best to try to wrest more sense out of the Commission. I wish him good luck in his endeavours in the week ahead.

6.49 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I beg to move, to leave out from "prices" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"and calls upon the Government whilst paying proper regard to the need to conserve fishing stocks, to make every effort to negotiate the best possible fishing opportunities for the British fishing industry in 1990, and to bring forward proposals both to supplement existing conservation measures and to facilitate the restructuring of the fishing fleet, and in particular, to help manage a reduction in capacity through the introduction of a decommissioning scheme."

The wide geographical contributions to the debate from south-east Cornwall, the Western Isles and Scarborough make it clear that a crisis is facing the British fishing industry. The hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) was right to remind us that that crisis affects different communities in different ways. There is clear unanimity that the Council of Ministers, which the Minister and the Secretary of State for Scotland will attend next week, is of crucial importance to the industry. Our amendment gives them every encouragement to try to achieve the best possible deal in terms of fishing opportunities for British fishermen, consistent with the necessary considerations of conservation.

Many of us thought the position bad enough last year, when the haddock total allowable catch was drastically reduced from 128,000 tonnes to 54,000 tonnes. Many of us warned of the dire consequences that could face the industry and the communities around our coast, which are so dependent on the fishing industry. We now face proposals to implement an even greater cut. Unless proper measures are introduced, many of our communities will be devastated.

The haddock total allowable catch is only one quarter of the 1988 TAC, with the cod TAC being just above half its 1988 level. Many of us believe that that is the result of the Commission's actions in recent weeks, not least in the negotiations with Norway. I share the view expressed by the Minister, the Opposition spokesman and other hon. Members that the proposals have been left until the last minute and that there has not been adequate time fully to consider them.

There are a number of lessons to be learnt. The Norwegians have certain advantages in negotiations, but, as the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) said, certain bargaining counters were also in the Commission's hands. None of us yet knows what in the world possessed Senor Marin to enter the negotiations with Norway at a very late stage and propose such ridiculously low TACs. It is difficult enough to try to persuade fishermen to accept TACs based on scientific advice; it is almost impossible —and no one would wish to try—to get them to accept TACs that have been put forward for some obscure negotiation purpose.

The other matter which is causing great irritation, even fury, is the increase in TACs for the industrial fisheries by-catch. Most fishermen fish for fish which end up on a consumer's plate, not in an industrial fishery. That aspect has compounded an already bad situation. We were pleased to hear the Minister say that when he goes to Brussels he will seek to activate the Hague preference. We welcome that assurance and encourage him in his negotiations to achieve that.

My hon. Friends and I who represent fishing constituencies obviously want the Government to secure the best possible deal for the industry. As all hon. Members have said, the figures on the table are not acceptable. However, we accept the important requirements of conservation. I well remember that when my hon. Friends and I met the Parliamentary Secretary last month he said graphically that he did not wish to be the Minister with responsibility for fisheries when the last haddock was taken out of the North sea. We have no desire to be the Opposition party that encouraged him to be so. That would not be a responsible position to take.

The scientists who recommend TACs are an easy target for criticism and there is some justification in the allegation that in recent years they must have got something wrong. Only two years ago, when they were setting the TAC for haddock for 1988, they recommended an increase. In today's circumstances, that recommendation appears incredible. It is worth noting that at the time the Scottish Fishermen's Federation simply did not believe it. Nevertheless, on the table are TACs for haddock and for cod which still fall short of what the scientists recommended. There is scope for an increase and I am sure that the Minister will try to obtain that. I understand that the Germans, the Danes and the Irish are not at all happy with the proposals. I hope that the Minister can put together that majority and obtain a far better deal.

I must make something clear to the Minister, but I do not do so in any hostile or partisan way. It is more a kindly word of warning. If he returns to the House next week and announces that he has successfully achieved a higher level of TAC, even that will not be a reason for rolling out the red carpet.

Mr. Gummer: No.

Mr. Wallace: I am glad that the Minister acknowledges that. The secretary of the Shetland Fish Producers Organisation said that the proposal was a compromise between a disaster and a catastrophe. What we seek, as reflected in our amendment, is a package of measures, not simply a better set of TACs.

One matter to which the Minister did not refer but which forms part of the Commission's proposals relates to the management of the haddock TAC. There is a specific proposal about fishing vessels having to cease fishing for 10 consecutive days per month if their catch had gone above a certain level in the past 18 months. There is another proposal for ceasing to fish other stocks when the total haddock TAC has been reached. That has met with considerable opposition within the fishing industry. Having been given a TAC, we should be left to manage it.

Mr. Gummer: I very much share the industry's concern about that proposal, which clearly seeks to interfere with the management of the TACs—or at least the quotas— within individual nations. We have enough trouble trying to manage our own quotas without other people telling us how to do it. I shall have to find better ways to manage the quotas for the reasons put forward by my hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw) and the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith). There is a real problem of over-fishing by one part of the country causing losses in another part. That must be carefully considered, but the position is not helped by other people trying to tell us how to do it. It is not an area in which I intend to follow the Commission.

Mr. Wallace: We welcome the Minister's reassurance on that matter.

I shall not dwell on another part of the package because the Minister responded satisfactorily to my earlier intervention on precautionary TACs. He gave an encouraging response on the need for a better package of conservation measures to supplement rather than substitute for TACs and quotas. Reference has been made to the proposals put forward by the Scottish Fishermen's Federation, which have been largely adopted by the Scottish Office. A number of specific measures have been mentioned, including the square mesh nets. An important measure is to try to make enforcement of conservation measures easier, with liability arising if a vessel is carrying rather than using illegal equipment. It is also important to recognise the willingness to accept the one-net rule. The Minister rightly stressed that the measures were tough. I am sure that the Scottish Fishermen's Federation and the Northumbrian fishermen did not suggest them lightly or without a great deal of debate among their members. It is to the credit of the industry that it has proposed such measures.

The Minister said that he had pressed the Commission on a number of conservation proposals and that they would be the subject of further negotiation. I hope that the Secretary of State, in his reply, will say what will be the likely timescale for any possible developments. It is widely recognised that we are dealing with an urgent situation. For it to continue into the distant future is unacceptable and a number of conservation measures should now come into play.

Hon. Members have expressed their concern about the number of discards. That is almost invariably mentioned at meetings with fishermen or those involved in the fishing industry. Despite the fact that the haddock TAC for this year has been fished out, many fishermen are still finding substantial volumes of haddock in their nets when fishing for other species.

We need measures other than the conservation measures already mentioned. The Minister singularly omitted to mention the need for decommissioning. If we have a problem, it is made even greater by having a large fleet, all the members of which are trying to get as much as they can within the legitimate bounds of the TACs.

If these measures go through, in 1990 we shall catch one quarter of the haddock allowed in 1988. Yet there has been no commensurate reduction in the capacity of the fleet. Time and again hon. Members, particularly Opposition Members, have called for a decommissioning scheme as an essential requirement.

The Minister should be grateful that the industry joins in such calls. Many Ministers would be only too pleased if they could stand at the Dispatch Box knowing that an industry for which capacity cuts had been announced was going along with those cuts and proposing ways in which they could be managed.

There will undoubtedly be some damaging effects, but we are trying to keep those to a minimum. I shall be interested to hear the views of the Secretary of State for Scotland on decommissioning when he replies. There has been some suggestion that he and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food do not always see eye to eye.

As the hon. Member for South Shields said, I understand why the Minister, given his previous dangling with a decommissioning scheme, has so many reservations about it. But he cannot hide behind the Public Accounts Committee's report in trying to put off any further decommissioning scheme. The Public Accounts Committee, in its twenty-fourth report of April 1988, made it clear that it was criticising the way in which that scheme operated. In the summary of its recommendations and conclusions it says:

> "For the future, we expect MAFF to determine more specific objectives for any grant schemes of this kind; and to consider fully the need for flexibility so as to ensure that they provide better value for money than was obtained from decommissioning grants."

It is clear from that that the Public Accounts Committee foresaw that at some future stage there might well be other decommissioning schemes but recommended ways in which they could be better administered than the previous one. That report cannot be used as an excuse for shying away from introducing a decommissioning scheme.

The Department has proposed such things as aggregate licensing. That has a role to play but it will only scratch the surface of what is needed. We would like to see the temporary lay-up scheme followed up. I accept that the benefits to be derived from that are small, but at a time like this anything is welcome.

What we cannot accept is that things are left hanging in the air and left to the free market. We are not dealing with a free market. When the Government and the EC can so dramatically and drastically determine the catching opportunity, the Government are clearly in the marketplace and there must be other ways in which they can help the industry to restructure its effort and keep a modern and efficient fleet which matches capacity more closely to fishing opportunities.

The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretary of State for Scotland can go to Brussels with every exhortation to get a good deal, but they must come back with a satisfactory outcome, not just on TACs, but on conservation and, in particular, a commitment to introduce measures to restructure the industry, particularly to manage a decline in the industry's capacity through decommissioning. It is on that that they will be judged.

7.4 pm

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): The amendment moved by the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) does not appear to seek to divide the House, but rather to clarify matters and to bring extra views to the House, which all hon. Members will value. What is remarkable about fishing is that it is the one industry in Britain that unites hon. Members on both sides of the House.

The eastern part of the Channel, with its substantial fishing ports of Hastings and Rye which I represent, may not be as hard hit as our friends in the northern and eastern fleets, but it should be clearly understood in Brussels that not only does the Minister go with our good will but he is speaking on behalf of all the fishermen round the coast who are unified in their condemnation of the haphazard way in which Brussels conducts its negotiations year after year.

[Mr. Kenneth Warren]

It is clear that Norway and Sweden have outmanoeuvred Brussels. It is as simple as that. They know that Brussels has a propensity for photo-finishes at the end of the year. Why, over the years, has not Brussels co-ordinated negotiations in such a way as to find out what trade-offs countries outside the EEC want rather than trying to do a deal on fishing?

I hope that the Minister will convey strongly our views on the Commission's ineptitude in the negotiating meeting next week. It is strange that the Commission cannot negotiate but it can produce hundreds of pages without coming to any conclusions that the House could be expected to back.

I hope that during negotiations my right hon. Friend will bear in mind the effect not only on fishermen but on the food processing and fish industries which depend on the landings round our coasts. I am anxious that the Government should be seen to be more forthcoming in supporting the British industry at a time of crisis.

Decommissioning has been mentioned, but I am particularly worried about the Government's strange reluctance to invest in research at a time when the industry is facing recognised difficulties. Why have they not put more effort into developing the possibilities of inshore sea fish farming solutions which already work well for some species?

My right hon. Friend will not mind if I draw his attention to the way in which the honourable fishermen of Hastings and Rye march in line with all the conservation measures that are proposed, only to hear the Government say that the offshore gravel beds, which are known to be the source of the young fish on which we rely for supplying you, Mr. Speaker, with your Dover sole and plaice, can be dug up.

Fishermen are respected by all in their communities, and there is no question but that, certainly along the Sussex coast, they back conservation. However, they expect more understanding and less nonsense from Brussels.

7.7 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I shall not deal with the Norwegian agreement. I agree with everything that the Minister said on that. His criticisms of it were so strong that I do not know why he does not insist that it be renegotiated. It is a bad agreement and it needs renegotiation. If his criticism is as telling as that, why does he not ask for that to take place?

However, I cannot accept the Minister's call for a bipartisan approach to the issue. In the past 10 or 11 years we have had two staples of Government policy towards the fishing industry. There has effectively been a policy, first, to let market forces restructure the fishing industry and, secondly, to get a common fisheries policy and trust to that. It is those two staples of policy over the past 10 years that have produced the crisis that the industry is now facing in a state of shock, dismay and anger.

We are paying the price for years of inadequate policing of the common fisheries policy. Onshore authorities in competitor countries have turned a blind eye to malpractice, overfishing and failure to observe quotas in a way that has not happened in Britain, and now we are paying the price for the inadequacy of resources devoted to policing by this Government as much as any. We have seen also the consequences of years of high discards—of fish being caught and then chucked back dead. That in itself is a major threat to conservation. The result of all that is also seen in today's crisis. That situation cannot be made good by panic cuts in total allowable catches and in quotas of the type proposed.

What is required is a drastic new, conservation-based approach. I was dismayed to hear that officials in the Department do not think it appropriate to put conservation back into next week's negotiations, because conservation is the central issue. We must produce new measures for dealing with conservation, which would take the weight off quotas and TACs. The fishing industry shall not live by quotas and TACs alone, although unless there is some kind of supplement it may die by TACs and quotas alone.

The key supplement seems to me—and to many in the industry, judging by some of the speeches today—to be an increase in mesh sizes. I can speak on this subject with a perfectly clear conscience because Grimsby fishermen use a mesh size of 110 mm, compared with 90 mm in the Scottish fishing industry. The use of a larger mesh size is the proper way to help conservation, because it ensures that the young, immature fish escape.

Research indicates that a larger mesh size is the best way of aiding conservation. It accounts for the fact that discards in Grimsby are much lower, at about 4 per cent., than in the Scottish industry. I shall not venture to guess the percentage of its discards. It could be as much as 50 per cent. Certainly the figure is much higher than for Grimsby.

Why do the Government not demand universal adherence to a mesh size of 110mm? Unless that happens, Scottish fishing vessels deprived of opportunities will move to the grounds used by Grimsby fishermen, for example. In that situation, Grimsby's fishing industry, having adopted a mesh size of 110mm, will be decimated. It would also prove disastrous for conservation, and would give rise to a descending spiral of competitive catching. At this juncture, it is vital to move to bigger mesh sizes.

It is vital also to insist on shortening extension pieces. Again, Scotland uses 15m extension pieces whereas Grimsby fishermen use extension pieces of only 2m as we do south of the border. The shorter the extension piece, the better for conservation, and the more the number of small and immature fish that escape. It is also essential to deal with the problem of discards. Discards should be brought back and landed with the rest of the catch, and then recorded as part of the quota. That would be the most effective way of dealing with the problem. The Minister should insist on that practice in the EEC, rather than give us a mealy-mouthed talk deploring discards but suggesting nothing to deal with them effectively. He should insist on discards being landed and properly policed. The discards are dead and are a threat to conservation, and unless they are properly dealt with there cannot be proper policing.

It is also essential that the Government spend more money on policing. The North sea is inadequately policed due to Government spending cuts and the Department's failure to live up to its responsibilities. As almost every hon. Member who spoke has said, there must also be a proper decommissioning scheme. I know that the Government got their fingers burnt with the last scheme, but it is wrong to blame the industry for the fact that the

Department made such a mess of it. The industry should not be asked to pay the price for the incompetent administration of the last decommissioning scheme.

I would like to see such a scheme geared to taking out the largest and most efficient vessels, because they are responsible for creating conservation problems. Grimsby vessels, of which I am very proud, are good vessels from a conservation point of view, but in the main they are old. I would prefer to see Government support to help keep those vessels fishing for reduced catches rather than see them taken out of service. On that I disagree with the National Federaton of Fishermen's Organisations, which is based in Grimsby. Nevertheless, a decommissioning scheme must be established if catching capacity is to be kept in balance with conservation.

As to quotas and TACs, it is all very well the Minister saying that he will resist any reduction of the size that Commissioner Marin seems to have picked out of the hat in respect of the Norwegian negotiations, but the Minister must draw a balance between the industry's catching capacity, the desire for an orderly run-down, and scientific advice. It is not enough to use the scientific advice as a shield in defence of all criticisms. A balance must be achieved between the industry's viability, its managed run-down, and scientific advice. If that is not done, we shall witness a descending spiral of intense competition.

For Grimsby, cod quotas are the central issue. I may say in passing that I am unhappy at the behaviour of the Scottish fishing industry, which forced the haddock ban on us. The Scottish industry's irresponsible behaviour was justified and even defended by DAFS, which seems to do a better job of making deals for the Scottish fishing industry than MAFF does for the English industry. In support of that contention, I quote from the Eurofish report of 23 November:

> "The UK's largest body, the Scottish Fishermen's Organisation, and the North East Scottish FBO are considered to be chiefly to blame for forcing that closure"—

of the haddock fisheries.

Mr. Gummer: Perhaps I may reassure the hon. Gentleman that north of the border Scottish fishermen take exactly the opposite view and feel that the deal done for English fishermen by myself and MAFF is better than that done by DAFS. That is part of those fishermen's view of other fishermen. As to the hon. Gentleman's comments about cuts in policing, I checked up on that aspect particularly because I should not want to mislead the House. There has been no cut in policing. In fact, we have forced an increase at a European level, and we have kept our own policing up. The hon. Gentleman must not talk about cuts when they have not taken place and will not take place.

Mr. Mitchell: The Minister exaggerates the case. Policing is inadequate. The demonstrable consequence of that is the situation in which we now find ourselves. The European effort, which the Minister praises himself for having secured, is totally inadequate. There must be a much more effective common policing system, rather than relying on shore authorities, which are often in collusion with their own country's fishing industry.

As to whether MAFF does a better job for the English industry than DAFS does for Scotland, my experience is that the Scots get a much better deal from DAFS. The industry's growth over the past few years certainly indicates that that is the case. If I were a fisherman, I would rather be defended by DAFS than by MAFF, which pays a great deal of attention to the demands of farmers but little to those of fishermen.

I return to the central issue of the cod quota. The Minister said that he would invoke the Hague preference. I hope that he will promise to resist any fall in the quota below the level at which the Hague preference must be invoked. I understand from a parliamentary answer of 13 November that the limit is 43,179 tonnes of cod. Why does not the Minister pledge himself to resist any reduction in the cod quota below that level so that the Hague preference will not have to be invoked, which would not benefit Grimsby, dependent though it is on fishing?

The scientific advice in respect of the saithe and coley quotas is somewhat doubtful. A cut is being recommended because there has been a certain use of paper fish in that particular fishery. All the evidence suggests that recruitment is increasing, and that we do not need a cut. A cut would affect the British industry disproportionately because, unlike the Community, it catches its saithe quota.

I hope that the Minister will resist the proposal by his colleague in the Department of Transport to end the Decca navigation system, which has involved huge investment in charts and personal information banks and the scrapping of which would impose a considerable cost on an industry not at present equipped to bear such costs.

The real problem is the Government's attitude. The Minister keeps returning to his fishing responsibilities. He is, in a sense, a reconstituted fishing Minister—a kind of departmental crabstick. He tells us that market forces will decide the shape of the industry and that the common fisheries policy is working well, but both claims are manifestly wrong. We need firm action to resist the proposals, but we also need a Ministry willing to help the industry financially, as the hill farmers were helped in the disastrous rain-sodden summer of four or five years ago.

The fishing industry has been asked to take a huge cut in its catching capacity and its earning power, and it needs financial help, not just a decommissioning scheme that will work. The Government must live up to their responsibilities, as well as preaching the forces of dire necessity.

7.20 pm

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): I will not follow the remarks of the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), especially his unfair attack on my right hon. Friend the Minister. I am sure that the overwhelming feeling of hon. Members on both sides of the House is delight at his return, as he has brought back to the Ministry his tremendous knowledge of the fishing industry and his determination to fight for it.

Sadly, only a few weeks ago a Cornish fishing boat—the Flamingo—was lost off my constituency, with the death of two Cornish fishermen. That is a tragic reminder of the risk that our fishermen take every time they go to sea, for conditions were pretty good that day: there were no storms or rough seas. Today's debate is largely preoccupied with the economic state of the industry, but we should also remember the human aspect.

A natural feature of the economic approach, however, is our habit of concentrating on the respects in which things are going badly. Although I do not wish to minimise the problems, I feel that we should remind ourselves from time to time of some of the success stories. I was pleased to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall,

[Mr. David Harris]

South-East (Mr. Hicks) mention how Looe, a port in his constituency, has been developed: we all rejoice in its success, and in the news that a market has been built there. Newlyn, a port in my constituency, now has a £20 million-a-year trade in fish, and in Devon, the neighbouring county, Brixham's trade amounts to £15 million a year. That is big business, and we should also consider the employment that such developments create.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East mentioned the increase in boats in Looe. That increase, which applies to many coastal areas, has added to the pressure on stocks; but the problem relates not only to the boats themselves but to their catching capacity. I may anticipate the remarks of the spokesman of a certain party north of the border when I express the hope that we all recognise that the tremendous increase in capacity is a major contributor to the present difficulties.

Coming as I do from the other end of the country, I appreciate the difficulties of Scottish and North sea fishermen—which they will continue to face, I suspect, in the years ahead. Perhaps the cuts with which we in the south-west are threatened are not so deep, but we must not be smug. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East about the need to maintain the Channel quota for cod, and I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Minister will bear that in mind when he goes to Brussels next week.

An issue that has exercised the mind of every hon. Member—although no one except my right hon. Friend mentioned it this evening—is quota-hopping, the disgraceful practice whereby Spanish boats in particular have moved into our waters and literally stolen our quotas. I am sorry to note the absence of one or two of my colleagues who were present at 3 am a few weeks ago when we debated an amendment to the Merchant Shipping Act 1984. I have a nasty suspicion—which I shall banish immediately from my mind—that they were more interested in bashing a European institution, in this case the European Court of Justice, than in showing an interest in the fishing industry.

My right hon. Friend was perhaps wise not to give way to me when he touched on the decision by the European Court. I warmly welcome that decision and know that it will also be welcomed in the south-west, which as the part of England nearest to Spain has borne the brunt of the pernicious practice of quota-hopping. I was going to ask my right hon. Friend—although presumably my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will give the answer—what the ruling of the European Court will mean in practical terms. How many Spanish boats will be left on the register? At the time of the setback a few weeks ago it was said that, of a total of between 100 and 150 boats, perhaps a dozen might have to stay on the new register of fishing vessels. Whatever the figure, however, we welcome the court's decision: we seem to have won most of the case that we were making not only in the courts of this land, but in the European Court. If an end has been put to quota-hopping, it may be the best news that has come from today's debate.

Many other topics could be discussed, but I shal revert to the issue that has dominated the debate: the serious cuts in quotas for the North sea and Scotland. The hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) was right. When we consider the fishing industry, we naturally tend to do so from the constituency point of view and from the point of view of our own fishermen and ports. The whole industry is, in fact, related and what affects the Scottish and North sea fishermen can have a repercussive effect on fishermen in the west of Cornwall. If fishermen elsewhere are in difficulties and suffer a cut in fishing opportunities, as happened in the mackerel fishery, they will come down to the south-west of England and catch what we sometimes think of as "our" fish. The crisis in the North sea and Scotland is casting a long shadow which stretches right down to the south-west of England.

Uncertainty hangs over the whole industry. I do not for a moment blame Opposition Members for returning to the problem of how on earth we are going to restructure the fishing fleet. We all agree that there is overcapacity in the fleet. The problem that my right hon. and hon. Friends must address is how to resolve that overcapacity. I do not know whether my right hon. Friends will go down the route of a decommissioning scheme, and I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will throw some light on Government thinking tonight. I am pleased to see my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food nodding his head in agreement and I await the winding-up speech with some eagerness.

If my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland can hold out some hope on that front, this debate will have been worth while. It will also have been worth while if we reinforce Ministers' determination, when they go to Brussels next week, to pursue the line that was set out at the beginning of the debate by my right hon. Friend. I am sure that that line is correct and that he will have the backing of the House in pursuing it next week in Brussels.

7.31 pm

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): The House will understand my anxiety and that of my hon. Friends to speak in this debate in defence of the fishing industry. It is a cause that we inherit because of the constituencies that we represent. The Minister asked today for a consensus. I can tell him that unless the winding-up speech is substantially stronger than the opening speech, he will not receive support from my party. In no circumstances could my party—or, I suspect, many other hon. Members—subscribe to a policy which could bring about the ruination of our fishing industry.

Furthermore, we must consider the complacency, confusion and disarray of the Government's fishing policy in the past two years. First, there has been complacency. The Minister apologised for the circumstances of the debate and for the deluge of late information available to hon. Members. Perhaps he could do nothing about that —the circumstances may have been beyond his control —but it is most certainly in the Minister's control that, disgracefully, this is the only major parliamentary opportunity in the whole year for a wide-scale debate on the fortunes of this vital industry. It is remarkable that Members of the minority parties, including myself, my hon. Friends and the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), have managed to force three debates on the fishing industry in the past few months but there has been no general debate on the fishing industry in Government time in the past year. One annual debate on the fishing industry is an insult to the importance of that industry and to the Scottish and United Kingdom economies.

Only last year, the Minister's predecessor made what was billed as a major speech in Europe on the common fisheries policy, which he said was bringing "stability and prosperity" to fishing communities. We see not stability and prosperity in our fishing communities but volatility and penury as the immediate prospect.

Secondly, there has been confusion in the Government's fisheries policy. That is best represented by the impasse on the decommissioning scheme. In the past six months, it has been well reported and understood in Scotland that there is a conflict between the Scottish Office and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. The Scottish Office favoured a decommissioning scheme while the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food was ensuring that such a scheme would not be implemented. When I raised that suggestion in the press, the Minister of State, Scottish Office, the noble Lord Sanderson, loyally wrote to me on 11 October and said that I had no basis for making such an allegation.

Unfortunately for the noble Lord, on that very day, under the heading, "Gummer sinks fishers' hopes", the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food was quoted in a Scottish newspaper as speaking at the Conservative conference in hostile terms about the decommissioning scheme. So unpopular was the Minister's opposition to the decommissioning scheme and so unpopular was his tendency to blame the industry for the problems that it faces, rather than to accept any policy responsibility, that even a journal such as the Scottish edition of *The Sunday Times,* which is not noted for its trenchant criticisms of Government policy, was moved to say on 22 October in a column by Allan Massie:

> "The attempt made by John Selwyn Gummer, minister of agriculture, fisheries and food, to throw responsibility for the crisis back on the Scottish fishermen was a characteristically silly and shabby effort to evade Whitehall's responsibility."

I hope that in the winding-up speech tonight the Scottish Office view and not the view of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will prevail on decommissioning.

Thirdly, there has been disarray in the Government's fisheries policy over the past two years. For the past two years, there has been no licensing scheme, there has been a stalemate on decommissioning and at the heart of today's debate has been the fact that the Government's conservation policy is contradictory. Once again, the Minister seeks to hide behind scientific advice from the Commission. That is dangerous because scientific advice is not all on one side. Senor Marin himself, arguing for his version of the cod and haddock quotas, will also be able to claim that he is acting on scientific advice on the bottom range of scientific advice as opposed to the top range.

We know that over the past seven years the procedure of following scientific advice with TACs and then quotas which have not been overfished still has failed to bring about any recovery in the main fisheries stocks and especially the haddock stock. There is a simple reason for that when the quotas are forced down to low levels. As that happens, the number and weight of discards automatically rises. It is a major problem and was even recognised in the voluminous documentation that we received today on the negotiations between the Commission and Norway.

The way forward for the fisheries lies in technical changes such as restrictions on fisheries gear and movement to the one-net rule.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I intervene only to ask the hon. Gentleman to clarify this point. I have sympathy with many of his points, but I am not clear about his party's policy on the TACs for the coming year. Does he argue that we should disregard the scientific advice and try to force a higher level of TACs than is advocated by our own scientists, or is he prepared to live with that and to pin his hopes on the structural changes to which he now refers? That is important.

Mr. Salmond: It is indeed important, and I am coming to that point now. Our argument is that in fisheries policy the emphasis should move towards allowing the immature fish to escape alive and not discarding them dead in the North sea. The Minister made two points that puzzled me. First, he seemed to suggest that it was a policy which might work, and there is substantial scientific advice, especially from the marine laboratory in Aberdeen, that the policy would indeed work. The Minister of State, Scottish Office was confident in the Adjournment debate on 21 November that there would be

> "real benefits in a relatively short time"—[*Official Report,* 21 November 1989; Vol. 162, c. 110.]

Secondly, the Minister seemed to doubt my credentials in arguing for such a policy. I do not know whether the Minister reads the report of Scottish Estimates debates in the Scottish Grand Committee. On 13 July 1989, I went into a new conservation policy in some detail.

If we are moving to a policy which stands a substantial chance of being successful, we must acknowledge the difficulties that it will create for the fishing industry and the sacrifices that it is accepting. It will be extremely difficult to attempt to impose such a policy—and it must be imposed—if we do so against the background of insupportably low quotas. That is why my party believes that the bottom line for quotas should be the Hague preference total of 60,000 tonnes for haddock and 43,000 tonnes for cod, which may be met within the negotiations. That should be the bottom line for quotas. Policy emphasis should move to new conservation measures.

Mr. Gummer: I ask the hon. Gentleman a direct question. Is he saying that before any of his conservation measures could take effect this year the British Government should seek quotas higher than those which scientists say are safe and thereby endanger the future of the fishing industry?

Mr. Salmond: I ask the Minister to take on board the fact that observance of TACs has not protected the status of the fishing industry. *[Interruption.]* I am coming to the Minister's question. Conservation measures should be discussed at the Fisheries Council meeting, and they should be implemented in the coming year. That matter should be debated in Brussels now, not the arid, sterile subject of TACs. As has been said, we do not even have the assurance that those will be the major issues to be discussed next week. We should discuss conservation measures next week and implement this year.

Mr. Gummer: If the hon. Gentleman does not answer the direct question, he will face the accusation of dishonesty. He must answer the question. Does he recommend that, when I go to Brussels with my right hon.

[Mr. Gummer]

and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, for the first time in British history I should argue that we should ignore scientific advice and opt for a figure which scientists tell us would endanger the future of the fishing industry? Does he say that or does he not?

Mr. Salmond: I have already pointed out to the right hon. Gentleman that the bottom line should be the quotas of 60,000 tonnes and 43,000 tonnes in the Hague preference. Of course that is above the top range of scientific advice, but, as the right hon. Gentleman has admitted, there is substantial evidence that scientific advice in the past seven years has been deeply flawed. The scientific advice in 1976 suggested a sharp increase in the haddock quota and has caused many problems. Was that also correct? I want a pledge from the Government that the focus of debate will move to conservation policies which might work and move away from TACs, which have failed in the past few years.

I make four points to the Government. First, we want the Marin proposals, as amended by the Commission, wiped off the table. Nor do we want a patch-up between the Commission proposals and scientific advice. It will not be acceptable to massage the figures up by a few thousand tonnes and claim victory after the Council's meetings next week.

I want an answer from the Minister and from the Secretary of State for Scotland: will the Luxembourg veto be used to block the settlement if it is not considered acceptable? Are the Government going to the EEC negotiations armed with the Luxembourg veto? The Prime Minister argues that the Luxembourg veto still exists within the Community for matters of vital national interest. From a Scottish perspective, there is no doubt that this is a matter of vital national interest. Will the Government go to the negotiations able and prepared to use that veto if the deal on the table is unsatisfactory? I do not want to unscramble the common fisheries policy, but if it comes to the crunch, I would rather unscramble the common fisheries policy than see it scramble the Scottish fishing industry.

Secondly, I should like an assurance that the new conservation agenda, which seems to have a good deal of all-party support, will feature in the Council's deliberations next week. Will it be debated? Will the Government make sure that other EEC countries acknowledge its force? Will there be rapid implementation of the conservation proposals? I should also like an assurance about industrial fishing. We are talking tonight about a total allowable catch for haddock in the North sea of about 32,000 tonnes for human consumption. In contrast, 1 million tonnes of pout and sand-eels have been taken by industrial fishing in the North sea over the past year. Will the Government acknowledge and explain the discrepancy between the huge tonnage for industrial fishing and the limited tonnage for human consumption? Can the Government explain why there is a 50,000 tonnes increase in the whiting by-catch for industrial fishing? Is that acceptable? When will we consider industrial fishing as a major cause of the industry's problems?

Thirdly, I am happy to say that the bottom line for the United Kingdom fisheries negotiation should be the Hague preference figures as agreed by the Council in 1976. I should like to see a wider application of the Hague preference. The Hague preference acknowledged that some areas of the Community—Ireland, northern Britain and, at that time, Greenland—had a special right to preference in the application of the common fisheries policy. That can be acknowledged in respect of quotas, so why can it not be acknowledged for decommissioning schemes and lay-up schemes, and why can it not help the processing sector through the FEOGA grant system? Is the Secretary of State for Scotland prepared to argue for the Hague preference across the range of fisheries policy?

Fourthly and finally, hon. Members hope and expect to hear the Secretary of State for Scotland say how capacity is to be reduced both temporarily and permanently. Will the Government apply access to the lay-up schemes that currently exist in Community regulation 4028/86? Will that be part of the Government's policy next year?

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): The hon. Gentleman has given notice that this is his last point. He is perfectly properly pushing a constituency interest rather than the Scottish fishing industry as a whole. Does he have any sympathy with the points made on behalf of the west coast fishing industry, the interests of which have not historically been compatible with those of some of his own constituents? I should like clear guidance as to whether he supports my hon. Friend the Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) in saying that there should not be a knock-on effect from the troubles of fishermen in the North sea to those whose home waters are on the west coast, particularly in the Minch.

Mr. Salmond: Unlike the hon. Gentleman, I have never sought to divide and rule the Scottish fishing industry. I have never launched attacks on west coast fishermen, as he has consistently done on fishermen from the north-east of Scotland. In contrast to hon. Members who represent English fishing constituencies, I have made no attack on fishermen in Hull, Grimsby or elsewhere. The hon. Gentleman should take on board the fact that, unless a satisfactory deal can be made for the North sea, there is bound to be a scramble for stocks not only on the west coast but around the United Kingdom generally. That is why, just for a change, my party would like the hon. Gentleman's support in defending the whole Scottish fishing industry and not just the interests that he wants to represent.

Mr. Wilson *rose*——

Mr. Salmond: I will not take any more information from the hon. Gentleman. I have already allowed him to intervene. My party represents the whole Scottish fishing industry. We are not launching an attack on any part of it.

We need an assurance that the fishing industry will be given the priority that it deserves. The most tangible assurance would be for the Minister to make it clear that, if no satisfactory deal is on offer next week, the United Kingdom veto will be available to block any deal that will cause the ruination of our fishing industry and fishing communities.

7.49 pm

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): The sense of unreality about our debate this evening is highlighted by the fact that one of the documents that we are considering deals with the price of tuna. When I was in the Bay of Biscay three years ago, the tuna ships there were laid up because tuna had been fished to such an extent that no stocks were left. It is a sign of the responsibility that falls upon the shoulders of my right hon. Friend the Minister if I say that over 60 per cent. of the total EEC fish stock in the EEC pond is found within the 200-mile limit around the United Kingdom.

I believe that I am correct in saying—perhaps my right hon. Friend will confirm this—that no other member of the EEC has such a sophisticated inspectorate. I first tabled a question on this subject in November 1987 and did so again in March 1988. My right hon. Friend met fishermen in Portsmouth in May 1988 to discuss conservation. I welcome him back, not only to the Front Bench, but to fielding on fish.

The hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) said that the North sea would predominate in this debate. He illustrated my point for me because I do not wish to talk about distant water quotas or about the North-West Atlantic Fisheries Association. Although most people's perception is that all fishing takes place north of Watford or west of Portland Bill, literally hundreds of inshore fishermen earn their living from the North Foreland to Land's End.

My right hon. Friend said that he takes note of the scientific advice that he receives. I draw his attention to the report by Messrs Pawson and Pickett on bass fishing stocks in the Channel. They state in paragraph 38 that the bass regularly move out of the six-mile zone. In paragraph 39 they draw attention to the fact that in unseasonably warm weather the bass move north earlier and there is an increase in the influx of international bass. Paragraph 51 states:

> "We now know that bass spend more time offshore as they grow older and become progressively less accessible to the British fishery".

In fact, the French regularly fish the adult spawning stock, which starts off Land's End and moves mid-Channel between January and May. The French pair fish, taking up to 40 tonnes at a time. We are not living in the real world if we believe that mummy bass says to daddy bass, "I suppose we'll swim up the English side of the Channel today to avoid all those naughty French fishermen who tend to overfish the stocks on that side of the Channel." My real fear is that when—I emphasise "when"—quotas are eventually introduced for bass fishing, which I believe will happen, they will be based on historic catches. My right hon. Friend has introduced nursery stocks that will restrict the amount of bass that we can take from the Channel.

When my right hon. Friend goes back to the EEC about such matters, I hope that he will negotiate a complete EEC ban on the taking of bass from January to May. We want a minimum fine of £1,000 per fish for each undersized fish taken. For second offences, we want the automatic confiscation of the boat and all its gear. Magistrates must be encouraged to fine the maximum penalty. This evening the Southern Seas Fisheries Committee visited the House and informed us that it had recently found a Solent oyster boat illegally fishing a catch of oysters worth £800, yet the maximum fine for that is £400.

I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to a point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren) about the problems of aggregate dredging. If we are serious about conservation—I believe that we are—we must consider the effects of aggregate dredging on the fishing stock and the fish breeding grounds. I have written to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer pointing out that the total fees earned by the Crown Estates from aggregate dredging in the Solent waters last year was £100,000. I have been to see the Crown Estates Commissioners, who informed me that they wish to continue to license aggregate dredging in the Solent waters because they provide a sheltered water environment that allows aggregate dredging to continue in rough weather. In the words of local fishermen, that argument is all cockles and rock because one often sees aggregate dredgers in a flat calm in the Solent during August. For £100,000 in licences, we should ask our right hon. Friends at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to join us in requiring a ban on aggregate dredging in the Solent.

I join the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) in asking my right hon. Friends to make representations about the phasing out of Decca—that is a most important point.

The Liberal Democrat amendment endeavours to show that this problem has been caused by the Government. Therein lies the dichotomy within that party—it can see no wrong with the European Community, whereas all hon. Members who represent Channel constituencies and who know of the difficulties that our inshore fishermen face know that the true problem is the French, who are not playing the game and who catch bass of a different size.

We wish my right hon. Friend well as he goes to negotiate on our behalf. I hope that we shall have either a proper system of enforcement, especially in relation to the bass fisheries, or a complete ban and controlled areas.

7.56 pm

Mr. Frank Doran (Aberdeen, South): I represent a constituency with a tremendous investment in the fishing industry. That investment includes not only catching, but processing and scientific work. Indeed, a great deal of the scientific evidence that has been discussed tonight is gathered in my constituency at the marine laboratory of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland. On behalf of the scientists involved, I took exception to some of the comments that have been made, especially those from the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond), who said that the Government seemed to be hiding behind the scientific advice and suggested that the advice was not altogether accurate or could certainly be devalued.

I have taken the trouble today to try to find out exactly what is involved in gathering that scientific advice and making it available to the European Commission. I discovered that 165,000 fish were measured at commercial landing points, but that the 20,000 fish that were to be discarded were measured on board ship. On top of that, there were over 450 trawls from the marine laboratory's own vessels and from other international vessels with an interest in the North sea.

Mr. Salmond: The hon. Gentleman misunderstands the point. The problem with the scientific advice is that various factors affecting the industry mean that even if the stock assessment is correct, low quotas—because of discards—cannot solve the problems of the industry. Does the hon. Gentleman acknowledge that, although TACs have followed scientific advice over the past seven years and there has been no overfishing, the stocks have

[Mr. Salmond]

continued to decline? He will have noted my glowing reference to the marine laboratory in connection with its research into the new conservation measures.

Mr. Doran: What I acknowledge is that the hon. Gentleman made a glowing reference to the marine laboratory, but then sought to devalue the evidence and refused properly to answer the question put to him. He tried to hide behind a smokescreen when pressed on whether his party would follow that scientific advice and ask the Government to follow it.

It is important to recognise that that work has been going on since 1960 and that it has produced detailed and precise figures—as precise as resources will allow.

My constituency also contains the Torry research laboratory. As my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) reported, there has been a considerable cut in that laboratory's facilities which has taken away its opportunity to give assistance and advice to the fish-catching industries.

Mr. David Porter (Waveney) *rose*——

Mr. Doran: I shall not give way because we are short of time. It is regrettable that that cut has been made at a time when the industry is clearly in crisis.

In the north-east of Scotland 4,000 people are employed in the fish processing industry, many in my constituency. Again, I checked on the consequences of the reported catches. I was told that in Aberdeen there are 500 expert haddock filleters. Filleting is an art form in my constituency. That is the number of people employed to meet this year's quotas. Next year's quota will reduce the number of jobs to 120, and there will be a knock-on effect on every other aspect of processing. A quarter of the jobs will be left when the quota comes into effect.

There are serious anxieties in the processing industry. I join the hon. Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren) in pleading with Ministers—if, as they should, they consider a decommissioning scheme for the catching side—to consider assistance for the processing side of the industry. Processing is in a state of flux, not only because of the reduction in catches that it has to process but because it is making itself ready for the implementation of EEC regulations on food handling, which will have a profound impact. The industry is vulnerable but crucial and it should not be ignored.

The position of the processing industry is not simply a local interest. Almost all the fish that ends up in British supermarkets, or at least a substantial proportion of it, is processed in my constituency. My plea is not simply a constituency matter but one in which everyone who eats fish has an interest.

The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan raised the veto of the Hague preference. It is difficult to understand the Hague preference because it is hard to find written evidence. I understand that it was agreed under the Hague preference that, for example, the United Kingdom quota would be 60,000 tonnes of haddock from the North sea. Last year, the former Secretary of State invoked the preference as part of the negotiations and achieved a compromise between what the EEC Commissioners wanted and what the Hague preference said. I do not know whether the same attitude will be taken this time, but the figure of 60,000 tonnes exceeds the scientific recommendations.

I should be interested to know what the Hague preference said. I want to know what it involves. I ask the Minister and the Secretary of State for Scotland to consider publishing the annexes to it, which none of us has seen. It is not good enough for information to filter out in bits and pieces during debates. We need to know precisely the basis on which the Government negotiate.

The Scottish press has responded to Scottish National party press releases about the veto or, more accurately, the Luxembourg compromise. Again, there is some uncertainty about the status of that compromise. I paid close attention to what the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan said. To quote him as closely as possible, he said that the SNP would not subscribe to a policy that would lead to the destruction of the fishing industry. He went on to call for the veto. I do not wish to put the Minister on the spot. The Government need to go into the negotiations with the strongest possible hand, so I do not expect them to declare their hand publicly in the House. I should like the Minister to confirm that there is a veto. If the veto is implemented or invoked, there will be several consequences. Will there be a free-for-all in the North sea?

An essential part of the negotiations will be an agreement with Norway. If the Council of Ministers cannot reach an agreement with Norway, will our fishermen be denied access to the Norwegian sector? Will they be allowed to catch as much as they like in our own sector, to which they have access? Will there be a complete freeze on catching in our sector? That seems a logical outcome. If the entire common fisheries policy operates on the basis of agreed annual quotas and an agreement is not reached, no catching will be allowed. From 1 January, will fishing vessels from my constituency and those of other hon. Members be prevented from operating? If the Luxembourg compromise is invoked, will the Commission be entitled to impose quotas that are far worse than the present ones? We need an interim settlement until agreement is reached. Perhaps the Minister could answer that point.

If any of the options mentioned were realised, the point made by the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan would be simply laughable. The SNP's call for a veto would cause serious harm to our fishermen.

Mr. Salmond: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Doran: No. The hon. Gentleman took far more time than any other hon. Member who has spoken.

An imposed quota would cause more harm to the Scottish fishing industry and could lead to its destruction, which the hon. Gentleman said the SNP would not be part of. That is an important point.

It is important to recognise a further political point, and I make no apology for making it. Earlier this week, Scottish Members and other hon. Members interested in the steel industry tried to put together an all-party approach to persuade British Steel to take steps to help the Scottish steel industry, particularly in view of the problems at Ravenscraig and Clydesdale. The SNP decided to boycott that meeting. It decided that it wanted to go it alone. As always, it was looking for an easy headline, just as it did by calling for a veto.

Last night, I attended a meeting called by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food presided over by him and attended by all Conservative Members with a constituency interest in fishing. The SNP, one of whose members has a vital constituency interest in fishing—a boat-building industry—attended that meeting. Its representatives did not walk out because Tory Members were involved. Their attitude is hypocritical and their approach is that of easy headlines. The SNP's remedy for the fishing industry would cause great damage to fishing and the House should reject it.

8.7 pm

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): I am grateful to have the chance to make a few remarks towards the end of this short debate. My right hon. Friend the Minister has dealt effectively with some of the comments made by the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond). I find it difficult to understand how the hon. Gentleman can say that he wishes to increase quotas above the scientifically acceptable limits already laid down while at the same time calling for conservation. We have to stay within the scientific limits for at least the next year. Alongside quotas I sincerely hope that we can carry out at least some of the conservation measures suggested by various hon. Members today.

I represent the port of Fleetwood on the west coast of England, which has suffered greatly for many years as a result of the reduction in the British fishing industry. It has not enjoyed the recent prosperity north of the border. Nevertheless, the fishermen in my port recognise the need to rely on scientific evidence to decide the levels of fish catches. If a port which has suffered as much as mine has in the past can see that need, I hope that others, particularly those in the constituency of the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan, can also recognise it.

I fully support the remarks made by the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) about the knock-on effect. It would be unfortunate if, as a result of what went on in the past, we saw the fish stocks off the west coast of Scotland and England being fished by people coming from the North sea.

It is important to look closely at how we shall achieve stability in our fishing industry. If possible, we must ensure that year on year we do not have continual reductions or increases in the amount of fish that our fishermen are allowed to catch. The long-term viability of our industry depends on stability. We need to do all that we can to refine and increase the accuracy of the scientific evidence on which our fish quotas are based. That is the main way forward.

In addition, we need conservation measures. In particular, will my right hon. Friend the Minister emphasise that we on the western side of England at least believe that industrial fishing should not have the priority that some member states want to give it? As the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) said, it cuts across the right policy, which is to increase the amount of fish caught for human consumption.

I wish my right hon. Friend the Minister well when he goes to Brussels. I am certain that he will fight our case as strongly as possible, and I sincerely hope that he will return with a reasonable deal for all our fishermen throughout the British Isles.

8.11 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): We have had several knowledgeable speeches, and there can be no doubt about the anxiety expressed from all sides and every sector of the industry. It is common ground between us that the industry is not all of a piece and that many interests are involved.

My hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran) was right to mention the processing side. Inevitably, this evening the spotlight has been on the catching side of the industry. My hon. Friend the Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) made an important point about the pressure on the prawn fisheries in the Minch and the dangers of a knock-on effect. I have sympathy with the feeling that those particular grounds should be seen as a precious stock area and that consideration should be given to limiting the size and capacity of the fleet operating there.

We have concentrated, understandably, on the North sea. That is justified by the figures, the announcements from Brussels and the evidence of a cruel pressure which will inevitably grow within the industry over the next year or two. I share the doubts about the present operation of TACs. I accept entirely that there is justified criticism of the deal done with the Norwegians. I take the Minister's point that there is room to get something better, even within the present limits of scientific advice. Figures abound. It seems that scientific advice puts the figure for haddock at about 50,000 tonnes and the present TAC at about 43,000 tonnes. The gap for cod is between 113,000 tonnes and 97,000 tonnes for the EEC as a whole.

I am running rather quickly through the matters on which I can agree with the Government. I was pleased to hear the assurance on article 10, which is that, once quotas are exhausted, automatically other species cannot be fished. I was also pleased with footnote 51, which will enforce tie-up provisions of so many days a month on the fleet. I know that the Secretary of State for Scotland is not noted for robust language, but his remark that this was not an area in which he could follow the Commission was a little perjinct. I should have liked something a little more encouraging from him in terms of going into battle.

I shall read carefully what the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) said. We cannot have a debate on it now, but I am not clear about the SNP position. I am not clear whether he is prepared to live with the logic of what he said—perhaps that is a fairer way of putting it. He seemed to advocate going well beyond what the scientific evidence suggests would be safe.

Mr. Salmond: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dewar: No, I am sorry. We can conduct this in another way. I shall just make my point.

The hon. Gentleman seemed to say that TACs had not been as effective as he would have liked. He drew from that the message that TACs could safely be ignored, as could scientific evidence. A rather more prudent man would have said that there were great difficulties with the TACs, that we must see how we can make them effective and ensure that they have the desired effect, and then gone on legitimately to talk about restructuring the fleet.

Mr. Salmond: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dewar: No. The hon. Gentleman has been up and down like the proverbial yo-yo and he spoke for almost 20

[Mr. Dewar]

minutes, so he has had his quota. His TAC has been well and truly exceeded. *[Interruption.]* I can think of several scientific suggestions for the hon. Gentleman, but I shall not go into that. This is a serious debate and I take the hon. Gentleman's view seriously.

I do not intend in a speech that has only five minutes more to run to get into an academic and constitutional argument on the Luxembourg compromise. The hon. Gentleman is in the land of make-believe if he believes that the Luxembourg compromise could be effectively played on this occasion. He may have noted that there has been a slight local difficulty in European politics about monetary union, for example. Clearly, the Luxembourg compromise was not available. I accept that Ministers can be tough in the negotiations. Indeed, all Opposition Members expect that.

I have some sympathy with many of the other points made by the Minister and the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan. The Minister told us in trenchant terms that TACs and quotas were not enough. That is right. There is the problem of the discards, the whiting by-catch, industrial fishing and the increase in the tonnages there, to which several hon. Members referred. The Minister, having declared his own discontent with TACs and quotas as a solution in themselves, said that conservation was essential. He referred to the Scottish Fishermen's Federation's views, which I endorse, and to the suggestion that there might be a one-net size on a boat. He suggested that possession of gear rather than proof of use might be an offence in itself and that enforcement rules should be changed. I hope that all that will be looked at sympathetically, as well as some of the other suggestions.

The trouble is that even that, together with TACs and quotas, is not enough. The Minister's speech was strangely incomplete. He tiptoed away from the whole question of a decommissioning policy. Attempts have been made to do something about capacity. In November, the Scottish Office produced a scheme for the consolidation of licences. If boats were to be replaced by new tonnage, the licence would be for only 90 per cent. of the total of the older boats going out of commission. That is a small step towards alleviating the problem.

The multi-annual guidance programme presents substantial reductions by 1992. We know that the market has not been working in that area. Despite all the industry's worries, capacity has been increasing while all these storm clouds have been gathering.

We must consider the decommissioning scheme seriously. I understand that there is already one in operation in Brussels. I do not know to what extent other nations use it. I think that the Danes and the Dutch have used it to some extent. As one person said to me today on the phone from Brussels, we are not "plugged in". I do not care whether we are plugged in. I am not even prepared to judge whether it is the right scheme.

Some scheme seems to be essential. If we do not have one, we shall have an illogical and painful process of change, as distinct from the planned, sensible and to some extent cushioned one which the industry deserves and which would come if we were to combine the attack, including the decommissioning scheme, on a wider scale than the Minister apparently envisages.

This is important. I do not make accusations of disunity in the Government, because I am not in a position to do so. However, I hope that there is at least a genuine debate taking place and I hope that the Secretary of State can say that the Government have not closed their mind to this possibility.

Debates in this Chamber are often heated. I accept that there are important interests—not merely constituency interests but much wider ones—at risk when we consider the future of the fishing industry. That is certainly true for Scotland. I do not want dramatics or bombast during this debate, but we are entitled to ask for determination when our negotitators go to Brussels on Monday. They should be determined to try to get the best possible deal to close the gap which certainly exists between the present TACs and the scientifically allowable levels. We also want a seriousness of intent and a willingness to move on conservation, and we want the Government to look actively and encouragingly at an adequate and flexible decommissioning scheme.

I entirely accept what was said at the start of the debate. The present crisis will generate pain for the industry, but it can be handled more sensibly than it has been in the past. The Government have a heavy responsibility to ensure that we make a much better fist of it over the next year or two.

8.22 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): I am happy to reply to this debate. In view of the remarks of the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) I should point out that I reply on behalf of Her Majesty's Government, not for the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland or the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. I should emphasise that over the years both Departments have done extremely well in the interests of British fishermen and no doubt they will continue to do so.

A great number of hon. Members on both sides of the House have spoken in the debate. That illustrates the fact that so many parts of the country have an interest in fishing policy. However, even in the debate, the views of those from important parts of the United Kingdom such as East Anglia, about which my hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) was hoping to speak, have not been heard. It also illustrates, as the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) emphasised, the diversity of the fishing industry in Scotland, England and throughout the United Kingdom. It also emphasises that, at present, there is remarkable unanimity on the unacceptable nature of the European Commission's current proposals which have arisen particularly over the past week or so.

We thank the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) who has helped us in the tasks that we face in Brussels by emphasising that Her Majesty's Opposition share many of the beliefs of Her Majesty's Government. He has shown that we believe the proposals to be, in certain vital respects, unattractive and indefensible.

It was extraordinary that, without giving any good reason, the Commission has departed from the scientific advice that it received and put forward proposals—particularly relating to haddock and cod quotas in which there will inevitably be major reductions—which were substantially less than the scientific evidence would have permitted.

As my right hon. Friend the Minister emphasised, it is difficult to see the justification in such difficult and unfortunate circumstances for the Commission putting forward proposals to Norway that would enhance its quota while the rest of the Community, for which the Commission is responsible, was expected to accept a severe reduction.

Quota management has also been mentioned. It is crucial to ensure that the Commission realises that its competence does not extend to the way in which national quotas are administered. That is, and must continue to be, a matter for national Governments.

In the short time available, I shall respond to some specific points made during the debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks) asked for an assurance that the Government will always press for scientifically based total allowable catches, even when these are higher than those proposed by the Commission. I am happy to give such an assurance. My hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw) said that the Commission must produce convincing reasons for not accepting scientific advice. As yet, no such reasons have been forthcoming and we are entitled to expect them at the earliest opportunity.

My hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) referred to the European Court's judgment and asked about its implications with regard to quota hopping. We have not yet had an opportunity to examine the text of the judgment, which was made only this morning. It appears that the court has found in favour of our basic proposition that there must be a substantial connection with the United Kingdom before vessels are entitled to benefit from our quota arrangements.

I share the astonishment of many hon. Members at the attitude of the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond). If I understood him correctly, he proposed that the United Kingdom's quota for haddock must be not less than 60,000 tonnes. The TAC for the Community must be substantially in excess of that, perhaps more than 70,000 tonnes, on the basis of the formula which he appears to identify. When we know that the scientists—not merely the Commission's scientists but our own scientists in the DAFS and the MAFF and elsewhere—agree that 50,000 is the largest safe figure consistent with the maintenance of stocks for the industry's future in Scotland and elsewhere in the Community, it becomes clear that the hon. Gentleman is behaving in a grossly irresponsible fashion.

Mr. Salmond: Does not the Secretary of State understand that if a new conservation policy is introduced, it should put a bottom line on the total allowable catch and the quota to avoid the perverse effects of low quotas, with fishermen flinging dead fish back into the North sea? Does he not appreciate that reasonably simple point?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman should appreciate that he is not speaking to a gullible audience in this House or when addressing the fishing industry. He knows perfectly well that conservation measures such as he suggests, even if they were desirable, could not be brought into effect in time to affect the quota for the next 12 months. I shall not waste the time of the House by pointing out what should be obvious to the hon. Gentleman and is certainly obvious to the fishing industry.

A number of hon. Members asked me for my views and the Government's views on the decommissioning scheme. I remind the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) that he asked me the same question on 15 November during Question Time. Then, I referred to the severe criticism of a decommissioning scheme that was in effect in this country some years ago and the report on that of the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee.

In paragraph 6 of its report the Public Accounts Committee concluded:

> "We consider that decommissioning grants, licences and construction grants represented a series of interventions that conflicted with and distracted from market forces with unintended and unfortunate consequences."

We also know that, due to the various Community financial arrangements on United Kingdom distributions, the costs of such a scheme when we had one meant that of the total cost of £17·5 million, the United Kingdom provided £15 million, despite the nominal 50 per cent. contribution by the Community. Those are serious and damaging criticisms which we must take into account.

We must also ask to what extent the decommissioning scheme would address the serious problems facing the fishing industry. It would channel money to some fishermen who wanted to get out of the industry and would be attractive to those individuals. However, would it reduce the amount of fishing effort? In its 1987 report, the National Audit Office questioned whether the removal of vessels under the earlier scheme did anything to relieve the difficulties of the fishing quotas that were most under pressure. It would be difficult to target a scheme properly, as it is difficult in such circumstances for the Government to intervene effectively and precisely in an industry with so many active participants.

Mr. Wallace *rose*——

Mr. Rifkind: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I continue because I have only a couple of minutes left.

There are strong arguments against a new decommissioning scheme.

Mr. Wallace *rose*——

Mr. Rifkind: I am sorry. I have only a couple of minutes.

I shall comment briefly on the conservation points that have been made. I am grateful to the hon. Gentlemen who spoke strongly in favour of more effective conservation measures. The House is aware that the industry has moved in a constructive way towards recognising the need for conservation measures and, earlier this year, the Scottish Fishermen's Federation put forward important proposals designed to improve the conservation of stocks. They have three ingredients—the prohibition of attachments to fishing gear which have the effect of constricting meshes and thus retaining juvenile fish in the net, the banning of the carriage of nets of more than one mesh size on any one fishing trip and greater emphasis on enforcement, and the prohibition of the carriage of potentially illegal gear.

I was asked about a likely time scale for the implementation of new conservation measures. The consultation period in our proposals ends very soon and

[Mr. Rifkind]

we will be able to put the proposals to the Commission early in the new year. The pace of progress will then be in the hands of the Commission. We shall press the Commission hard for quick action. It is crucial that in putting forward these proposals we can point to the support that the industry has given to the need for enhanced conservation measures, and that enhances the prospect for early progress in that direction.

I endorse the comment by the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) that we must take into account the interests of the industry in all parts of the country, including Scotland. That is crucial.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said that he was looking for determination by the Government at the negotiations in Brussels. I assure him that such determination will be forthcoming. In putting forward our case not only to the Commission but to other Community countries, we will be strengthened by the strong support given by all hon. Members who pointed to the inadequacies in the current proposals and who emphasised the serious consequences for the British fishing industry if major improvements are not made. The House and the fishing industry can assume that we stand four square behind the need to give a fair deal to our industry. We intend to do that.

It being three hours after commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to Order [8 December], to put the Questions necessary to dispose of them.*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: *Ayes 39, Noes 119.*

Division No. 20] **[8.30 pm**

AYES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Beith, A. J.
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Haynes, Frank
Henderson, Doug
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Johnston, Sir Russell
Kennedy, Charles
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Maclennan, Robert
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morley, Elliot
Quin, Ms Joyce
Robertson, George
Rooker, Jeff
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wilson, Brian

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. James Wallace and
Mr. Malcolm Bruce.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bowis, John
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forth, Eric
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jessel, Toby
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Mans, Keith
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Neale, Gerrard
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Walden, George
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 111, Noes 2.

Division No. 21] **[8.45 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boswell, Tim
Bowis, John
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chapman, Sydney
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William

Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Harris, David
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jessel, Toby
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Mans, Keith
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Neale, Gerrard
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Walden, George
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John M. Taylor and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

NOES

Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Andrew Welsh and
Mrs. Margaret Ewing.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of the proposals described in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food's un-numbered Explanatory Memorandum of 12th December 1989 and Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum of 13th December 1989 on Total Allowable Catches and Quotas for 1990, its un-numbered Explanatory Memorandum of 13th December 1989 on the Reciprocal Fisheries Agreement between the Community and Norway for 1990, European Community Document No. 9888/89 on fishery guide prices, and of the Government's intention to negotiate the best possible fishing opportunities for the United Kingdom fishing industry for 1990 consistent with the requirement for conservation of the fishing stock.

Orders of the Day

Landlord and Tenant (Licensed Premises) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Roger Moate (Faversham): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I apologise for raising a point of order now, but I wonder whether it would be helpful to the House to have your guidance on how this and succeeding debates, which are on a related matter, are to be conducted. I think that it would be in the interests of the House to hear hon. Members speak as infrequently as possible on the subject, but some might be tempted to speak on Second Reading and on the motions that are to follow it. I wonder whether it might be possible to learn whether you would be tolerant of hon. Members restricting themselves to just one speech in this debate, thereby saving the time and patience of the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I appreciate what the hon. Gentleman is saying. While the subsequent motions are separate, they could be construed as being related. It might be sensible to see how we get on and for me to take account of the advice offered by the hon. Gentleman.

8.54 pm

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

This Bill is part of a package of measures to promote greater competition and consumer choice in the supply of beer. It will give tenants of pubs the same protection as it gives to other business tenants under part II of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954.

The Bill arises from a report by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on the supply of beer, which was published on 21 March of this year. It found that a complex monopoly existed in favour of the brewers with tied estates. This complex monopoly restricts competition at all levels by protecting brewers from competition in supplying their managed and tenanted estates because other brewers do not have access to them.

On 10 July, the Government announced a series of measures to remedy the public interest detriments identified by the MMC. The Bill forms part of the Government's response to the MMC report. Other measures are being implemented through orders under the Fair Trading Act, 1973, which hon. Members will have an opportunity to debate later this evening.

The starting point for considering this Bill is the MMC report and its recommendations. In its report, the MMC said:

> "tenants of on-licensed premises are not, under the present arrangements, able fully to act as independent businessmen. We therefore consider that it is essential that a tenant's interest in on-licensed premises should be legally protected."

It recommended in consequence that the interests of all tenants of on-licensed premises should be brought within the provisions of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954, whether the premises were subject to a tie or not. The Bill is addressed to this recommendation.

[Mr. Nicholas Ridley]

The MMC also outlined a number of further measures to increase tenants' security. They included, in respect of tenants of licensed premises, disapplying the provision in the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 that allows parties to an agreement to agree to apply to the court to contract out of the Act, and a recommendation that the Director General of Fair Trading renegotiate the current Brewers Society's code of practice with all interested parties. The code would then be given some mandatory status.

Following publication of the MMC's report, the Government recognised that, like any radical proposals, the MMC's recommendations could have consequences that could not be anticipated, and that they were best explored in public debate. The Government therefore listened to representations from all shades of opinion, including the Brewers Society, individual brewers, representative organisations of licensed trade tenants and managers, individual tenants, consumer associations, members of the public, and, of course, hon. Members.

It became clear as a result of that process of hearing representations that the issue with tenants' security was how to increase protection without making the tenancy system so unattractive commercially that it would be killed off. The Government concluded that it would not be right to set up a special class of tenancy under the Act just for licensed premises. It is therefore intended that licensed tenants should simply be placed on all fours with other business tenants, and that it should remain for the parties concerned to decide whether it is in their commercial interests to forgo their statutory rights.

Similarly, the Government concluded that a mandatory code of practice was inappropriate. The brewers have said that they are prepared to accept the present proposals on tenants' security. The National Licensed Victuallers Association too, while continuing to press for more extensive security for tenants, has made it clear to us that the inclusion of licensed tenants within the Act is the key, and it is pressing for its earliest adoption.

Although I cannot agree to all that the tenants seek, I want to assure them and their representatives that we do understand and appreciate the difficulties that many of them face. Nobody likes paying higher rents or having their tenancies terminated against their will, but we cannot solve such problems by legislating. Pub tenancies, like rented property or any other form of asset, are part of a market, with terms governed by supply and demand. A pub tenancy agreement is the result of a commercial negotiation, and while we can set out what are fair procedures for reaching agreement we cannot force the agreement to be more or less favourable to one side than what the market dictates. Our proposals therefore represent a balance, as carefully struck as the balance in the Act itself. That has been shown over 35 years to be workable.

I should like to describe briefly how part II of the Landlord and Tenant Act works. Essentially, it sets out rules for both landlords and tenants of business premises with regard to the beginning and ending of tenancy agreements. Under these rules, if a tenant has paid the agreed rent on time and complied with the tenancy agreement, the landlord can bring the tenancy to an end at or after the end of the current tenancy only by serving the tenant with a notice of termination.

Upon receipt of the notice, the tenant has the right to apply to the court for a new tenancy, which it is bound to grant unless the landlord can show grounds for being granted possession. Such grounds include failure by the tenant to comply with the conditions of the tenancy or the fact that the landlord wishes to occupy the premises himself for the purposes of running a business, a residence or to reconstruct the premises.

Currently, section 43(1)(d) of the Landlord and Tenant Act, part II, serves to exclude licensed tenants. We are proposing that section 43(1)(d) should be repealed. We are additionally proposing to repeal paragraph 5 of schedule 2 to the Finance Act 1959, which substituted a new paragraph for the original section 43(1)(d). As a matter of keeping the statute book tidy, it should also be repealed.

The transitional provisions are intended to ensure that tenancies agreed before 11 July 1989 are unaffected if they end before 11 July 1992. Most brewery tenancies are for terms of three years, and the Act will apply in those cases only when a new tenancy is agreed. The significance of the 1992 date is that it is exactly three years after the 10 July 1989 statement. Clause 1(3) provides that, where the Landlord and Tenant Act provides for statutory notices to be given by a landlord or a tenant, these notices can be validly served before July 1992, where appropriate.

As I have suggested, the Bill represents a carefully struck balance between the interests of tenants and those of their landlords, who are in most cases brewers. In this, the approach mirrors the one we have taken with all the measures to deal with the MMC's findings. Some hon. Members will feel that we should have gone further. Others, I know, will argue later this evening that we have gone too far, and that the measures are an unnecessary intervention in the market.

I would urge hon. Members in both these camps to recognise that, while the package of measures will not satisfy everyone, it achieves a balance between the conflicting interests involved. Tenants will have greater freedom to buy products that meet their customers' preferences, and they will be able to do so at competitive prices. They will also have the protection of the Landlord and Tenant Act. Consumers will benefit from this greater freedom on the part of tenants. They will be beneficiaries of the more open and competitive market that we shall see in beer and other drinks.

Brewers and pub owners will also benefit. The long-term success of their industry depends on creating an environment in which a wide range of products that people want to buy can be offered at prices people believe are competitive.

9.4 pm

Mr. Doug Henderson (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): The Opposition support the principle behind the Bill but we believe that the Bill has major flaws and we shall seek to amend and modify it as it passes through its various stages of consideration. We want to give the Bill a backbone so that it can make a real contribution to improving competition in the industry and protecting the 33,000 tenant landlords of Britain's pubs. Our support follows the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on the supply of beer, which we welcomed some months ago as a useful and long overdue report on monopoly practices in the supply of beer.

Tenant landlords know that there is a monopoly every time they are threatened with increased rents or a loss of tenancy, or are forced to accept the brewer's tied products. The consumers—regulars and even weekend punters—know that there is a monopoly every time that they pay over the top for lager, every time they cannot get a cask beer and every time they are forced to buy a brewer's soft drinks. The Consumers Association estimates that the average price of a pint of orange juice in an English pub is £2. The Secretary of State knows that people in Northumberland shudder—perhaps it is the same in the west country—when it is their round and their friends want a soft drink. Workers know that there is a monopoly every time the brewery is threatened with rationalisation and every time the company is threatened with a takeover.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): I know that the price of soft drinks is of great concern and causes dismay among those who use public houses, but the overheads that accrue in serving a whisky and those that accrue in serving a soft drink are precisely the same for the person serving them.

Mr. Henderson: That may well be so, and I am glad that the hon. Gentleman mentioned it, but I do not think that it is central to the point about competition in the industry.

The Opposition, like the tenant landlords, the consumers and the work people, agree with the Monopolies and Mergers Commission that a complex monopoly exists in the supply of beer. We shall discuss that in greater detail in our next debate. I hope that at that stage I can show that the orders fail to tackle the real measures required to bring competition to the industry. It is in that context that the Bill should be debated.

I wholeheartedly agree that the Bill is necessary, not only to protect tenants but to protect the industry from monopoly pressures, and thereby to protect consumers. We have all had our arguments with pub governors in our time, and no doubt won very few of them. Perhaps that is why the public ask, "What has protecting pub governors to do with guaranteeing competition in the industry? Are they not the same people who overcharge us and often restrict our choice of beer?" They are the same people, but they are not ultimately responsible because they are not the ultimate governors. Hon. Members know, and I hope that the Government recognise, that one of the principal ways that breweries control the industry and reinforce the monopoly is by tying tenant landlords to taking their beer. If the tenant has no security and if he is forced into the pocket of the brewery, ultimately the consumer will suffer.

The Opposition firmly believe in a competitive environment in the brewing industry and the supply of beer. We back the consumer and we welcome the opportunity to debate the Bill. In the past, Governments have rejected legislative controls and there has always been a powerful lobby against them. Now, the brewers' arguments against legislation have been shown to be spurious. Indeed, in their evidence to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission the brewers argued that the relationship between a landlord and a tenant was special and that the rental terms were at a discount as a condition of the tie. If the tenant lost his licence, perhaps for some criminal offence, how could the brewery get that person to leave his premises? That sort of argument might be defensible if there was an agreement that the monopoly should continue, but if we are to go down the road of encouraging competition—I hope that that is the Government's intention—and if we are to break, or at least to loosen, the tie, the brewers' arguments have no basis. Without a tie, the first thing that the brewers will do is to put rents up. In any case, their ability to protect their interests in relation to someone who may be justifiably dismissed for some felony could still be protected through a code of practice.

The National Licensed Victuallers Association has a major interest in the Bill. On numerous past occasions, including when giving evidence to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, it has insisted that it needs a legislative shield to protect its members against excessive rent increases. In its evidence to the commission it cites a number of cases. A tenant in Kent complained that after agreement had been reached for alterations at a cost of £35,000, the brewer wanted to increase the landlord's rent by 200 per cent. to £11,000 per year. On top of that, the tenant would also have to fund the cost of furnishings, recarpeting and new fittings. He said that the new rent level represented the equivalent of 13·75 per cent. of his turnover. The association also cited the case of a tenant in Berkshire who complained about high rent increases. In particular, he complained about an increase of 208 per cent. after the public house had been refurbished and about the practice of increasing rent in line with barrelage. He said that the brewer's representative had told him that his rent might be further increased if he did not purchase soft drinks from the brewer. He also complained about the wine and spirits tie which made retail prices higher than they need be. Those are but two of hundreds of examples which occur throughout Britain because of the weak bargaining position of tenant landlords in relation to rent increases.

The association argues that the voluntary code of practice is completely ineffective and that if a tenant wishes to challenge the decision of a brewery, the costs of doing so, even within the code of practice, are prohibitive. The association has also shown that tenants who have built up a business can end up with little or no compensation if a brewery disposes of a public house. It cites the example of a tenant in central London who had been given notice to quit the house which he had run successfully for 12 years. The tenant told the association that no suitable alternative premises were offered. In fact, his request for a suitable alternative was met with a refusal. The brewer offered the minimum compensation payable under the code, which would largely be used for redundancy payments to his long-serving staff. The tenant suggested that the motive for the brewer's action was based solely on the value of the site for redevelopment.

The case for legislative protection is overwhelming, but there are major weaknesses in the Bill. The Secretary of State alluded to some of them. Under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954, as amended by the Law of Property Act 1969, landlords and tenants can mutually exclude themselves from the terms of the Act by making an application to the court. The evidence submitted by the tenants' association is that in the overwhelming number of cases the court accepts the joint application. The National Licensed Victuallers Association has argued that that is completely inappropriate for governing the relationship between brewers and landlords. If there is an exclusion clause, the brewer will say to the tenant, "If you don't

[Mr. Henderson]

accept such a clause your future might not be so bright as you imagine when you next seek to review your tenancy." That is the evidence from the people involved.

Does the Secretary of State accept that that could be the case? Does he accept that poor Bet and Alec Gilroy could be in trouble in the Rovers Return or that Pat and Frank could be saying goodbye to the Queen Vic if they do not agree to an exclusion clause? All of us know that they have enough troubles without having the Secretary of State adding to them with this legislation which is supposed to help them. Does the Secretary of State accept that, in a world of ever-tightening margins and international competition, pressure will be put on landlords to opt out? If he accepts that that will be the case, does he also acknowledge that it will undermine the whole purpose of the Bill? Will the Government make proposals to meet that major problem?

Why have the Government not recognised that the timing of the Bill is too slow? If it lets off the hook most tenancies expiring before 1992, brewers will simply terminate tenancies so as to avoid the Bill's effects. Will the Secretary of State not recognise that a code of practice is necessary as an adjunct to the Bill? Is he aware that most tenants believe that the existing voluntary code is unworkable and that the brewers are unchallengeable? Will the right hon. Gentleman accept the introduction of a code of practice during the progress of the Bill?

The Government claim to believe in private ownership. If that is so—I do not suggest for one moment that it is not —why have they failed to introduce the right to buy for pub tenants? Partly because of the current market situation, partly in an attempt to avoid the legislation, and partly in anticipation of some of the matters that we shall be debating later today, brewers will try to dispose of some of their tenanted houses. In fact, in my own area in the north-east Scottish and Newcastle Breweries announced only last week the sale of 250 of its premises.

If council tenants have the right to buy council assets, why should not brewers' tenants, who have shown a deep commitment to their businesses and who have built up much goodwill in their houses, have the right to buy brewers' assets? Surely Scottish and Newcastle Breweries public house tenants should have the first right to purchase their tenanted houses and to protect their livelihoods. Or does the principle of a property-owning democracy not apply when those who should comply are contributors to Conservative party funds?

Another worrying aspect of the Bill is the exclusion of Scotland from its provisions. The level of brewery-owned tenancies in Scotland is lower than in England and Wales, but about 750 tenanted houses will still be at risk. Will the Secretary of State consider inserting into the Bill protection for Scottish tenant landlords? Those matters are all of concern to tenant publicans, and if they believe that those shortcomings weaken the Bill and their protection, the public at large should also be worried. If the tenants' position is undermined, competition will also be undermined. If competition is undermined, public and consumer interest will also be undermined.

I described five main objections to the terms of the Bill, but it has merit of purpose, and on that basis the Opposition will not seek to block its Second Reading. I have no doubt, however, that the Bill in its current form would fail to achieve its purpose—to offer landlords the necessary protection—or to make a lasting contribution to improving competition in the industry. I hope that the Secretary of State will examine all the issues and seek to strengthen the Bill before it returns to this Chamber. If the Secretary of State is receptive in Committee, he may continue to receive the wider support of the whole House when the Bill returns here.

9.18 pm

Mr. Roger Moate (Faversham): The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) gave a grudging welcome to a Bill that I thought had received almost universal acceptance throughout the industry. I welcome the Bill largely because it is a generally agreed measure.

It is something of a disappointment to me that my righ hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs felt unable to translate the recommendations of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission into a series o voluntary agreements, which I believe were on offer and would have been immensely beneficial to all concerned in a great industry. None the less, the Bill that we are debating this evening has been welcomed by all concerned —with the exception of the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North. Certainly most of us accept the argument for greater security for tenants, and we welcome the fact that that has been agreed with the brewers.

Having said that, I must add that I think that the hon Gentleman is trying to have his cake and eat it. He said that the Opposition broadly welcomed the MMC report if that is the case, the Opposition would have done more damage to the tenants whom they now claim to defend than any of the minor factors cited by the hon. Gentleman

I regret the introduction of this package of proposals which I believe will do serious harm to every aspect of the industry. They may provide protection for tenants, bu there will be fewer and fewer tenants, and that will mean a major loss not only for the tenants themselves but for the whole cause of small business. This package of restriction will cause a gradual decline in a tenancy system which i the past has proved a splendid way for small business me to build their own businesses, often with limited resource

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): My hon Friend is absolutely right: the lessons are never learned Let us go back to the simplest relationship betwee landlord and tenant—that covered by the Rent Acts. W know that there are no properties to rent; similarly, th more the agricultural tenant is protected, the fewer farm there are to rent. It is utter hypocrisy for the hon. Membe for Newcastle upon Tyne, North to suggest that th proposals will improve the position of tenants: in fac fewer and fewer brewers will be prepared to offer th partnerships that are currently offered so widely.

Mr. Moate: Indeed, the sad logical consequence of th MMC report is that we shall end up with fewer pub owned by the brewers, and of those many will be manage rather than tenanted. Nevertheless, we welcome th increased security: there are many arguments for it.

In my constituency—and, I believe, in many others— the views expressed by the trade unions, which Labou sometimes claims to represent, have been totally a variance with the stance adopted by the hon. Gentlema and his colleagues. When the MMC report was published, I was concerned not for a specific sector—the large national brewers, the regional brewers, the smaller brewers or individual publicans—but for the industry collectively. I felt that the proposals would damage jobs in one of our greatest and most successful industries. The proposals that the Opposition Front Bench has supported were opposed by the Transport and General Workers Union, particularly in my area, and any loss of jobs will be in part due to the remarks of Opposition Members.

The hon. Gentleman is fundamentally wrong. The view that he propounded—that some tenants are unhappy with the terms imposed by their landlords, and that that implies a monopoly—is simply nonsense. Commercial partnerships often involve unequal relationships, but the fact that a tenant does not like the terms of a contract, or would rather buy elsewhere, while it may call that particular relationship into question, does not suggest the existence of a monopoly.

The hon. Gentleman—and, indeed, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State—mentioned the allegation that a complex monopoly was in operation. There has been considerable debate about whether that term has any meaning; indeed, it has been suggested that it is a technical concept that people latched on to with the purpose of bringing this subject within the competence of the MMC. Certainly it does not conform with the view of the man in the street about what constitutes a monopoly. I hope that my right hon. Friend will consider that point, because we do not want the MMC in future to dredge up a "complex monopoly" in the absence of other obvious public detriments so that it can make recommendations that the House, for one reason or another, feels obliged to follow through. I should like to see that concept eliminated: a monopoly either exists or does not exist.

In my view—and, I believe, in that of any fair-minded person—the brewing industry in this country is highly competitive. There is little evidence of consumer dissatisfaction with the brewing industry. Beer prices are generally low compared with those in almost every other country. The quality of pubs has improved dramatically in the past few years and they have made a major contribution to our leisure industry. More than 440,000 people are employed in one of our most successful industries.

Against that background, the MMC report made its wide-ranging attack on a supposed monopoly. Are we not foolish to be inflicting damage on one of our most successful industries, which is far more competitive than those in almost every country of Europe with which we are supposedly in competition? For that reason, we are being extraordinarily foolish in accepting this package of measures so blithely. That may sound ungrateful, but I do believe that the package, including the Bill and the other measures, is a dramatic improvement on the original recommendations. I realise that I have sounded churlish, so I want to pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs, because they have been receptive and flexible. I make those comments now, as I intend to vote against the draft Supply of Beer (Tied Estates) Order 1989 later tonight. However, although I think that the order is bad, I welcome the rest of the package and the tremendous improvements that have been introduced.

Some bad consequences will flow from the whole package which will become visible not in years, but in months. We shall see a concentration in brewing. Many of our brewers will amalgamate or be taken over, some into foreign ownership. We shall see a reduction in the number of pubs, the sale of pubs—ultimately, some may move out of serving the public—and fewer tenanted pubs. Those consequences will flow directly from the MMC report and partly from the recommendations tonight.

I want to put on record, as the House should, the fact that this package is a bad move for British industry, for British brewing and for the public. The other result of all the measures will be higher rather than lower prices for the consumer. The object of introducing anti-monopoly measures is to try to obtain a better deal for the consumer, but there is no evidence that consumers were paying too high a price for beer. One judgment of a monopoly is that the producers were making excessive profits, but that was not alleged in the MMC report. Is it not extraordinary that we are faced with these recommendations and that it has been decided to implement them? Higher prices will result.

If we force the brewers to change from tenancy to management in many cases, they will become, in effect, property owners and will no longer use pubs as retail outlets. The breweries will no longer be interested in beer production or beer retailing, but will move out or will be obliged to charge far higher rents to tenants and higher prices to the consumer. That will be the net result of the extraordinary intervention of the MMC.

Is it not extraordinary that the MMC—and I stress again that the Bill arises from the recommendations of the MMC investigation—made no reference to the experience abroad. The Australians went through this exercise and the result was a dramatic increase in beer prices. Beer production became concentrated to the extent that two brewers control 98 per cent. of production. That is what came of breaking the tie. How can that be defended? Yet that is the road that we are supposed to be taking. We have more competition than in almost any other country. As I have said, in Australia, two brewers control 98 per cent. of production. In Japan, four brewers control 99 per cent., in the Netherlands, four brewers control 95 per cent. and in France, four brewers control 93 per cent. Yet here we need to consider four brewers to arrive at a figure of 58 per cent. of the market.

We have a highly competitive industry. There is a large number of regional brewers and small brewers. There is a total of 66 sizeable brewing companies. There will be fewer and fewer brewing companies as a result of the proposals. I deeply regret that. I deeply regret also the fact that we were not able to reject the MMC report in its entirety, because it will be bad for business, the industry, jobs, and the consumer.

9.29 pm

Mr. Stan Crowther (Rotherham): I declare that I am the parliamentary adviser to the National Licensed Victuallers Association. I must disagree with almost everything that we have heard from the hon. Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate). He seems to think that brewery companies are charitable institutions which are only too anxious to provide their tenants with all the protection for which they could possibly ask on the basis on voluntary agreements. The lessons of history are against him. As for the latter part of his remarks, I cannot believe that a brewery

[Mr. Stan Crowther]

company cannot stay in business with fewer than 2,000 pubs. It is not logical to suggest that the proposal that will be debated tonight will put brewery companies out of business.

The Bill is warmly welcomed by the National Licensed Victuallers Association and its members. It is a long-overdue reform. As my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) said, it does not go as far as it should. The voluntary code of practice has been of some value, but it does not alter the fact that there have been far too many cases of tenants being treated disgracefully by pub owners—not always brewers by any means, but the people who own their public houses. The trend towards ownership by companies other than brewers will be accelerated as a result of the orders. Bearing in mind that, in any case, the code of practice is subscribed to only by the Brewers Society and the NLVA and that people outside the Brewers Society are not covered by it at all, the need for a Bill of this kind, which provides a measure of protection for all tenants, irrespective of who owns the pub in question, is particularly important.

I do not intend to regale the House with a long rigmarole of horror stories, but I will mention just one or two examples. One of the worst in recent times concerns a licensee in Lancashire who won some cans of lager in a raffle. They were presented to him by the area manager of his brewery company, who said that he could drink them or sell them as he wished. Being a decent man, the licensee decided to sell them at £1 a can in aid of an excellent charity, cancer research. It seemed a sensible and reasonable thing to do. When the head brewer found out about it, the licensee was called to the brewery office and handed his notice to quit because he had been selling lager that had not been supplied to him for that purpose by his landlord, the brewery company.

There was a long argument. The NLVA's legal advisers were brought in , but eventually the man who had been the licensee of the pub for 14 years finished up out on the street with a derisory amount of compensation. That is one particularly disgraceful example, but there are many other equally disgraceful stories.

Recently in the south of England, a licensee—a woman, as it happens—who has been paying rent of £13,000 a year for a pub which is in great need of repair and improvement has been offered a 20-yar lease by her brewery company landlord—one of the big six; not a small regional outfit —which is part of its policy. Many people will guess that I am referring to Grand Metropolitan. It is a full repairing lease, which provides for total responsibility for all the money that has to be spent on the pub at a rent of £40,000 a year, which is just over three times what she is paying now.

In my constituency, a licensee of a small Victorian pub —a nice little place where I have been known to have a pint or two myself—was told by his landlords, a company that is expanding fast in the leisure industry not in brewing, that it wished to sell the premises. He was invited—at least, he expressed his wish—to make an offer. He did so and was told by the owners' representatives that if he increased it a little, it would be enough to clinch the deal. In fact, he increased it substantially to well above the local valuation. It is alleged that the owners let his rival bidder know the amount of his bid. The rival bidder then put in a slightly higher offer and the first that the licensee heard of the result was when the other man walked into his premises and said, "I've bought your pub." That happened just a few weeks ago—not a very nice Christmas present for any licensee.

However, at least that man was invited or allowed to put in an offer for his own pub. Even that has not been permitted for the tenants of Scottish and Newcastle, to whom my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North referred. Scottish and Newcastle has decided to sell 250 pubs without allowing the tenants the chance to put in bids to buy them. Scottish and Newcastle is selling them to bring itself below the level that would render it liable to various responsibilities under the orders that we shall be debating later. Surely it would have been reasonable to allow the tenants to put in an offer for the premises in which they make their livings. Although I should have thought that reasonable, there is no obligation on the landlord companies to do so, and they have not done it.

While licensed tenants appreciate the protection that the Bill will afford them under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954, the provisions do not take account of the unique features of the licensed trade—features that do not apply to other kinds of business tenancies. The most important is the fact that for the vast majority of licensees their pub is not only their business, but their home. If, because of some capricious decision by the owners of the premises, they lose their business, they also become homeless. That in itself is sufficient reason for giving them special treatment, which would not necessarily apply to other business premises.

At the very minimum, it would be reasonable if the Bill provided for some of the MMC's recommendations, which the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, Lord Young, said that he was minded to implement. I refer especially to the MMC recommendation that there should be a provision in every tenancy agreement such that

> "the brewer/landlord shall not be permitted to take back the premises for the purposes of installing his own manager if the licensee/tenant wishes to continue in business at the premises on terms agreed (or in default of agreement as determined by the court)".

That proposal seems eminently reasonable. It would need only a small amendment to the Bill, possibly in the form of a schedule, to require those provisions to be written into tenancy agreements. I can see nothing wrong with that. At the moment there is nothing to protect a tenant from being put out of his pub by the owners so that they can install a manager. The compensation payable in such circumstances is derisory. As I understand it—I may be corrected on this by the Secretary of State—even with the protection of the Landlord and Tenant Act, the only compensation statutorily required would be six times the rateable value.

Although this has not yet been mentioned, we must bear in mind the fact that the goodwill in the business does not vest in the tenant; it is held by the brewery company. A tenant who has devoted a great deal of work to building up a successful business does not have equity in the sense of goodwill in the event of the business being transferred. That is a serious matter. It is nothing new. A former right hon. Member, one Mr. Gladstone, told the House about it a long time ago on 5 March 1880. He said:

"As to compensation, the licensed victualler ought to be dealt with on the same principle as every other class in regard to which a vested interest has been permitted to grow up."

That has not happened. Compensation for a licensed victualler who loses his business is not based on the same principle as the other classes referred to by Mr. Gladstone. A few months later he called for equitable compensation. Such a provison should be written into the Bill, which is intended to provide some form of protection for occupants of licensed premises.

We must bear it in mind that an owner is unlikely to take back most types of premises covered by the Landlord and Tenant Act to put in his own manager because of the nature of the business. For example, the owner of a grocery shop is unlikely to be in the grocery business himself. It is unlikely that he will put out the tenant in order to put in a manager. It takes only a moment's thought to appreciate that that applies to many other types of business premises. The owner of a public house is likely to be in that sort of business and, if the tenant has built up a flourishing business, may wish to get rid of the tenant to put in a manager. Tenants rightly feel that they should be provided with that sort of protection under the Bill.

It is unfortunate that the Government have not been persuaded that such protection is needed. When the Secretary of State says that the problems cannot be solved by legislating, I am bound to say that I disagree. The Opposition will seek provisions to solve the problems during the progress of the Bill.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North referred to another great weakness in the Bill. It is the proposal to allow contracting out, as provided for in relation to other premises covered by the Landlord and Tenant Act. The MMC was right to suggest that contracting out should not be allowed in this case because of the special circumstances of licensed premises. It said:

"We recommend there should be no right on the part of the parties to contract out of the provisions contained in Part 11 of that Act, except for a preliminary period not exceeding one year. This exception is solely to allow a probationary period for a new tenant to establish the satisfactory nature of his abilities."

Again, that is a reasonable suggestion.

It is unfortunate that that important recommendation has been rejected by the Government. I do not wish to repeat my hon. Friend's remarks, but contracting out could defeat the whole purpose of the Bill. When negotiating a tenancy, an owner of a public house, whether a brewery or other company, could say to a prospective tenant, "You will join me in going to court to apply for us to be contracted out of the provisions of the Landlord and Tenant Act". The prospective tenant will say, "No, I would like the provisions of the Act made by Parliament on my behalf to apply to me". The owner will then find someone else who is willing to contract out. As time goes by we may find that the new protection which the Bill is supposed to provide will be used less and less because the owners of the premises decide that they are not prepared to let their premises to someone who will not join them in applying to the court to contract out of the protection of the Act.

Tenant licensees are appreciative that the Government are introducing a Bill to bring them within the terms of the Landlord and Tenant Act. They are grateful to the Secretary of State for what he is doing. If he would go just that bit further and close those loopholes, he would earn their undying gratitude.

9.45 pm

Mr. Vivian Bendall (Ilford, North): I agree with much of what the hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther) said.

For more than 30 years, part II of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 has unquestionably served business premises and leasing well. The Act has stood the test of time and proved to be excellent. However, many people in licensed premises—I have known some personally—who have gone into a broken-down public house and built up the business find, perhaps at the second rent review after five or six years, that for improving the sales of the company's liquor and other products, they face a huge rent increase. That does not occur in any other business areas which come within the terms of the 1954 Act.

Under the terms of the Act, if agreement cannot be reached on the rental the matter goes to the courts. That is a perfectly right and fair way to proceed. Years ago there was no voluntary code of practice for licensed tenants of public houses. It has been formulated over recent years. For many years I have been in favour of this type of legislation because it is entirely wrong that licensees of public houses should be treated differently from anyone else in business. For that reason I am sure that the House welcomes the Bill.

Part II of the present Act lists exceptions in which a landlord can gain possession, and I see nothing wrong with them except in one case. It is right that a landlord should gain possession, for example, before a comprehensive redevelopment. But that can be covered by the licensee getting the right sort of compensation. The management area worries me. It is a technical area and we must understand it. As the hon. Member for Rotherham rightly said, when the lease of a business premises runs out, the landlord can step in and run it as his own business, thus gaining possession. If a brewery puts in a manager, is that the same as running one's own business? It is not strictly the same. The Committee must give careful consideration to that point. It must ask itself whether the management should lose that right, so that there is continuity for the lessee. In normal business, one can assign a lease on business premises. I wonder whether that should happen in this case.

If the management has to stay at the end of the lease, the only other alternative is to give substantial compensation which takes account of goodwill. There is no doubt that a couple can go to work in a pub and the wife can work extremely hard on the food side to build up a business which is going very well, and then the couple can find that they have nothing. They will have lost not only their home, but an immense amount of goodwill which they had built up over a great number of years. That is morally wrong and it happens nowhere else in business. I hope that the Committee will address itself to that problem, because it is a matter of grave concern. Although I welcome the Bill wholeheartedly, if we are to give the proper protection, we must deal properly with that area in Committee.

I know that many of my colleagues want to speak tonight, so I shall merely refer to one other matter: the code of practice. The right place to decide the rental is the court. That should not be done by any code of practice set up outside but, as part II of the 1954 Act states, when a rental cannot be properly agreed, the matter should go to the courts.

[Mr. Vivian Bendall]

If we can resolve the small issue relating to management when we discuss the Bill in Committee, I sincerely hope that we can start to create not more managements, but more tenancies. I have often seen a public house which is built up by a tenant but, when changed over to management, starts to deteriorate rapidly. If we want to encourage the small business man, as the Conservative party has said over and over again that it does, the right way to do so is to give him the right protection within a tenancy.

9.51 pm

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): I shall begin with a declaration of interest which came about in a curious way. About three years ago I first became involved with tenants in my constituency who had problems with breweries. I was then a consultant to a firm of London solicitors called Watts, Vallance and Vallance. Two months ago, in October this year, that firm amalgamated with another and by a complete coincidence that firm, now known as Vallance Lickfords, is the firm retained by the National Licensed Victuallers Association. Therefore, although I have never done any paid work for the NLVA, I have an indirect connection with it because I am a consultant to the firm of solicitors which acts for the National Licensed Victuallers Association. I felt it right to declare that interest right from the start.

I am drawn to speak in the debate because of my concern about relationships in the brewery industry. Like all hon. Members, I welcome the fact that the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 is to be extended to licensed premises. However, I share the concerns expressed by hon. Members on both sides of the House that the Bill may be seen as a halfway house because it does not go far enough to secure the better relationships in the industry which it is designed to bolster and support.

About three years ago, I first became aware of concern in tenancies in my constituency about the way in which breweries were behaving. Since then, my appreciation of what is happening in my constituency suggests that some breweries behave extremely well towards their tenants while others behave poorly. It was because of that mixture of relationships and behaviour that the Monopolies and Mergers Commission made its recommendations. If, as my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate) suggested, life could be sorted without legislation, it would be a lot sweeter and better than it is. Alas, however, we cannot in all circumstances rely on those with greater power than others to use that power fairly.

In my investigations of the relationships in the industry in my constituency I am most concerned about the inequality of bargaining power between brewers and tenants. I welcome the Bill because to some extent it redresses that inequality of bargaining power, but it does not go far enough.

I have been greatly helped in investigations in my constituency by Mr. Peter Roberts, chairman of the local branch of the National Licensed Victuallers Association and owner of the Grant's Arms in Ramsbottom. He and his colleagues were enormously helpful in taking me through the trade and in preparing some of the concerns which I shall express. Before I became so closely interested in the subject, I did not appreciate that relations between some tenants and brewers were so bad. Many people who go into pubs do not appreciate that behind the pumps all is not so cheerful as it appears. Some of that is caused by sharp practices on the part of the breweries. The hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther) and my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, North (Mr. Bendall) gave examples of tenants who had worked extremely hard in the pub in which they were living and then found that as a result of their hard work the rents were increased and, effectively, money was taken from them.

There are other sources of concern which are not immediately apparent on the face of the Bill. It is not widely known that the provision of machines such as juke boxes or one-armed bandits, which many people enjoy using when they go into a pub, do not necessarily provide profit for the tenant. The tenant may have taken the trouble to have such machines installed to increase the amount of enjoyment in his pub, but the brewer takes a considerable rake-off without having done anything at all. Such matters make tenants feel that they are not being fairly dealt with. Such worries were set out in the report by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, and that has led to legislation rather than to a voluntary code of conduct.

I quote briefly from the *Morning Advertiser* of 7 July to show why it was important to have certain provisions of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 incorporated in the Bill so as to protect tenants. It says:

> "If their landlord wants to take their pub into direct management because they have built it up so successfully, he can.
>
> If their landlord wants to take a bigger slice of their income as rent—again, because of their success—he can.
>
> If their landlord wants to introduce arbitrary and sweeping changes to the nature of the tenancy agreement, he can.
>
> Can this be justice? Of course it can't, and now at last you"

—that is, the Government—

> "are in a position to do something about it by altering the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 to protect pub tenants."

Such sentiments have led to the Bill. The Bill is needed and I welcome it.

I wish to direct the Minister's attention to one or two matters which should be examined in Committee. I share the concerns expressed by some hon. Members about contracting out. It is clear from what hon. Members have said that there is genuine inequality of bargaining power. Those who wish to become tenants of pubs may seek to sign an agreement. They may be told by the brewery that unless they agree to contracting out they will not be allowed to sign and that there is another person in the corridor who is even more anxious to become a tenant. The attitude is that if the prospective tenant does not wish to contract out, there are plenty more applicants waiting.

One of the great tragedies in the industry is that many people imagine that they should spend their life as pub tenants, and sometimes they want to do that so badly that they do not read between the lines and appreciate everything that they are signing. The trade must do something about that. There should be better training and instruction, and breweries could help a little by preparing tenants for what they will have to face. At the end of the day, inequality of bargaining power is not always dealt with in that way. If contracting out is not possible, the protection desired by the Bill and the Government may not come about. I should be grateful if the Minister would look at that again.

I share the concerns expressed about management and I echo what my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, North said about that. I also share the concern about the date on which the Bill will come into effect. It would be better to have it as early as possible; 1992 is too late and the brewers may take unfair advantage of that. Perhaps I could suggest a way forward. I should be grateful if my hon. Friend the Minister and his colleagues would look carefully in Committee at the defects of the Bill that have been mentioned. There is great good will for the measure and there is wide understanding of the great importance of the brewery industry in this country.

In many ways and in many places, the system works perfectly well. We are trying to make a good system work better, and to ensure that the poor relationships in the industry, which would ultimately destroy it from the inside, can be remedied with sensible legislation that is properly followed.

I would welcome a commitment from my hon. Friend the Minister that, even if he cannot make concessions during the passage of the Bill, he will agree to monitor the effects of the Bill carefully and listen to further representations from tenants, and if he finds that the spirit of previous voluntary agreements and of the Bill is not adhered to——

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Landlord and Tenant (Licensed Premises) Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

Question again proposed, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: Order. If it is any help to the House, the affirmative motion and prayer that will follow the debate will last for an hour and a half.

Mr. Burt: In conclusion, if my hon. Friend would make such a commitment to monitor the situation, some of our concerns will be covered. I recognise the balance that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State explained at the beginning of the debate, and it has been evident in some of the speeches that we have heard already. Sometimes the poor old Secretary of State is caught in a vice between the interests of the brewers and the industry and those of the tenants so that he cannot get it right. The Bill is a genuine effort to help, and I believe that it will help in a number of ways.

The Bill could be further improved, but if there is a commitment to monitor its effects the best things about the brewing industry in Britain—the quality of pubs, their management and tenants—can be further enhanced. The Bill will not have a detrimental effect—it will be beneficial for tenants, for my constituents, and for the people of Britain.

10.1 pm

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): I declare my interest in the licensed trade, as I have done on a number of occasions in the House. I am the chairman and majority shareholder of a small family company which runs six houses in London. They are held on a variety of tenures, but are all tenanted or leased. I am also a member of the National Licensed Victuallers Association. I was delighted at the robust and stout defence of interests in the House by the hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther).

I had some difficulty earlier in the year when the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report was published, because at the time I was, as I now am, Parliamentary Private Secretary to my right hon. Friend the Member for Braintree (Mr. Newton), who was then Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and at the Department of Trade and Industry. I was thus constrained to silence at a time when I might have been able to say something about the report, which I consider to have been a flawed piece of work by people who did not understand the industry and all its ramifications despite two and a half years' investigation.

I believe that too much notice was taken in that report of two interests in particular—Guinness and Bulmer's. Guinness has a unique position, as it supplies almost every public house with its products, but until recently it had not invested in any public houses. Bulmer's had a monopoly, and was pretty upset when it was destroyed by the creation of a second company.

The report offered a grotesque piece of retrospection, because the suggestion was that brewers who owned more than 2,000 public houses would need to sell off all the houses in excess of that number. The brewers had acquired those assets for the sale of their products entirely legitimately, either as individual purchases or through takeovers. The law which prevailed at that time allowed them to acquire the houses. Then, all of a sudden, six people came along, wrote a report and said, "You shouldn't be allowed to do that—you must flog them all off." To me, that was a piece of interference in the market which seemed utterly inappropriate, unfair and retrospective. I thought it particularly so because of the strange phrase that my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate) highlighted—the "complex monopoly". We have diffuse ownership in the brewing industry. Although it is far less concentrated than in the United States, Australia and several continental countries, it has been held to operate as a "complex monopoly". I found that concept difficult to grasp.

I also found that, after two and a half years of work, the MMC had come to some strange conclusions. I shall mention just one. It concluded that the brewers, who had assiduously built up their managed house operations over 20 years, had done so to make a loss. That seemed a peculiar and curious conclusion. It is, of course, untrue.

Above all, I was worried by the MMC's suggestions, as it seemed to demand a weakening of a substantial, successful and mature industry which has operated in a unique way when we should be strengthening our brewing companies in preparation for 1992 when they may be able more freely to take our unique beer to the continent and interest them in drinking our beer rather than the other way round.

I am worried that the consequences of the report, and what the Bill and the motions that we are to discuss later suggest, will be a weaker brewing industry. I am aware of at least one of the big six companies which is likely to sell its brewing interests. Another is likely to put them at arm's length as a separate plc. A third does not know quite where it is going, but would like to stay in its present vertically integrated form, although it would be caught by the steps that we are taking in these three pieces of legislation. A fourth company's brewing operation is already almost off-shore. A fifth appears to be trying to get itself below the

[Mr. James Couchman]

2,000 houses limit. The management of the sixth has yet to reveal its hand and where it may go. We know little about it.

I am worried that those six companies will, as a result of the MMC report, substantially damage the structure of an efficient industry. That structure has allowed investment by brewers in their public houses, knowing what the likely throughput for their brewing interests would be. That is the purpose of vertical integration. In such circumstances, brewers know with some certainty how much of their product they will sell and if they sell in the free market, that is a bonus.

I was worried that the MMC report came to some curious conclusions, but it was obvious that my noble Friend Lord Young, for whom I worked at the time, was minded to accept much of the report. It seemed, therefore, that there were bound to be changes in the industry. I set myself the task, in a fairly humble way, of acting as a kind of bridge between my friends and landlords in the brewing industry and the Department for which I was working.

I have spoken of my vested interest and experience. Perhaps I may be permitted to take the House back to the early 1970s when brewers decided to build up their chains of managed houses in a pretty rough way, dispossessing successful tenants of their houses and therefore of their homes. The brewers took the successful houses into management, but they did not try to exploit those which were badly run by tenants. They frequently did that without paying any compensation or without offering an alternative house. If an alternative house was offered, it was of a lower standard. Where compensation was paid, it was at a derisory level. As a result of the fight by the trade, a code of practice came into being, which was considered an improvement on the previous position although it had no force in law. The hon. Member for Rotherham referred to the code.

Recently, the major brewers have tended to set houses back from management to tenancy. That is because they made a mess of running the houses under management. This, to some extent, has opened up new opportunities. The kick is that downgraded houses in need of substantial repair are frequently being offered on a lease rather than being set back to tenancy. I speak with personal experience because I recently took a house in such circumstances on a 20-year agreement. It is a good trend as it may allow into the trade those who would not otherwise have been able to enter it, but they will do so on a basis entirely different from that which has prevailed traditionally in the trade. I speak with the experience of my company, which has seen people come into the trade at 18 years of age as barmen, work through management and eventually, in their early thirties, with modest capital, take a tenancy on their own account. That is a way into small business that we should continue to encourage. When premises are put to lease, the capital required is entirely different from a tenancy agreement. Again, I speak with some personal experience.

The worry about security stems, perhaps, from a spate of sales of blocks of houses—the freeholds of houses—over the heads of tenants without any offer being made to the tenants. The houses go to all sorts of companies and are then sold on again. The relationship between the tenant and the brewer landlord is broken entirely and instead there is a purely property relationship. When that happens a lease may be offered, but at a rack rent, by someone who is not interested in selling beer through the property. It may be that the rack rents will relate to property rather than the public house. The House may know that public house rents have traditionally been quite low compared with those for other retail outlets. When a person is faced with a rack rent on a lease and full repairing terms, however, there is a much greater commitment than that which many people would wish to face, especially if the offer comes late in a career. A man of 55 or 58 may not wish to take on a 20-year lease and may wish, for example, to continue a tenancy with three-year reviews.

I suppose that the Bill offers a degree of security that we have not had before, although I, too, am worried about the right to break out of the landlord and tenant relationship if that is mutually agreed. The mutual agreement is an uneven relationship and may be used either as a lever to ease the tenant out of his house or as part of the interviewing process for new tenants. I am concerned that the Bill may lead ultimately to an end of tenancy as we know it and that there will be a far greater prevalence of leases. That would be a shame. It would mean the end of a route into small business with modest capital, which has allowed many people to enter the industry.

I do not wish to speak at great length about the order, but I should be grateful for your indulgence, Mr. Deputy Speaker, while I ask my hon. Friend the Minister a few questions—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I realise that the procedure is a little difficult. We are dealing with the Bill and later we shall deal with the orders. It might be better if questions about the orders were left until we reach that debate.

Mr. Couchman: I am entirely in your hands, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I will postpone my questions on the orders, but I regret that that will mean asking for the indulgence of the House for a few minutes in the next debate.

I hope that this great and successful industry will not be irreparably damaged by the steps that we are taking today. Had the inclination to accept the original report unamended prevailed, it would have led to masses of changes in the industry and, ultimately, to far fewer pubs and a great deal of damage. I hope that the Bill will offer a sensible balance. I am timorous about asking for codes of practice to be added at later stages. The question of contracting out should be considered exhaustively in Committee. I am only sorry that I have to serve on the Committee on the NHS and Community Care Bill, and thus will not be able to take part in discussions in Committee on this Bill. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will take on board the concerns about contracting out that have been expressed by several hon. Members tonight.

10.17 pm

Mr. Iain Mills (Meriden): I shall not detain the House for long. I intend to make a short but important speech on behalf of the small independent brewers. I am disappointed that hon. Members have spoken only about the large brewers and have given no encouragement to the smaller businesses. Hon. Members have talked about the retailing, the distribution and the selling in public houses of the products of extremely large organisations. No one has said that new people wish to come into the business. How do they do that? How do they challenge the great brewing houses?

Some colleagues may say that there are complex problems, and I agree with some of their assessments. However, my few remarks tonight are really an appeal both to the Minister and to House for a little lateral thinking. We need to consider how this measure will encourage new starters in the business. No one has said how one actually starts a new business and how one challenges the big guys. The measure, through its protection of tenants, will encourage those who wish to try.

I have some sympathy with the original reaction to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission proposals, but I think that the Government have the balance about right. Many of the proposals that have been mooted and much of the to-ing and fro-ing during recent months have now been distilled into a practical, good working code. I should like it to go further and encourage small brewers.

If I catch your eye in the next debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will talk about guest beers. There are at least 200 members of the Small Independent Brewers Association who want the opportunity for small business men to begin to brew beer and to get into that big market. I do not formally represent them, but they are my friends and some of them are my constituents. One thing that we can do tonight is to recognise the importance of such people. It is the Government's policy to encourage small business men and entrepreneurs who, strangely, have so far been denied access to a market for their specialist beers. We cannot buy Old Tusker in our local public houses because they are tied and because of the monopoly. Change is needed.

Why was such a big industry, with all its strength, incapable of innovation, of encouraging such people? The CBI, most businesses and even the old steel industry encourage small entrants into their businesses. The breweries have failed to do that, and we need to encourage small new entrepreneurs to enter the business.

10.20 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I apologise for not being present at the beginning of the debate but I was attending a Standing Committee.

I support the Bill. In general it moves in the right direction. But I share many of the concerns that I have heard voiced in the Chamber in the past half hour or so. First, I share the concern that the inequality of power between the two contracting authorities might give the brewery a dominant position over the publican, allowing contracting-out to work to the advantage of the brewery in almost every case. I ask the Minister seriously to consider bringing forward the Bill's implementation date of July 1992. The hon. Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate) is nodding. I speak as someone who is the son and grandson of a brewer—a large brewery, too, for most of the time —and my earliest memory was going to a brewery. I do not come to this from a prejudiced position.

A third matter which I have not yet heard mentioned relates to a practice which can often mean that a publican can be put under considerable pressure by breweries. Publican constituents of mine have regularly come to me under such considerable pressure. Widows have had the traditional indulgence of the widow's year, which breweries are not necessarily keen to uphold. I hope that in Committee such a custom will be legalised so that a spouse of a deceased or otherwise incapacitated publican who wishes to continue will be allowed to do so for an additional year.

Let me say one final thing which is not necessarily in support of licensed victuallers or publicans. I share the concern of the hon. Member for Meriden (Mr. Mills). Many people make a substantial contribution to the pleasure and variety of brewing and to the interest of the public by setting up, running and developing small brewing companies. We do not want to prevent them from being able to develop and practise. There was an over-restrictive practice and it was right that that should be examined by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. I, too, am happy that in the event the original recommendations were not implemented. The Government are moving in the right direction.

The concerns of hon. Members on both sides of the House, not just those who represent members of licensed victuallers associations, appear to command widespread support, and I hope we can ensure that we protect against the danger of inequality. In seeking to provide better security of tenure, we must ensure that publicans are more secure in practice as well as in theory.

10.24 pm

Dr. Lewis Moonie (Kirkcaldy): I do not propose to dwell on my role as chairman of the all-party alcohol policy and services sub-committee and as a specialist in public health; that would be inappropriate, given the tenor of tonight's debate. I have preached to the House often enough about the difficulties that some people have with alcohol, and no doubt I shall have ample opportunity to do so again.

I wholeheartedly support the remarks of the hon. Member for Meriden (Mr. Mills). My own experience of pubs began about 25 years ago—I must be sure that that puts me over the age of 18 at the time—in the dark, dingy, smokey places that we had to frequent in Scotland in those days because they were all that was available. There has been a remarkable improvement in the standard of public houses since then. I wish that I could say the same for the beer. Like the hon. Member for Meriden, I should like to see a proliferation of small brewers being given the opportunity to sell their products on licensed premises.

Tonight's debate is part of a highly complex issue. The Bill itself is unexceptionable so far as it goes. As my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) said, we do not intend to oppose its Second Reading. One could say that the Bill is distinguished solely by the fact that it is the only one that we shall be considering this Session that is shorter than the legislation dealing with student loans.

The Bill gives on-licence tenants the same rights as other commercial tenants, thereby bringing them within the scope of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954, from which they were previously excluded. The Bill's provisions have generally been accepted by the brewers and have the support of the National Licensed Victuallers Association, on whose behalf my hon. Friend the Member for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther) spoke earlier. I am sure that right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House accept the conviction and knowledge with which he spoke

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in respect of the attitudes of an association that represents the wishes and aspirations of tenants. I sincerely hope that the Minister listened carefully to my hon. Friend's remarks and that his points will be taken on board.

Monopolies are complex entities, and the brewing industry is no exception. I suppose that one might more properly call it an oligopoly because there is more than one competing company in that industry. Just because that oligopoly takes a different form in this country from that in other countries—where there is vertical rather than horizontal integration, with the buying out of competitors that one sees in a country such as Holland—does not alter the fact that there are constraints on competition in Britain, which the report of the Monopoly and Mergers Commission properly saw fit to examine.

The Government recognise that there are problems with the present form of the industry. Attempts have been made to modify the Commission's recommendations and to specify which of them should be implemented and which should not. Fair enough. We may challenge the Minister on some of them, and may accept others. Tonight we are attempting to improve the Bill, and we shall do so again in Committee. My hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North mentioned giving the Bill backbone, and we shall certainly seek to do that in Committee.

Specific cases cited by hon. Members in all parts of the House are indicative of the many unfair pressures that are often placed on tenant landlords by their breweries. They make it essential that we try to give the Bill real powers. The Opposition do not accept that a voluntary code of practice is an adequate safeguard against abuse, certainly in the form that has been suggested; we recognise the need for tenants to receive adequate protection, however, and will therefore do our best to give the Bill the teeth that it needs.

Let me add my plea to that of my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North, and ask the Government to consider extending the provisions to Scotland. There can be no logic in retaining an anomaly of this kind.

10.30 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. John Redwood): I am grateful to all who have contributed to this workmanlike debate. Many good points have been made, some of which can be discussed more appropriately and at greater length in Committee.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) said that he welcomed measures that offered protection to the landlord, balanced by increased competition in the brewing industry. That is the Government's case tonight in comparing the Bill with the orders that we are shortly to consider. The hon. Gentleman feared that the prices of soft drinks were too high: he was worried about paying £2 for some orange juice. He will see that the orders contain proposals to break the ties concerning soft drinks, which may help competition—and competition is the friend of the customer.

I am glad that the Opposition agree that the Bill is necessary. It will be the Government's task in Committee to explain why this Bill, and this Bill alone, provides the required balance—for it is a case for balance, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made clear. Other hon. Members have pointed out that, if we go too far, not enough tenancies will be on offer, and the market will be considerably affected, whereas if we do not go far enough we shall not be offering a reasonable deal to tenants who have made representations to my Department, both directly and through other hon. Members.

The hon. Members for Newcastle upon Tyne, North and for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther) mentioned Scottish and Newcastle Breweries. As we have seen in the press, the brewery is selling some pubs, and I have heard about the nature of the sale from one of its advisers, who tells me that existing tenancies will be honoured as part of its terms. The sale will, of course, lead to more diversified ownership in the pub market, so in a way it satisfies the Opposition's demand that we further implement the MMC's recommendations.

Both the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North and the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) mentioned the Scottish legislation. There are two important differences. First, there is more free trade in Scotland anyway, so the market starts from a different point; secondly, there is no Landlord and Tenant Act in Scotland, so the legislation would not be appropriate there. We chose this route because we felt that, in England, there should be a symmetry between the treatment of pubs and the treatment of other types of business tenancy.

My hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate) made a good point about the need to balance protection with the danger of fewer tenancies resulting. He was worried about the possibility of higher prices. The purpose of the orders is to introduce more competition, which should—in one combination or another—improve service, or prices and choice, for the customer.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Rotherham for making his points about tenants' protection. He will know that I have met the National Licensed Victuallers Association to hear its representations, and my door is open whenever the association wishes to bring new material to my attention or that of my right hon. Friend. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will recognise that the Government are keen to ensure that the NLVA has a role in monitoring the way in which changes in the industry take place, and the way in which the Act and the orders work in practice.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, North (Mr. Bendall) and the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North were worried about the case where a tenant builds up a business and is then threatened with the loss of it as the pub tenancy changes. Under current legislation, there is no compensation in such a case. Under the Bill, such tenants will be eligible for compensation. That is an improvement which many hon. Members will welcome. I am sure that there will be further debate in Committee about the way in which that compensation is arrived at, but it is progress to have compensation and the Government's case will be symmetry of treatment between pubs and other business tenancies.

I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) wants the Bill to proceed. I was grateful for the persuasive way in which he put his points and for the way in which he said that, if we pledged careful monitoring, he might see his way to welcoming our proposals. I can pledge tonight that the Government will, of course, monitor the proposals when they are implemented extremely carefully and we shall have an open door to good representations on changes.

I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) was concerned about the original MMC recommendations and thought that they were a little over the top. I am glad that he now agrees that we have abated some of the recommendations and I hope that he will agree that this is a balanced package which reflects the concerns that were put to the Government by the brewing interests on the one hand and by the tenants' and the customers' interests on the other.

My hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Mr. Mills) was interested in the plight of small business. Like him, I am a fan of small business and of more choice and competition. He may find that the guest beer provision in the order goes some way to meeting his point. Of course we welcome more small businesses. Pubs provide a way of building a small business for the tenant and there will be more free houses as a result of the proposals. There is a niche in the market for certain kinds of brew. Listening to the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy who, from his Scottish viewpoint, casts aspersions against our English beers, I suspect that he may be part of the market for the new beers which my hon. Friend the Member for Meriden would like to see.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) was worried about the implementation date. It will be two months after Royal Assent. I think that the hon. Gentleman may have been a little confused about the transitional period. There has to be a transitional period for tenancies that are already in force, but new tenancies will be governed by the provisions from an earlier date than he thought. I shall look into his question about the spouse of a publican who dies or who becomes an invalid during a tenancy; that is a point to which I shall respond in Committee.

I recommend the Bill to the House. It represents great progress for tenants. It is part of a balanced package to improve the shape of the brewing industry and I hope that the House will agree that we should proceed without a Division.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a Second time and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Supply of Beer (Tied Estates)

10.37 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. John Redwood): I beg to move,

That the draft Supply of Beer (Tied Estates) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 6th December, be approved.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this, it will be convenient to discuss the prayer:

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Supply of Beer (Loan Ties, Licensed Premises and Wholesale Prices) Order 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 2258), dated 1st December 1989, a copy of which was laid before this House on 4th December, be annulled.

Mr. Redwood: The hour is late and I do not want to detain the House at great length. The two orders are an essential part of our balanced package for the brewing industry in response to the report by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. The draft Supply of Beer (Tied Estates) Order includes the guest beer provisions, the reduction in the number of tied houses under the formula identified in the measure and the breaking of the tie on soft drinks, non-beer drinks and low alcohol drinks, which will improve choice and competition.

The Supply of Beer (Loan Ties, Licensed Premises and Wholesale Prices) Order deals with the need to have a facility to repay loans and to obtain an exit from the loan tie within a reasonable time, and it introduces a maximum wholesale prices list. It introduces a supply obligation and restricts or prevents covenants on the sale of pubs after 1 January 1990, under which a brewer tries to sell a pub and to stop its further use as a pub.

These are important measures which are part of a balanced package for the industry. They are the result of a great deal of consultation and thought with the industry, with tenants and with customer groups, following the MMC report. It would be best for me to reply to the specific concerns of hon. Members that they raise in the debate.

10.39 pm

Mr. Doug Henderson (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): I am somewhat disappointed at the way in which the Government have approached these matters. I should have expected a more detailed and thorough approach by the Minister. The order has caused considerable controversy over a long period. By no means is there unanimity in the House on how these matters should be dealt with.

The Government have failed the industry and the consumer by bringing forward the proposals. They have failed to take the opportunity to restructure the industry and bring about competition. They have failed to satisfy the valid objections of pub customers who are fed up with being overcharged for beer and, in particular, lager. The Monopolies and Mergers Commission reckoned that there is overcharging to the tune of 20 per cent. We know also that there are considerable regional differences. A product produced in a certain brewery sells at remarkably different prices in similar circumstances in different regions. The Government have failed to outlaw overcharging for soft drinks, low-alcohol and non-alcoholic beers. That subject was mentioned in an earlier debate this evening. More important, the Government have failed to give future security to the people who work in breweries and bars.

The proposals are a cave-in to the brewers' lobby. They are half-baked, and they fail to address the need to introduce real competition in the industry, and they will probably do very little to bring down beer prices.

The extent of competition in the brewing industry has always been controversial. The Monopolies and Mergers Commission report in March was but another stage in what has become a long controversy. At the time of publication of the report, Lord Young stated that he was mindful to——

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): Minded.

Mr. Henderson: He was minded to implement the findings. We all know that it did not take Lord Young long to be less minded, and it did not take him long to realise the error of his ways. Few hon. Members are surprised that such a transformation can occur after a little word in the ear from Victoria street and, perhaps, a bigger word in the ear from the Brewers Society. We all know that, in March, the Monopolies and Mergers Commission said that brewers are protected from competition in a complex monopoly. By December, and a Secretary of State later, it seems that the brewers are protected from competition by a new complex monopoly.

The Government have repeatedly stated that they believe in competition policy—the Minister hardly needs me to remind him of this—but does competition apply only to local authorities and public authorities? Where is commitment to competition in the brewing industry? Is it the case that competition is all very well if it involves selling or, as has more often become the case, giving away public sector assets? If it entails compulsorily divesting private capital, we are told that it is an infringement of business freedom. Is it not more honestly an infringement of Conservative party ideology, a cave-in to the Brewers Society and the £6 million of advertising, and a surrender to Conservative Back-Bench Members with vested brewing interests? There are many of them present this evening.

Mr. Roger Moate (Faversham): Will the hon. Gentleman say a word about my vested brewing interests, for example?

Mr. Henderson: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving me the opportunity to remark on the number of hon. Members who have declared a direct interest in the industry. I have made no specific reference to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Moate *rose*——

Mr. Henderson: I have already given the hon. Gentleman an opportunity——

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have a vague feeling that the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) was looking in my direction. My vested interest is not as a brewer; it is as a licensee and a publican in six tenanted and leased premises. I have no brewing interests whatsoever.

Mr. Moate: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It was not a point of order, but the hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) has now got his point on the record. Does the hon. Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate) have a point of order?

Mr. Moate: Only to the extent that the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) made a point about vested brewing *interests. When some of us* speak, we are not speaking for vested interests: we believe that we are speaking for our constituents. In my case, I was speaking for the Transport and General Workers Union, which the hon. Gentleman has singularly failed to do.

Mr. Henderson: I know that you will have realised the relevance of that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but it was a little lost on me.

I was grateful to the hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) for raising his point of order because the fact that he thought that I was looking in his direction suggests that he accepts some guilt.

The Monopolies and Mergers Commission may or may not have the right approach to breaking up monopoly in the industry. I believe that if a limit of 2,000 were put on ownership, a firm policy of preventing the further concentration of ownership would be absolutely necessary. Only that action could prevent predators from gobbling up the assets disposed of by the brewers. If the loan tie for large brewers were outlawed, we would need a lower limit on pub ownership, which would be permissible to protect the genuinely regional and local breweries.

The Government now appear to have accepted the important principal of tackling the issue of loan tying. If they have—I hope that they have—how can they justify their scheme to outlaw only half the loan ties above 2,000 units? Surely that would still allow the big six to dictate the market. Bass will still have 4,650 units that are owned or tied, out of an estate of 7,300 units. Allied Breweries Ltd. will still have 4,300 units tied or owned, out of an estate of 6,600 units. Many believe that the impact of that will not be to extend competition meaningfully. Indeed, that view has been put to me by people who work in the industry and who believe that it will create instability, threaten jobs and make breweries more vulnerable to takeover.

It is noticeable that the Brewers Society has been remarkably silent of late. We all recall the outrage expressed by the Brewers Society when the MMC report was published in March which had become something of a reservation by the time Lord Young changed his position in July. Where is the Brewers Society now in December? Does it believe that its complex monopoly has been let off the hook by the Government's proposals? If that is the case, where are the Government now? Can they still say that they have stood their ground in the face of pressure from the Brewers Society? Can the Government still say that competition is on the agenda in the brewing industry? How minded is the current Secretary of State to face up to the issues that his predecessor chose to duck after four months? Do the Government really expect that these proposals will dent monopoly power in the industry? And to what extent do the Government believe that their proposals will succeed in bringing down beer prices around the country?

The Opposition accept some parts of the orders. The publication of wholesale price lists for beer, with discounts that are both shown and known, is an important contribution to increasing the information that is available to publicans. I am pleased that the Government have accepted the MMC's views on this matter—and those of many people in the industry. The provisions that prevent brewers with over 2,000 outlets from tying those outlets to their exclusive supplies of non-alcoholic, low alcohol and non-beer drinks are welcome. That is long overdue. As I mentioned in the previous debate, the Consumers Association estimates that the average price of orange juice in an English pub is £2 a pint.

Large profits are to be made on soft drinks, low-alcohol beers and non-alcoholic beers. Regrettably, the Government have caved in on applying the regulation to regional breweries with fewer than 2,000 units. The Monopolies and Mergers Commission believes that the provision should apply to outlets throughout the country, and I agree.

In my area in north-east England—I apologise for repeating what I said in the previous debate—the new regulations have motivated Scottish and Newcastle Breweries to dispose of its outlets over the level of 2,000. That means that, in many instances, people who drink in regionally owned pubs will have to pay more in the long term for soft drinks and low-alcohol beers. I am the first to concede that in my local area there is not the same demand for low-alcohol beer as there is perhaps in other parts of the country. However, that is no excuse for not providing protection. Consumers in the north-east and those who consume in other regional breweries should have the same rights as those who patronise pubs in national chains.

The Opposition welcome the provision to allow tied pubs to offer a guest beer if they wish. There is a danger that swap arrangements will develop between big brewers. That would undermine consumer choice and keep small cask beers from the smaller breweries out of pubs. As with the soft drinks regulations, regional brewers with under 2,000 units will be completely exempt from the provision and drinkers in north-east England, who are largely required to drink in the outlets of regional brewers, may not have the same choice as drinkers in other parts of the country.

The Opposition believe that the regulations are inadequate to break up what the MMC described accurately as a complex monopoly. Consumers and workers must have better protection. Because of the way in which the regulations have been presented to the House, we do not feel bound in the long term by their contents. We shall not finish with the matters before us this evening. They must be kept under constant review.

The Labour party believes that competition can be enhanced and security for the industry's work force achieved only if several other measures are taken. Further concentration of the big brewers must be stopped. Companies such as Anheuser-Busch and Heineken should not be allowed to plunder the United Kingdom market and would not be allowed to do so under a Labour Government. They would be subject to strict regulations which would be reinforced by the Office of Fair Trading —[HON. MEMBERS: "That is what this is all about."] The matter of the tie should be reviewed. We recognise the need for protection to allow smaller regional and local brewers to develop their business.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): How would the hon. Gentleman effect the regulation under EEC regulations?

Mr. Henderson: The EEC has still to come to an agreement on how the balance will be struck between powers in Brussels, in Westminster and other powers. If we gave notice that a Labour Government would not allow further concentration of monopoly power in the brewing industry, that would be consistent with the arguments put forward in Brussels to improve competition not only in this country but throughout the European Community.

Non-brewing retail companies which might move into licensed retailing should similarly not be allowed to dominate the market and any ownership limits should also apply to them. Full statutory protection and the right to buy should be guaranteed for pub tenants. Tied arrangements for soft drinks, low-alcohol beers and non-alcoholic beers should be outlawed in all outlets. The Office of Fair Trading should be charged with constantly monitoring competition in the industry. A Labour Government would want discussions with brewers and their work force on how the British brewing industry can break into the European market. In 1988, we had a trade deficit in beer of £73 million.

If competition, consumers' choice, reducing prices, protecting jobs and building a sound future for the industry matter, the Government should further review these orders and face up to the real issues in the industry.

10.55 pm

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): I am sure that it is no new commentary to my hon. Friends that when the two Front Benches agree, let the people of this nation beware for their freedom for their choice and, on this occasion, for their beer.

In case anybody listened to the speech of the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) and interpreted it to mean that the Labour party was against the Government's proposals, I should point out that only one Labour Member has sat throughout the debate, recently joined by another. That shows the depth of feeling in the Labour party. I understand that there is to be no demonstration in the Lobby from the Labour party. It will be up to others to demonstrate that the Government are not going along the lines that we believe to be in the best interests of consumers.

The Transport and General Workers Union, which is deeply involved in the brewing industry, rightly and wisely made representations, as have non-political clubs. The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), who is in charge of these matters for the Opposition, however, believes that there is "a feeling" against the big brewers. In more than 20 years in this House I do not recall once having a letter complaining about a monopoly, near-monopoly or technical monopoly in beer. The reason is perfectly simple. If one does not like the house in which one finds oneself, one goes down the road to another. I do not understand how it has been possible magically to dream up the supposition of a monopoly in the supply of beer.

This is not an unimportant matter. Half of British adults go into licensed premises at least once a month and a third do so more than once a week, so if there were a monopoly we would surely have heard about it. We hear of many strange things, so I am sure that we would have heard about that. The Office of Fair Trading dreamed up this inquiry. There were no complaints on its table. It thought up the inquiry itself. Is Marks and Spencer to be investigated because it sells only St. Michael products in its shops? There is no monopoly there, of course, because one can go round the corner if one does not like its products or prices. So why was the brewing industry investigated in the first place?

If only one point emerges from this debate, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will take seriously the widely held view that the Monopolies and Mergers Commission is no longer up to the complex, important and elaborate investigations that it has recently been asked to carry out. I know one or two people on the long panel of those selected for these difficult hearings. They are busy, knowledgeable and intelligent people, but the sheer volume of material presented to the commission is a barrier to full understanding, and the salaries paid mean that the staff are generally young and inexperienced. The Government must grasp the nettle either by employing some seriously well qualified people to head up the teams in the MMC or think of going along the American road and passing proper legislation so that cases can be hacked out in the courts of this country. It is completely wrong and against the interests not just of big business but of the nation's shareholders and our national interest in Europe and the world for our great companies to be threatened by such a totally incompetent organisation. I say that advisedly because I can use this report as an example.

The MMC never understood the nature of the retail market in beer. It failed to recognise the importance of clubs. In one village in my constituency the chairman of the licensed victuallers association has a club opposite his pub. He tells me about the competition that the club provides for his pub. The MMC failed to accept the competition between outlets and the choice of beer available in many pubs. It never grasped one of the most elementary facts about the industry, which is that most profits are generated from retailing and not production. That did not take much finding out because it is in the annual reports of all the breweries which are public companies.

The MMC complained about regional price variations, but took no account of variations in land and house prices or labour costs. We who travel from our constituencies to London know about the differences in retail costs in different areas. We accept that everything is more expensive in the centre of London.

There is a wider choice of beer in the United Kingdom than anywhere else in the world. The United Kingdom industry is less concentrated than that of any other country, except possibly West Germany. Prices in United Kingdom pubs, relative to earnings, are lower than in bars elsewhere. Perhaps this is not a good example, but the other day in Rome I was charged the equivalent of £5 for a bottle of mineral water and a bottle of lager beer.

The MMC never accepted that vertical integration was the brewers' incentive to invest in retail premises. It became extremely concerned about the ability of new brewers to enter the market, but more than 50 per cent. of beer sales occur outside brewers' premises. The beer market, particularly in ale, is a mature market and its most successful new entrants have been internationally known brands advertised at great expense, as we all know as we walk through the streets.

I shall not dwell upon the Landlord and Tenant (Licensed Premises) Bill which has just received its Second Reading for fear of being ruled out of order. Pubs and their ties were created as retail outlets for the breweries. Tenants who entered pubs did so in the knowledge that they had a contract, just as a farm tenant takes on his farm knowing that he has a contract with his landlord. The tighter we make the protection for the tenant, the less we induce the landlord to enter into an agreement. I confidently forecast that the number of tenancies which continue on the same basis will start to decline rapidly as the legislation begins to bite.

I fully understand the concern felt about loan ties, but brewers are not banks and if they lend money for the improvement of a club, which is the usual form, it is not unreasonable that they should tie that loan to some interest of their own. That is a perfectly normal commercial transaction.

One of the more agreeable events of my annual calendar is to attend, as an honorary member, the annual general meeting of the Weston-super-Mare Conservative club. In recent years it has borrowed a large sum of money to purchase the property next door, to expand the club, open it up to ladies and generally prosper. It has become so prosperous that it has amassed capital sufficient to pay back the loan that it received under an agreement from a brewery. I listened with interest as the members argued among themselves about the desirability of paying off the loan and being able to buy cheaper beer, from a wider market, and I understand that desire.

Once the order is passed, however, clubs will be unable to obtain such loans as brewers will be less and less willing —because they will see less and less benefit to their businesses—to make such loans available to clubs. That is to be deplored. The publication of wholesale prices is an interference with trade which is unique to beer. I hope that the Minister will justify that in much more detail and with better arguments than the MMC has used.

The Supply of Beer (Tied Estate) Order contravenes all the Government's best principles. It is the most serious intervention in private property rights since Labour's Rent Acts. Many public houses will come on to the market. Given the size and location of some of those properties, many of them will cease to be licensed premises because their value as residential property will be greater. One more nail will thus be driven into the coffin of rural communities with low-profit pubs.

There has been a decline in the number of brewers. I have the figures for the past 10 years. In 1978 there were 143 breweries and in 1988 there were 107. That decline will be strongly accelerated because, as my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman), who knows more about the industry than most of us put together, said in his extremely well-informed speech, some of the big brewers will escape the effects of the order by selling their brewing interests. My guess is that before our time is up there will be only a small handful of breweries. That will be the result of the work of the Government—who have no business to interfere in a free market, as they constantly tell us in relation to other areas.

I am disappointed in my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, who brought a fresh mind to his new position. I had expected him to look at this matter and say that his best market philosophies were not in total agreement with those of his predecessor, but he did not take the view that he could reverse his predecessor's decision. I hope that I am not being too mischievous in reminding the House that his successor at the Department of the Environment took a completely different view about a well-known planning application at Foxley Wood. Perhaps in his heart my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs will have some sympathy with me in reminding the House of that.

If the theory of monopoly grabs the mind of any hon. Member, I ask him to remember that the position of the regional brewers is greatly strengthened by the order. The competition for the regional brewer, which so far has been the national houses—the big breweries—will be taken away. Out of that will come a greater strengthening of the position of individual regional brewers and that, of course, is at the heart of the reason why the Brewers Society has been so impotent in the matter. That was one of the few things on which I agreed with the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North. It is a problem of all trade federations—and I have some sympathy for them—that they cannot meet the interests of all their members when there is conflict in the organisation.

Happily, for once there is a positive and easy solution to the problem and I regret that the Government have turned their back on it. It is to review the licensing laws, because it is the existence of those laws which allows the value of a public house to exist. The Government have said that in the next year or two they will review the licensing laws with a view to dealing with the number of licensed houses in an area. Meanwhile, this draconian measure is to be pressed through the House and in three years the Office of Fair Trading will look again at the brewing industry, casting yet another shadow over its future and its commercial development. Why on earth has it not been possible for the Government to say that they will review the licensing laws and consider the proposition that the licensing justices shall not take into account the number of licensed premises in an area? If the Government did that, competition would be rife and free and none of the problems mentioned today, which I do not think exist anyway, would have occurred in the first place.

The Secretary of State should change the decision. The Office of Fair Trading operated under a false premise, the Monopolies and Mergers Commission was incompetent, the Brewers Society was muted and the Government's final decison disastrous. I shall vote against the order.

11.9 pm

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): Before I refer to previous speeches in the debate, I must tell the House how pleased I was to be in the Chamber when my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) was telling us about his public houses. I have the great good fortune to live bang opposite one of them. It is appropriately called the Constitution, and it is a very attractive and popular-looking pub. A few yards further down the road there is another pub called the St. George's Conservative Club, so I am well served, although I am ashamed to tell the House that I have not been in either of them—[HON. MEMBERS: "Shame!"]. Hon. Members must understand that I am not a heavy drinker, and I have to spend so much time here, working hard.

The comments of the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson), when he referred to Conservative Members having vested interests, were somewhat discourteous, to say the least. I have no vested interest whatever. My only interest is that I used to work for a company that sold soft drinks to the licensed trade,

[Mr. Graham Riddick]

so I know a little bit about the industry. I realise that that may be a disadvantage when one is talking about a subject, particularly if one is a Labour Member.

The speech of the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North was one of the most blatant and cynical exercises in political point-scoring imaginable. He is totally out of step with his own Back-Bench Members.

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): What Back-Benchers are they?

Mr. Riddick: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for pointing out that there are not many Labour Back-Benchers in their places. I can count one, and I know that he has an interest.

Mr. Stan Crowther (Rotheram): In view of what the hon. Gentleman said, how can he say that my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) is out of step with me, and I am the only Back-Bencher here?

Mr. Riddick: I have talked to the hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther) about this issue on many occasions, and I am not sure that he altogether disagrees with some of the comments that I may make.

During the past few months, I have had conversations with Labour Members who were concerned about the possible repercussions of the proposals of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Market Access carried out a survey among right hon. and hon. Members, showing that only 23 per cent. of Labour Members believe that the MMC's proposals should be implemented in full. However, the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North was criticising the Government for not implementing the MMC's proposals in full, and was suggesting a few months ago that the Government should go further.

I take very little notice of what the hon. Gentleman has to say, particularly his comment that a Labour Government would stop the likes of Ansheuser Busch from getting a foothold in the British market. The proposals will lead to that outcome—they will open the door to the big foreign predators—but he does not seem to realise that.

The brewing industry provides 450,000 jobs in the United Kingdom. It is a significant contributor to the Exchequer and it has invested billions of pounds in pub refurbishment in recent years. There is more variety in the outlets, a larger number of brands are sold—there are more than 1,000 brands of beer in the United Kingdom—beer prices are lower and the average number of brands per bar is greater than in any other industrialised country. Consumer surveys have shown up no great consumer dissatisfaction with the current pub scene. In short, the British pub and the British brewing industry is a success story. How does the British establishment react? As is often the case, we try, perhaps unwittingly, to undermine and even to destroy it.

These orders will severely undermine the delicate and complex balance in the industry. The vertical integration which the order is designed to upset, and which the Office of Fair Trading and the MCC seem to dislike so much, has led directly to the provision of a wide range of brands and the brewers' high level of investment in retail outlets.

The order encourages brewers to entice customers to drink more of their beer, not by making their pubs and amenities more attractive, but by spending more on advertising a few, select big brands.

Nevertheless, the order represents an enormous improvement on the MMC's recommendations. I pay tribute to my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench who have shown that they are prepared to listen to some of those who understand the industry. They have made some sensible alterations. As I know them both to be firm believers in the free market, I have no doubt that, had either of them been in the Department during the spring, the original report would have ended up where it most certainly belongs—the dustbin.

I hope that I have not embarrassed my hon. Friend the Minister. He will of course deny emphatically what I have said. Unfortunately, the previous Secretary of State, who we imagined believed in the free market, embraced a report the recommendations of which amounted to a massive and unwarranted intervention by Government in the workings of the free market.

The report raises some questions about the brewing industry and about the role of the MMC and the Office of Fair Trading. After an investigation lasting two and a half years, how could the commission have got it so wrong? Its proposals were based on a number of false premises, as my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) said. It wrongly concluded that most profits were made out of brewing, not retailing. The report failed to understand that consumers are more interested in the amenities on offer than just price. The report almost totally and, it seems, deliberately ignored the clear lessons to be learnt from international experience, which shows clearly that, where brewers have no tied outlets, the market is dominated by a small number of massive concerns.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate) said in the Second Reading debate, the report would take us down the route followed by Australia some 10 years ago. The MMC dismissed the results of that experience, which was that the market became dominated by two major players and prices rose way ahead of inflation. The MMC recommendations were condemned by those whom they were intended to help. The original guest beer provision which was designed to help small brewers was condemned by small brewers. The proposed ending of loan ties to the free trade was condemned by those in the free trade. How could the MMC get it so wrong? Was the report plain flawed or was it drawn up with one purpose in mind—to destroy the vertical integration which is the central structure around which the brewing industry is built?

I have heard from more than one source of the Office of Fair Trading's dislike of vertically integrated industries. Sir Gordon Borrie, the director general, has confirmed to me in a letter that he was consulted about the MMC's recommendations when they were being drawn up, so it is a little surprising that the OFT, which has great experience, did not draw attention to some of the obvious flaws in some of these recommendations.

The failure of the MMC and the OFT to grasp the obvious solution to any so-called problem that might exist in the market—to limit the number of houses that any brewery could own in any geographical area—suggests to me that those responsible for the MMC's report were determined to arrive at a preconceived set of conclusions regardless of the realities of the industry and so long as it undermined the vertical integration that they disliked so much. They failed to tackle regional monopolies. There seems to have been dogma at work.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State should initiate an investigation into the conduct of the MMC's inquiry. The orders will lead to some breweries divesting themselves of their brewing interests and to more money being spent on brand advertising and less on pub refurbishment and improvements. I fear, too, that the price of a pint will increase, not decrease. If my worst fears come to pass, the MMC will have much to answer for. I am minded not to support the orders.

11.21 pm

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): I declare an interest as the proud representative of the great brewing centre of Britain. The constituency is proud of the contribution to its daily life for over a century of such great brewing names as Bass, Ind Coope, which is part of Allied Lyons, and Marston's which is one of the great regional brewers.

I congratulate the Government on a shrewd piece of business management in scheduling the debate, when the House has been hammered by world-shattering events over the past few weeks, when we have faced the demands of television and the urgent requirements of our families to see us before we slip into the Christmas mode, and when as a result the House is emptier, especially on the Opposition Benches, than it would have been. It is as shrewd a piece of business management as could have been engineered in the interests of business efficiency. When my hon. Friend the Minister says, "The hour is late, these measures are not all that important and really, chaps, it is time for us to pack up and get home," I can appreciate how clever the Government have been.

So it comes about that, at the fag end of the pre-Christmas part of the Session, we are debating changes as potentially damaging to the British drinker and the production of the British pint as it is possible to conceive in a free society. If the Monopolies and Mergers Commission had had its way, the only brewer left in Burton would have been the Heritage brewery, which, although an excellent institution, is a working museum. However great its output and however delightful its product, it hardly satisfies the nation's thirst in the same way as the great breweries of Allied Lyons, Bass and Marston.

The MMC's report was a production so manifestly damaging and absurd in its major pronouncements that the industry could hardly believe its ears when Lord Young of Graffham, in a moment of inadvertence, which he must have lived to regret, said that he was minded to accept it. So great was its authors' commitment to the removal of restrictive practice, wherever it is, however it is and whenever it is, that they seemed never to begin to grasp some of the essential truths about the brewing industry.

They did not understand that commercial rents are not always being charged for public houses. The country is full of small pubs that could not exist if commercial rents were charged. Why is that? Because the brewers can get their profit from volume sales of their own beer, and there is no need to make money from rents. Small villages often have uneconomic village pubs. They are of great charm and beauty, existing in some of the most beautiful parts of Britain, but their existence could hardly be justified by turnover. They are encouraged to continue by the large breweries, which consider them publicity outlets—perhaps loss leaders—or perhaps quite simply can afford to carry their losses.

The Monopolies and Mergers Commission did not understand that beer prices are lower in tied houses than in free houses because there are lower rents and cheaper loans and the prices are kept down by the tie. In my constituency town of Burton upon Trent we visited a number of pubs and found that in almost every case the price of beer in tenanted houses was lower than that in the free houses.

The commission did not understand that the good pubs, and there are very many of them, provide a far wider choice of beers, produced by major brewers, than can be found anywhere on the continent. The French do not come to Britain expecting a limited supply of beer or a limited choice, and neither do the Italians. We could go anywhere on the continent and find nothing like the opportunity in Britain to choose between the different sorts of beers produced by the same brewer, or even different brewers. The sheer number of small pubs in the streets of towns and villages in Britain provides the competition for which the MMC thirsted, and it is far greater than in any street in any town or village on the continent where the tie does not exist.

The MMC did not understand that, if we force major brewers to choose between being manufacturers of beer and being retailers, because they have shareholders they have to choose to be retailers. That is where all their capital is tied up. One major brewer said to me, "We have £30 million tied up in our manufacturing estate, but we have £750 million tied up in our retailing estate. If we are forced to choose, we will shift our production abroad or import beer that is manufactured abroad.", One of the primary fears about the MMC report was that it would cause a serious decline in the manufacturing of beer in Britain.

The MMC did not understand that, in any event, 50 per cent. of beer sales are made not in public houses, but in supermarkets and other outlets. It is no longer true to say that one must go to a public house for beer.

Nor did it understand that the commitment to a certain brand of beer is often very strong. The nearest to a riot that I have experienced in my constituency office on a Saturday morning was when Bass and Allied decided to swop some pubs in Burton. The appalling thought occurred to some of my finest constituents that they might have to walk a little further down the road to get the Double Diamond they loved. They would not put up with a change of product in their local public house. That sort of commitment is peculiar to beer and has nothing to do with the choice that the economists say the customer craves.

As a result of all those misconceptions of what are fundamental truths about how the British brewing industry works and how the drinking people respond to it, the Monopolies and Mergers Commission was driven to some truly absurd conclusions.

It recommended the forced sale of private property, some 22,000 pubs, as tyrannical a measure as could be found in any Socialist regime in eastern Europe, and one which is totally unacceptable to a Britain of the Thatcher era or even to the era that preceded it, when the Prime

[Mr. Ivan Lawrence]

Minister was my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). He also would never have tolerated such tyranny.

The commission recommended a low ceiling on the number of tied outlets which, as my hon. Friends have already said and I will not labour the point, would inevitably have forced down sales and forced up closures, reduced public houses and restricted competition and the availability of beer to the British drinker.

The commission threatened the disruption of clubs. They are competitors to pubs. They provide not only a high proportion of the draught beer that is drunk in Britain, but they do so at low prices. It proposes to draw a distinction between the major brewers and the regional brewers. So in parts of Britain, such as Wolverhampton, the regional brewers would be permitted to operate every pub, because the regional brewers are not a major brewer, and the major brewers would not be allowed to operate such a monopoly—an absurdity. Like so many of these economic rules stretched to a completely alien environment, the logic of it leads to the most absurd results.

The commission proposed to restrict the outlets of a brewer's product—an interference with the working of the free market. That is what we have in Britain at present. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, the most outstanding spokesman of the free market on the Government Front Bench, choked on his words. He could hardly sit down quickly enough. His introduction of the order took about two and a half minutes flat. No wonder he was ashamed of what he was saying. All his life he has fought for the free market and that is the very thing that the commission's proposals will interfere with.

I do not seek to delay the House a moment longer than is necessary to try to convince hon. Members of the nonsense of the measures. The question is whether the Government have seen enough sense to cut, to trim, to neuter, the commission's harmful recommendations. I am driven to the conclusion that they have not. They have hardly begun. They think that they have come to some kind of compromise and it is true that the compromise will cushion the blow to some extent.

The Government have done good things such as the Landlord and Tenant (Licensed Premises) Bill, to which the House has just given a Second Reading. They have done things that are not unacceptable, such as the introduction of a guest beer, as though there are many pubs that do not now have guest beers. That is another misunderstanding of the commission. Practically every pub has some kind of guest beer, if it is only Guinness. I do not think anyone will mind too much about the breaking of the tie of the soft drinks.

But the fundamental matter is the forced closure, the forced transfer, the restriction of outlets, the restriction of choice, the restriction of competition within Britain where we understand how beer is brewed, the reduction in the access which ordinary drinking people in our society will have. I see one curled up in the corner there. The hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) is a great tribute to the drinking masses. When the drinking people of Britain wake up tomorrow morning and hear what we have done in their name tonight, they will throw up. I am driven to the conclusion that the Government have done nothing near enough to trim away what is bad and absurd in the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report.

I listened to the comments of the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson)—who has left the Chamber to have his goodnight tipple, or whatever—concerning jobs. The Opposition Benches are crowded with hon. Members who are concerned about the possible job losses inherent in stripping down the major brewers' contribution to employment. One is talking not just of the people working in the breweries but of those employed in pubs and, in my own constituency, in the factories that produce brewery equipment. We must consider all those matters. I welcome back to the Chamber the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North. I hope that he sustained himself with Burton ale.

Under these orders there will inevitably be a concentration of a smaller number of brand products produced in a high volume. A limitation on choice will be the result. There will also be a restriction on the capital investment in public houses. The price of beer will rise, and although the market may assuredly be open to the foreign brewer, he cannot claim to produce beer of the quality that we in Britain know how to produce.

To argue, as the Opposition have done, that the Bill represents a craven collapse to the brewers' lobby or to the Brewers Society is as much nonsense as we have heard from the members of the Opposition Front Bench on any subject so far in this Session. The very opposite is true. The Government are instead guilty of a craven collapse to the views of some very strange reporters in the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

I conclude by reminding the House of the minority report. Mr. Mills commented:

> "I consider my colleagues' recommendations to be far more drastic than is necessary and indeed that they could worsen the problem . . . I consider that the recommendations are unnecessary and indeed could lead to a reduction of competition and less consumer choice."

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs, the great stalwart for consumer choice and for more competition, should take heed of those words.

Mr. Mills continued:

> "Many [tenants] would presumably become unemployed . . . in my view the proposed changes might even lessen that competition . . . and . . . the other recommendations . . . would be an unnecessary leap in the dark, could be counter-productive and damaging to the structure of the industry and consequently be against the public interest. The tied estate and the loan tie should be left to continue as they are and the brewing industry should be left to change and develop as it is already doing."

I pay tribute to the major brewers in my constituency who have done wonders in improving their pubs. With the help of flexible licensing hours, they have been encouraged to introduce whole families into the environment of the traditional English pub. The standard of behaviour has also improved. At the very moment when the British brewing industry and the British pub are beginning to expand and improve, and to be greater than they have ever been, we are going to break the glass and dash it in the face of the consumer. That is a very odd way for a Conservative Government to behave.

There seems to be no sense in these measures that this Government of all Governments are introducing. They will damage one of our great industries, reduce competition, weaken quality, and drive up prices. If there is a Division at the end of these proceedings, I shall go into the lobby and vote against the Government.

11.39 pm

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): After that eloquent speech by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence), I shall not detain the House for more than a few minutes.

Although the interest that I declared earlier is still relevant, let me put it on record that I am no longer a licensee, having passed the joint licenseeship of my six houses to a fellow director. It happened quite recently, and I overlooked it in my point of order.

It is the Supply of Beer (Tied Estates) Order that mainly concerns me, as I believe that it will wreak the most damage on the traditional pub estate. My hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) was particularly worried about rural pubs, and other hon. Members have also mentioned them, but I believe that if brewers are forced to choose between putting a substantial number of their pubs at arm's length and selling them off they will choose the latter course. They will begin to sell valuable high street properties, which will almost certainly be worth more if sold for some other use than they are as public houses, and not only rural communities but many urban ones will lose their pubs.

Mr. Gale: As a friend, colleague and fellow Kent Member, my hon. Friend will know only too well that many rural pubs in Kent are already faced with exactly that prospect, standing as they do in as much as three quarters of an acre of development land. The order will result in villages in Kent and throughout the country having no pubs at all.

Mr. Couchman: My hon. Friend's remarks encapsulate the problem in the south-east, particularly those areas where land values and property prices are high. That is where the most pubs will probably be sold.

Although my hon. Friend the Minister has managed to modify the extent to which certain classes of licensed premises are caught by the Act, he has failed to address the problem of full on-licence premises that are not public houses. I refer particularly to hotels, in which the proportion of turnover representing beer sales is extremely small. I believe that there is also a problem relating to bingo clubs and the like, although I am not personally acquainted with it.

I have one more question for my hon. Friend, concerning the estate that the brewers will be allowed to retain under tie. New developments are taking place: in the old Chatham dockyard in my constituency, a complete new community will be built up through such a development, which includes residential, office, leisure and commercial elements, and the addition of a public house —perhaps two or three—will undoubtedly seem an attractive proposition. What will be the position of the major brewers, who may have the money to invest in the new properties? Will they have to put further houses at arm's length to compete? It would be ridiculous, surely, if the overall pool of licensed premises were increased by those houses.

My next point is very parochial and vested: it relates to the guest cask-conditioned beer that those of us who are the tenants of six major brewers will be allowed to stock. Personally, I consider that my hon. Friend was right to exclude the regional brewers, although we must remember that the biggest is nearly as big as the smallest of the big six. The regional brewers, especially the small ones, had a legitimate fear that their pubs would be flooded with major, heavily advertised national brands of lager if they had had to have a guest beer in those houses.

There are problems that the orders do not address. The orders speak of additional rents that may be required by brewer landlords so that the loss of income shall be made up, but they do not address problems such as the use of equipment. The near-mutilation of counters is involved in the installation of new facilities for the supply of cask-conditioned beer. The installation of a pump is a substantial modification and that problem should be addressed. Refrigeration equipment is used to cool beer and, in its modern form, is a far more complex piece of equipment than it used to be. Can the guest cask-conditioned beer be served through that or will additional equipment have to be installed?

There is also the question of advertising and promotion. I got out my six agreements—in five different forms—and the one point that they have in common is that I am not allowed to advertise or promote within those pubs other people's products. What provision does my hon. Friend propose to make for the advertising of guest beers? What is more natural, if a minor or regional brewer manages to get its product into a major brewer's pub, than to want to promote it in some way? Those questions need to be answered.

We are now seeing no alcohol and low-alcohol beers in pubs—the so-called "NABLABs"—on draught as well as in bottles. If we are to free the tie for NABLABS, it will require additional dispensing equipment which will have to go on to the counter. That will bring into question the brewer-landlord's ownership of those counters and their use for dispensing.

There is a myth about the mineral tie. I am not tied on minerals for any of my public houses. By and large, the major brewers do not tie for minerals. It is the regional brewers which still tie for minerals and they are excluded from the order, which makes it a bit of a nonsense. Those are the questions—which I accept are technical and parochial within the industry—that my hon. Friend has a duty to the House to answer if the order is to have any substance.

I want to say little about the Supply of Beer (Loan Ties, Licensed Premises and Wholesale Prices) Order. The publication of wholesale price lists with discounts that are available will do nothing other than to allow brewers to publish their maximum wholesale prices. Those maximum wholesale prices will undoubtedly be exacted from the tenanted trade, so the tenanted trade—the weakest purchasing power—will be unable to use the benefits of the publication of those price lists.

If I had more time, I should like to say more to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) about mineral prices. I can justify the prices that are charged for minerals in public houses, but perhaps we shall have another occasion on which to discuss that.

11.47 pm

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): I seek to detain the House for no more than two minutes. I do not wish to argue the merits of the MMC report, which has been dealt

[Mr. Alistair Burt]

with sensibly by several of my hon. Friends who are better qualified than me. I wish to make just one comment about the Supply of Beer (Tied Estates) Order.

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister not to create a level playing field—an overused metaphor these days—but to ensure that the tenants of regional breweries have the same slope on the counter as colleagues who belong to larger breweries in relation to the tie for minerals and ciders. As my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) properly pointed out, it is nonsense that the regional breweries have been excluded from the provision which removes that tie for the larger brewers. The tenants of those regional brewers in my constituency would welcome the opportunity for that tie to be swept away.

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to look at that point in Committee and to accept certain evidence on it.

11.49 pm

Mr. Redwood: A good number of points have been raised. Of course, Opposition Members have raised points in a diametrically opposite way from those raised by my hon. Friends who are worried about the impact that this measure may have upon the brewing industry. My hon. Friends the Members for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) and for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) and my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) suggested that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I might have had some difficulties with the order. I remind them of my personal history in this connection.

I seem to remember that, as a Back-Bench Member, I signed the early-day motion in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) when the MMC report first came out, and when the then Secretary of State said that he was minded to implement the report in full. I felt, as my hon. Friends feel today, that that was an extremely large attack on property in the private sector, which I could not support. When the proposals were substantially changed on 10 July so that mandatory sale of pubs was no longer to be imposed upon brewing companies, I withdrew my name from the early-day motion, and I am glad that I did as Opposition Members might otherwise have been unkind enough to point it out. That reflected my then judgment that a good compromise had been reached between the recommendations of the MMC and those who did not wish to see any change at all in the industry after the identification of a public interest detriment with respect to competition.

I cannot say that I accept the criticism that I, the apostle of competition and free markets, am eating all my own words, because I am responding to an MMC report which identified defects in competitiveness in an industry and I am making proposals today which go some way to remedy the identified defects. Some Labour Members have criticised me, saying that I have not been competitive enough in the proposals that I have brought forward.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton was concerned that this measure is not the craven collapse to the brewers that Labour Members are suggesting. He felt that we would have been well advised to take the advice in the minority report. In some ways, one can say that the Government did that, as our proposals are nearer the views of Mr. Mills than to the recommendations of the main report in terms of the treatment suggested for the industry in the orders. I remind my hon. and learned Friend that the minority report also found a public interest detriment. The author of the report did not say that there was no case to answer. He said that he thought that the remedies recommended in the main report went too far. That is the Government's view, too, and that is why the 10 July statement, as amended in response to subsequent consultation, has taken the form of the current orders and not the more extreme form of remedies suggested in the original MMC report.

My hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare thought that there was some inconsistency in the Government's treatment as between these measures and Foxley Wood. There is a missing link in his argument, which does it some damage. When my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State arrived at the Department of Trade and Industry, the Government had already had second thoughts on the MMC report and, in the light of consultation and of feelings in the House, had come forward with the excellent compromise proposal that has been embodied in the orders, with some minor amendments in the light of further consultation. That was not the case when my other right hon. Friend arrived at the Department of the Environment, where the report had been through only one stage. The Secretary of State then said that he was minded to accept it, and consultation revealed that that was not a good idea. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare will appreciate the nuances and see that there is a distinction.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham asked a number of detailed questions. He asked whether high street pubs rather than rural pubs might be sold and whether they might pass out of the pub business altogether. I do not think that there will be a huge change between the position after these orders have gone through and the position that already exists. Brewers are becoming much more aware of the valuation of their retail estates, and they are making a distinction, for management purposes, between running the property and running the brewery. That was quite clear in the trends in the industry before the orders came forward. Therefore, I do not think that there is such a sea change as the hon. Gentleman is suggesting and I do not hazard a view as to which types of pubs are more likely to be sold or to pass out of pub use altogether.

Mr. Moate: My hon. Friend is suggesting that there is already a trend in the way in which the brewing industry is structured and that there has not been a significant sea change, but others would suggest differently. We are already seeing evidence of major and significant changes as a direct result of the MMC report. If the trend appears to be hastening and we are to see a substantial divestment of properties—my hon. Friend has said that he was against the original proposals because of the implications for enforced sales of properties—what proposals does he have for altering and relaxing these proposals, perhaps to undo some of the damage that people may suffer?

Mr. Redwood: There is all the difference in the world between forcing people to sell pubs and giving them choices to deal with the problem of the tie which is what the report and these orders address. There is evidence that pubs are coming on to the market, but there is also evidence that before the orders were laid before the House and before the MMC report was published major brewers were looking hard at their property values and were beginning, for management purposes, to segregate the returns on rented property from those on brewing.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham asked about new pubs and new developments. If a national brewer wishes to buy and open such pubs, it will be governed by the dynamic formula. There are several ways in which that brewer could acquire a new pub and still meet the target of the dynamic formula by, for example, adding one untied property for every tied property or by making other changes in the estate. Because of the way in which the dynamic formula works, people are not prevented from adding pubs to their chain, but the numbers of tied and untied are influenced under the formula. I am glad that my hon. Friend feels that the Government were right to exclude the regional breweries. There is logic in that case, as the hon. Gentleman described.

The questions of equipment, advertising and new agreements which might be necessary to implement some parts of the provision are commercial matters that will be settled by negotiation between the parties. It would not be right for the Government to have a view on how those negotiations should be conducted or how they may turn out.

To my hon. Friends who are worried that we may have gone too far against the brewers and who fear that there may be a threat to the British pub, I say simply that that well-known independent publication, "The 1990 Good Pub Guide", passes into the realm of political and industry comment when it concludes:

> "Our research shows that the MMC proposals to break the big brewers' complex monopoly pose no threat to the future of the British pub as a thriving institution."

As my hon. Friends may know, those responsible for the publication have conducted an extensive survey of all pubs. If we are concerned about the charge brought by the Labour party that there may not be enough competition in the proposals, Labour Members can listen to my hon. Friends who feel that too many changes may be in view.

Another independent source—a leading stockbroking analyst in the City, with a good knowledge of the brewing industry—has stated:

> "What will probably happen as a consequence of the latest recommendation is that the proportion of UK beer sales sold in some sort of free market place could rise from 54 per cent. towards two thirds, and it is possible that the proportion could rise even as high as 70 per cent. . . . Our view is that the UK brewers will find the new environment considerably more challenging."

That may well be a sensible conclusion to have reached on the evidence.

Mr. Henderson: Will the Minister give a commitment to the House that he will ask the Office of Fair Trading regularly to investigate this matter and report to him?

Mr. Redwood: I give no specific assurance of the kind sought by the hon. Gentleman, but it is the duty of the Director General of Fair Trading to keep all matters relating to competition under some kind of watching review. It is always open to the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends to make representations if they feel that major problems have been brought to their attention.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) said that he was disappointed that I had been so brief. I was simply trying to give my hon. Friends adequate time to make their points and myself adequate time to reply to them. I was disappointed in his speech because I came expecting a major parliamentary occasion. I had read "What's Brewing". It said that the Labour party planned to force a new major brewing debate. *[Interruption.]* It gets better. This great debate, manfully conducted by one Back Bencher, one Front Bencher and one silent Whip was going to be a huge occasion. "What's Brewing" tells us that

> "the aim is to combine with pro-competition Conservative MPs, force the Government to withdraw the orders, and come back with something more impressive."

Where are the pro-competition Conservative Members wanting to unite with Labour on the grounds that the orders do not go far enough? I have not heard any of them speak. If anything, Conservative Members feel that the Government have been a little too firm with the brewers. Where are the serried ranks of Labour Members who are to bring about this amazing challenge to Her Majesty's Government? If they are not testing brews in the pubs of London, they are probably tucked up in their beds where all sensible people should be at this hour. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman's interview in the CAMRA publication is a case of him playing to the camera. Perhaps in future when he is about to savage the Government he will ensure that all his hon. Friends are on a one-line Whip. That seems to be the form here this evening.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North also says that I stand accused of lacking enthusiasm for competition. I will defend myself with some spirit against that rum charge. Much of what I have said and written shows that I am not lacking in enthusiasm for competition, and much of what the Government are doing shows that they are committed to a firm competition policy. They are much more enthusiastic than the Labour party was when in office and than it advises us to be in individual decisions and problems brought before the House.

I promise the hon. Gentleman that there will be competition. The policies that he faintly outlined tonight would make matters worse rather than better. Competition will be seen in the creation of more free houses, the guest beer provisions and the breaking of the tie on soft drinks and low alcohol beverages. The publication of price lists, which he welcomed, will help competition, particularly from tenants and smaller purchasers who feel that they do not get a fair deal. I am surprised that he attacks the regional breweries. An important part of rigorous competition in the brewing industry is to give the regionals the chance to expand and produce their alternative wares.

I hope that micro-brewers—the very small brewers about whom we heard earlier—will flourish. I am sure that there is scope for the good niche brewers whose products the public will savour and like to buy. There will be more chance for the public to buy such products under the arrangements set out in the orders.

Some of my hon. Friends accused the MMC of bad workmanship and my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare said that the MMC should be strengthened in various ways. I remind him that the MMC already has a large number of experienced panel members from industry and commerce. They are there to provide a leavening of experience and expertise based on their business to go alongside the work of technical experts on the staff. I hope that he will bear that in mind when considering the way in which the MMC operates. He also

[Mr. Redwood]

asked whether there had been any case where wholesale prices had been revealed. Proceedings are usually undertaken as a result of inquiries. Two examples that come to mind are British Gas prices and the price of plasterboard. We are not singling out the brewers.

The Government are reviewing the licensing system for the very reason identified by my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare. One of the underlying reasons for the power in the market place identified in the report is licensing. But licensing also has benign consequences. There is a good reason why pubs are licensed, as all hon. Members will accept. The Government are aware of the problems. That is why the matter is being reviewed to see whether there need to be changes in the light of the problems identified by my hon. Friends and others.

This has been a good debate. It has revealed that the House is split between Labour Members—who want the orders toughened up and the brewers taken further to task—and my hon. Friends who feel that there has not been enough care taken in responding to the brewers' concerns. In that connection, the brewers have made many good representations in recent months and the orders now represent a sensible conclusion to those negotiations with several important modifications that I hope my hon. Friends will welcome.

It is important that the Government have taken out of the equation food chains which sell some beverages, perhaps alcoholic ones, as part of their general food service. They are not offering a general pub service to the public coming in off the streets. That was a mistake in the earlier versions and I hope that my hon. Friends will agree that it was a good idea to remedy that problem.

The reason why the Government have kept the full on-licence as the criterion is that a definition of a pub is that its service involves serving a drink and nothing else to people coming in off the street. That is the problem that the MMC identified, which is why the orders are drafted as they are. That does not make a huge impact on most of the chains concerned because the number with hotels of the size for which exemption is sought are few and the number of hotels is also few, so it does not have a material impact on the total number of pubs covered.

I hope that the House will vote for the orders, reject the Opposition's prayer against the one order and support the Government's positive resolution in favour of the other. The orders represent a good deal for tenants, for customers and for the brewing industry in the light of the MMC report, and I hope that my hon. Friends will support them.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 54, Noes 8.

Division No. 22] **[12.7am**

AYES

Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Atkinson, David
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Boswell, Tim
Bowis, John
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Durant, Tony
Fallon, Michael
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forth, Eric
Freeman, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Irvine, Michael
Kennedy, Charles
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Mans, Keith
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mills, Iain
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Redwood, John
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Speed, Keith
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Wallace, James
Widdecombe, Ann
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Nicholas Baker.

NOES

Golding, Mrs Llin
Haynes, Frank
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Lawrence, Ivan
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Riddick, Graham
Skinner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jerry Wiggin and
Mr. Roger Moate.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Supply of Beer (Tied Estates) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 6th December, be approved.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

MEDICINES

That the draft Medicines (Intermediate Medicated Feeding Stuffs) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 30th November, be approved.—*[Mr. Goodlad.]*

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

EDUCATION

That the draft Education Support Grants (Amendment) Regulations 1989, which were laid before this House on 15th November, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved. —*[Mr. Goodlad.]*

Question agreed to.

Consumer Protection

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Alastair Goodlad.]*

12.17 am

Mr. David Porter (Waveney): I shall start by thanking Mr. Speaker for giving me this opportunity to raise the subject of consumer protection. I also want to thank and pay tribute to Miss Susan Fleming, a third-year politics major student at the university of East Anglia. As part of her course she has been assigned to work on a project of my choice for one day a week this autumn term, and I am grateful to Miss Fleming for her research. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for giving me time to air some of my views. I also thank most warmly the staff of the National Consumer Council who have provided helpful assistance.

In order to make consumer protection a reality and not a pious intent, I call for the establishment of a CIA in Britain, a consumers' interests authority. Although I am reluctant to advocate more bureaucracy, I think that, parallel with the green revolution and in tandem with individual choice and responsibility, we need to go into the 1990s with strengthened consumer protection.

The proposals by the National Consumer Council for a consumer guarantee on cars and household goods costing over £50 go a long way towards providing the consumer with real choice and protection in the marketplace. That guarantee concept is at the heart of customer confidence.

Our trading standards service generally does a good job. Sometimes its members are limited by resources, and sometimes by their brief, the criminal side of the standards enforcement, which leaves a gap on the civil side, which has no protection.

An authority or agency such as the one that I propose would include the parameters of the trading standards service to some extent, some parts of the Office of Fair Trading, weights and measures, and the various schemes for independent arbitration and would reduce some of the work load of the small claims courts.

Local authorities should decide their priorities on trading standards. Consider the differences in spending per head on consumer protection last year—it ranged from £2·05 in Warwickshire to 64p in Lancashire. The projected range for the current year is from £2·62 in Warwickshire to 89p in Lincolnshire.

Local democracy apart, consumers are entitled to a more certain sign that local authorities, as enablers, are meeting their commitments. I accept that the figures could, to some extent, reflect the inefficiency of the statistical service. I do not want to go too far down that road, and talk about those figures, but they illustrate my point.

We hear daily about the rights of voters, the rights of women, the rights of workers and even the right to die. Surely, as consumers, we must expect a minimum agreed standard of manufacture and service. That is not too much to expect, is it? I do not think that an agreed standard that manufacturers of goods and suppliers of services have to meet is too much to expect.

Let us take the famous case of Mr. Bernstein. Some 27 days and 140 miles after he bought his Nissan Laurel car, the engine seized. He was forced to take the garage that sold it to him to court, but the judge told him that it was too late for him to reject the car, and that he was only entitled to compensation.

The Supply of Goods (Implied Terms) Act 1973 gives the consumer the right of redress against the retailer if goods are faulty, but it is flawed, because the consumer is deemed to have accepted the car or the goods after an unreasonably short time. Therefore, the consumer loses the right to get his or her money back.

Let us take the case of Miss Cox and Mr. Flowerday, two of my constituents, who started a small business under the Government's enterprise allowance scheme. They bought a brand new Fiat for the business. From day one it was clearly a dud. Eventually, after endless repairs, an independent assessment and much citing of the Sale of Goods Act 1979, a solicitor advised them to accept £100 in compensaton, because they could not afford the court procedures. Why should they have had to go to the expense, the delay and the inconvenience of going to court? If they could have gone to a consumer interest authority, the court element might not have been necessary, but if it had been, the authority would have handled it on their behalf.

Under current legislation, a contract is established between the retailer and the customer. Last Session, I introduced a Ten-Minute Bill—the Public Service Contracts Bill. I sought to lay down the right to compensation when public services such as British Rail, the Post Office, and local authorities failed to deliver an agreed minimum standard, if possible a legal minimum standard. I still believe that that is right, and that it should apply to the sale of goods in the same way.

The Retail Consortium hopes to be able to support the concept of consumers' guarantees, a subject on which much has been said lately. It wants satisfied customers. After all, business depends upon satisfied customers. In millions of daily transactions, best practice prevails, and can be demonstrated to do so. Of course there are cowboy sellers, and unreasonable customers, but retailers are keen to protect consumers' rights.

The Retail Consortium is part of a monitoring group on misleading prices, which was set up by the Minister, who, I think, prefers a code to regulation when there is detailed agreement within a trade and with enforcement agencies. Perhaps the role of the DTI in those matters needs defining.

The convention that the retailer is liable stems from the clout that he presumably has with his own suppliers and the difficulty of the individual taking on the large manufacturers. Consider the Philips fan-assisted oven that did not reach roasting temperature unless the fan was disabled. It was a straightforward design fault, but Philips denied responsibility and passed the buck back to the retailer. The customer was left out of that entirely.

We also have the case of the Honda motor bike, the brake of which would seize in snowy weather—with obvious consequences. Honda did not see it as a manufacturing problem, but blamed the British practice of salting roads in icy weather.

They may be isolated and extreme cases, but an enforcement agency could make even giant manufacturers more responsive to consumer demands. We should never under-estimate the power of consumer demand. The marketing of products in aerosol cans, for example, is being changed out of all recognition because of it.

I believe that there is a growing tide of demand for a legally enforced, reasonable minimum standard for goods and services. In Britain, up to 6 million people a year fail to get adequate satisfaction when something they have

[Mr. David Porter]

bought goes wrong. It is not just the purchaser who loses out. As consumers, we all pay for the production and marketing of shoddy, if not useless, goods.

A potential buyer looking at a line of washing machines or fridge-freezers has nothing to tell him or her how much faith the manufacturer has in the reliability of his product or how efficient the after-sales service will be. That means that British manufacturers are missing a vital element that would help them enormously.

The NCC consumer guarantee would cover the entire product for 12 months at least, and any fault would be repaired at no cost to the consumer, provided that the consumer had not caused it. If the item were not repaired within five days—three days for cars—the consumer would be loaned a similar one, or compensated for loss and expenses. A fault would be put right in three attempts and the product would not be out of use for more than 30 days in any 12-month period, or there would be a choice of a refund or replacement.

The idea is not to cause manufacturers to mark the goods with a guarantee, but to oblige those without it to be clearly marked "This has no consumer guarantee." What an incentive for improvement that would be. What an act of faith it would be for quality manufacturers. What a death sentence it would be for most of the cowboys.

Details are subject to debate, but what about the principle? Even then, things may still go wrong. We have independent arbitration schemes, and banks and building societies have ombudsmen. There is talk of the tourist industry having an ombudsman. Ombudsmen have the good will of the industry and the support of the public. We should have a high street ombudsman for the consumer in the street.

Sweden has an independent arbitration scheme in its Public Complaints Board. It deals mainly by post with civil claims, at very little public cost. The board gives an advisory judgment which, if not accepted, is sent to arbitration. Names and details are widely publicised, which has proved effective. Power of public embarrassment is an additional tool on the consumer's side. Sweden's system is less bureaucratic than our small claims court, and I hope that it commends itself to the Minister.

There is a model in the United States. Most states have a utilities commission with power to refer to the district attorney complaints of violation of legal service standards. In effect, the district attorney can prosecute on behalf of individuals, and most get compensation out of court as a result. It is a principle that can be adapted here—legal minimum standards without being too complex, expensive or off-putting.

A CIA would be customer-friendly and be seen as such. It would present not an obstacle course in the minefield of consumer legislation but a powerful ultimate sanction in a society in which the Government have given the individual choice and responsibility.

I ask two things of the Minister. First, he should give periodic remits to the NCC. It has independence written into its constitution, but it is funded by taxpayers. Will he ask it to explore the issue of redressing the high street and how it may be made more effective? Secondly, if the hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones) or any other hon. Member brings forward a consumer guarantee bill as a private Member's Bill, will the Government maintain benevolent neutrality or support the guarantee concept, even if they want to amend the details?

I shall end by paraphrasing Lord Palmerston who, you will remember, Mr. Deputy Speaker—from history lessons, not from memory—said in 1850:

> "a British subject, in whatever land he may be, shall feel confident that the watchful eye and the strong arm of England will protect him".

I say that, in whatever high street, market stall, corner shop or out-of town shopping centre, and whatever service a consumer pays money for, he shall have the strong arm and watchful eye of the CIA—the consumers' interests authority—and the consumers' guarantee available to him.

12.30 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs (Mr. Eric Forth): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) on securing the debate. The House should be grateful to him for giving us an opportunity to discuss an important subject that represents a major part of my portfolio and for drawing our attention to his constituents' concerns. I acknowledge the presence of the hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones), who has taken the trouble to be in his place, to whom my hon. Friend referred. Also present is my hon. Friend the Member for Great Yarmouth (Mr. Carttiss), who has shown an interest in these matters and who is with his parliamentary neighbour this evening to give him support.

I shall examine any proposals that come forward in the form of a private Member's Bill, or any other form, to give effect to the National Consumer Council's recommendations. I shall do so with a critical eye because I am concerned to ensure that any proposals are workable and not over-bureaucratic. My hon. Friend the Member for Waveney prays in aid the United States, and I admire that country more than most hon. Members. I am aware, however, of the differences between the United States and the United Kingdom. I would be reluctant to take this country down the rather litigious route that the United States has taken in many instances. The costs of remedy often exceed the benefits either to consumers or producers.

My hon. Friend the Member for Waveney rightly laid stress on the importance of giving protection to the consumer. That is a principle to which the Government and the Department of Trade and Industry have always been fully committed. I remind my hon. Friend of a passage in my Department's White Paper of January, 1988:

> "In consumer protection, the policy emphasis will reflect the Government's belief that the best form of protection comes fom consumers making well-informed choices and acting in their own interests. To achieve this, information can be more effective than regulation. However, where the case is made out for regulation on safety or other grounds, the Government will not hesitate to act."

That remains our position.

The consumer already enjoys the protection of a comprehensive and well-developed framework of legislation, backed by effective and equitable mechanisms for redress. The Government provide support to the National Consumer Council and the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, which provides an important source of advice, information and research to consumers.

Legislation, and even the new type of bureaucracy that my hon. Friend the Member for Waveney has suggested, is not necessarily the answer to every perceived problem. New legislation takes time and can often be over-bureaucratic, and that is a danger that exists with my hon. Friend's suggestion. Voluntary response by industry is often quicker and more effective. Consumers have benefited considerably from industry initiatives to develop codes of practice and to provide mechanisms for the resolution of disputes, driven, as ever these matters are, by the need for it to compete in the marketplace and to attract and retain the confidence of consumers in the products that it is offering. An effective consumer policy is a combination of statute law, self-regulation and information.

My hon. Friend the Member for Waveney has spoken about the importance of protecting consumers' rights when goods are bought. The Sale of Goods Act 1979 sets out what the consumer is entitled to expect and provides him with remedies if things go wrong. The Act is one of the most fundamental pieces of our statute law, covering everything, as has been said, from a box of matches to a nuclear submarine. I do not know how many claims have been made under the heading of the second item, but it is one that we like to quote.

No statute can have been more frequently effective—it is usually unseen in its operation—in everyday life. If the average shopper made only three purchases a day, for example, the number of daily transactions governed by the Act would be over 100 million. Under the Act, traders are required to sell goods which are of merchantable quality, which are fit for the purpose and which correspond to their description. Traders cannot exclude these provisions from their contracts with consumers. The Act allows the buyer, if he acts within a reasonable time, to reject goods which are not of merchantable quality and to receive back the purchase price.

If a latent defect comes to light later, after the goods have been in use for some time, the buyer is still entitled to claim damages and this right is not subject to any time limit except the normal rules which apply to the limitation of actions. In awarding damages, the courts would take into account the use the consumer had had from the goods.

Mr. Martyn Jones (Clywd, South-West): This is crucial to the idea of the consumer guarantee mentioned by the hon. Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter). The problem with the Sale of Goods Act is that rejection is the immediate remedy. In the case of a product that is not repairable, which the Minister mentioned, there is only action at law for repair. If a consumer guarantee were enshrined in law, the product would carry a guarantee for replacement or a refund within a statutory period. That would provide a right for consumers that they do not currently enjoy under the Act. The Minister is missing the problem with the Act in dealing with a rogue product.

Mr. Forth: I am aware of the hon. Gentleman's interest in and knowledge of the matter. He and I discussed it recently, and no doubt will do so again, as I am sure I will also discuss it with my hon. Friend the Member for Waveney. I do not claim that the Act is perfect. The hon. Gentleman knows that for some time we have wanted to update it. Neither do I claim that all is perfect with guarantees. However, I am not yet convinced that the National Consumer Council proposal is workable or ideal. I hope that, between us, we can find the best way forward. I shall strive to do so, and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will do so.

The Law Commissions' review of legislation governing the sale and supply of goods, published in 1987, made a number of recommendations that have been accepted by Government. The main recommendation is that the old requirement of merchantable quality should be replaced with an up-to-date term that recognises the aspects of quality—something dear to the hon. Gentleman's heart—which are important for consumers as end-users of the goods in question. The new Act will spell out that the relevant aspects in determining satisfactory quality include fitness for purpose, the appearance and finish of the goods, their freedom from minor as well as major defects, their safety and their durability. The Government have announced their intention to introduce legislation to implement those changes, which will clarify and strengthen consumers' rights.

Some have argued that consumers' rights should go further. The hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friend both said as much. The argument is that the right to reject and to obtain a refund should be a long-term one and should not necessarily expire after a reasonable time. They also argue that latent defects may come to light only afer some time in use. My hon. Friend referred to the famous—some would say notorious—Bernstein case of the motor car that broke down after a limited period.

The House should be aware that the Law Commissions gave very careful consideration to all the arguments when they considered this issue, but they recommended against creating a long-term right of rejection. They argued that such a right would create major commercial uncertainties and be extremely unfair to sellers. Consumers who bought a defective product would, in effect, get free use of it until the defect appeared. The seller would then be obliged to take back a used product and to refund the purchase price in full. Suppliers would be obliged to hedge against the commercial uncertainties of such a regime and the unwelcome implications for consumer prices. I should want to avoid that, and so, I suspect, would other hon. Members.

My hon. Friend welcomed the National Consumer Council's recommendations on consumer guarantees. He urged me not just to consider them, but more or less to adopt them. I have already given them careful consideration, and there is much in them that I want to think about positively. I agree that guarantees should state their terms clearly and in plain English and I could support legislation that would make such guarantees legally enforceable. I fully endorse the view that any guarantee must be additional to existing statutory protection.

But I do not accept that it is necessary to lay down detailed terms or procedures which would attach to specific products covered by consumer guarantees. To do that would be needlessly bureaucratic and would constrain rather than encourage competition on the terms of individual guarantees, and it may result in some manufacturers withdrawing existing guarantees which offer different terms, which could have the effect of leaving consumers less protected than before.

The Sale of Goods Act provides the consumer with a clear right of action against the supplier, who is normally a retailer. The NCC proposals would involve the manufacturer, who is not normally a party to the contract.

[Mr. Forth]

There is a risk that that would result in confusion in some disputes, which might undermine the consumer's rights against the retailer under the Sale of Goods Act.

I would welcome measures that would promote greater transparency of information about guarantees and wider and more open competition in their terms, but the NCC proposals would need more development along those lines before they would attract Government support.

My hon. Friend raised the issue of legal redress in consumer disputes and the problems associated with seeking that redress in some circumstances. Earlier this year, the Lord Chancellor announced, in response to the civil justice review, the introduction of a programme of reforms, designed to improve access to justice by speeding up, simplifying and reducing the cost of civil proceedings.

The Courts and Legal Services Bill permits the Lord Chancellor to replace the present system of jurisdiction with more flexible criteria for allocating business between the High Court and the county courts. This will enable more cases of higher value to be handled and tried in the county courts. Procedural changes, such as a requirement for early exchange of information, the introduction of new pre-trial rules covering more informative pleadings, interrogatories and admission of facts, and the creation of a new system of court control could and should also assist smaller plaintiffs to pursue claims more effectively.

A further development arising out of the civil justice review is the raising of the upper limit for small claims proceedings from £500 to £1,000. I appreciate that that may not be relevant in the case that my hon. Friend cited, but it will be a substantial increase in the facility given to consumers to benefit from the simplified proceedings.

My hon. Friend referred to the problems that his constituents had with the purchase of a motor vehicle. The code of practice for the motor industry is an important supplement to the general law covering the sale of motor cars and it is a good example of self-regulation by the responsible sector of an industry. It provides consumers not only with minimum standards in the sale, repair and servicing of motor cars, but also with a mechanism for resolving disputes that does not entail having to go to court.

The code has the support of the Director General of Fair Trading, who also has a role in monitoring it and keeping it under review. Any proposals for changing the code are a matter betweeen the director general and the trade associations concerned, and any complaint about a member failing to abide by the code should be directed to the trade association and also to the Office of Fair Trading.

A code of practice is not intended to be a substitute for legislation, and it does not act as such. Nor is it designed to be enforced in the same way as legislation is, but codes of practice have distinct advantages over statutes. Because they are voluntary, they represent a genuine desire on the part of the traders concerned to go beyond the letter of the law in their dealings with consumers. Codes are also more flexible than statutes and can be interpreted more liberally and modified more readily. Furthermore, codes such as the motor code provide consumers with valuable alternative facilities for resolving disputes, which may be quicker, cheaper and less intimidating than going to court, particularly in the case of larger claims.

I have tried to answer most of the points raised by my hon. Friend. I have also tried to deal with some of the matters that have been considered by others, including the hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Great Yarmouth, who has been listening, has been persuaded that the Government are aware of the concern shared by many hon. Members in this most important area. We shall always look positively at suggestions that may come forward in the shape of legislation or in any other form. But, above all, our concern is to ensure that we combine what is effective and practical while resisting what may be bureaucratic. In striking that balance, we shall provide the best and most effective protection for the consumer.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at seventeen minutes to One o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 15 December 1989

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITIONS

Broadcasting (Deaf People)

9.34 am

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): I wish to present a petition that is part of a national appeal by 150,000 people who believe that, without adequate subtitling and sign language, deaf people are deprived of the most modern and powerful means of communication for information, entertainment and education. They are right. My good and hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) and some of his constituents wish to be associated with the petition, which reads:

> The broadcasters are not providing complete access for deaf television viewers, for example, with subtitles or sign language; the number of viewers affected are at least four million; deaf viewers, as equal members of the general public, are entitled to equal access to television programmes.
>
> Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House will ensure that legislation be passed placing an obligation on television channel operators to make their programmes more accessible to deaf people by using Teletext subtitles, sign languague or other means and to reach complete coverage by a fixed date.
>
> And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

Ambulance Dispute

9.36 am

Mr. Speaker: The next petition is to be presented by the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook). I understand that there are a large number of signatures—up to 100 boxes. In order to protect the business of the House, which today is precious Back-Bench Members' time, I have had to place some limit on the number of supporting pages that can be brought into the Chamber, but no doubt the hon. Gentleman will inform the House of the total number of signatures that the petition bears.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): On a point of order——

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: No. I shall take the petition first.

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): I wish to present a petition on behalf of ambulance staff, which is signed by 4·5 million electors. Yesterday, when it was presented to myself and my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition, it took six stretchers to convey the boxes into the House. Without questioning your ruling, Mr. Speaker, its effect is that the pile of boxes presented in the Chamber this morning is but a quarter of the total number of signatures collected in the petition.

It is the largest petition presented to Parliament since the new rules were devised 150 years ago. The petition reads:

> that the Ambulance dispute is in need of urgent resolution. Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House urge the Secretary of State for Health to use the good offices of ACAS and agree to arbitration in order to end this unnecessary dispute: and urge the Secretary of State to provide a pay formula for the Ambulance Service similar to that for the other emergency services.

The record size of the petition is a powerful statement of public support for the dedication and courage of ambulance staff. It shows the public dismay that they are still denied arbitration. Its presentation is timely in that it comes just before the busiest week in the year for this vital emergency service.

I appeal to the House and to the Government to listen to this magnificent plea by the public, who need their ambulance service, for a just and urgent settlement to the dispute.

To lie upon the Table.

Mr. Frank Cook: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Allen: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No, I will deal with the other petitions first, and then I shall take points of order.

Mr. Allen: The points of order deal with——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I call Mr. Roger Sims.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): I beg to present a petition.

Mr. Allen: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I have said already that we must deal with the other petitions first.

Mr. Allen: But, Mr. Speaker, the boxes of petitions are already being taken away.

Mr. Speaker: But the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) has placed his petition in the Bag.

Mr. Allen: My hon. Friend has only placed——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am well aware that there will be points of order, and I shall deal with them shortly. I call Mr. Sims.

Broadcasting (Deaf People)

9.39 am

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): I beg to present a petition from Mr. Alan Roberts, himself profoundly deaf, which is part of a national petition presented by the Deaf Broadcasting Council. Its terms are identical to those of the petition already presented by the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley).

To lie upon the Table.

9.40 am

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I beg to present a petition signed by Mrs. G. Menhinnick of Aberdeen and by 4,000 other people from places stretching from Aberdeen to Armagh, and from London to Londonderry, pleading for the cause of the deaf.

To lie upon the Table.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): I present two petitions that are also part of the national campaign by the Deaf Broadcasting Council. One petition has more than 1,000 signatures and originates from my constituency, Moray, and from others such as the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) and of the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), who is present in the Chamber. The other petition has some 4,000 signatures, which were collected in Kent, Surrey and Sussex. I acknowledge the honour of presenting the petitions to the House, and, like the petitioners, humbly pray that the cause that is the subject of the petitions, will be recognised by the Government.

To lie upon the Table.

9.42 am

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): I wish to present a petition from the people of Nottingham, North and from others nearby in respect of the television service provided to the deaf. The petition reads:

> The people of the constituency of Nottingham, North and elsewhere showeth that the broadcasters are not providing complete access for deaf television viewers—for example, with subtitles or sign language. The number of viewers thus affected is at least four million. Deaf viewers, as equal members of the general public, are entitled to equal access to television programmes. Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House will ensure legislation be passed placing an obligation on television channel operators to make their programmes more accessible to deaf people by using teletext, subtitles, sign language, or other means, and to reach complete coverage by a fixed date.

It is a great privilege for me to present that petition to the House.

To lie upon the Table.

9.44 am

Mrs. Rosie Barnes (Greenwich): It gives me great pleasure to present a petition on behalf of more than 100 residents of Greenwich and their concerned relatives and friends, who have an interest in deaf people—who at present feel that they are excluded from participating fully in television viewing. My petition is part of the general petition being presented today.

I share the concerns of my constituents. Deafness is an isolating disability. Not only does the condition itself present special problems, but attitudes to deafness because of its invisibility make those problems much worse. I share the concerns expressed by my petitioners and by other right hon. and hon. Members, who hope that the necessary amendments will be made to the Broadcasting Bill.

To lie upon the Table.

Points of Order

9.45 am

Mr. Speaker: I said earlier that I would take points of order after petitions. I call Mr. Graham Allen.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): My understanding is that the number of signatures to the petition concerning the ambulance dispute that were brought into the Chamber represented one third or less of the total number of signatures that have been collected on street corners and outside supermarkets throughout the length and breadth of the land. At school, many of us learned of the effect of petitions in securing the vote in this House, vividly illustrated by coachloads of petitions arriving here. That may even have been one of the reasons why the rules were changed. Nevertheless, petitions are, and always have been, one of the ways that ordinary people can make their views known to this House. They have not been given an opportunity properly to do so this morning.

Mr. Speaker: No, that is not so.

Mr. Allen: Two thirds of the people who signed the petitions have been denied the right——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot have that. How many boxes of signatures were brought into the Chamber is irrelevant. The right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) presented a petition on behalf of 150,000 people, but he held only a few of its pages in his hand. In terms of our procedure, it is not necessary visibly to demonstrate the number of signatures collected by bringing them all into the Chamber. What is relevant is what is stated in the petition, and the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) explained that his petition was signed by 4·5 million people.

Mr. Allen: With the greatest respect, Mr. Speaker, the physical size of the petition and its visual impact—[HON. MEMBERS: "Ah!"] Yes, I am aware that Conservative Members would not like to see televised a large petition requesting a settlement of the ambulance dispute. Nevertheless, the size of that petition is an important factor. It is one of the largest ever presented to this House. To remove the rights of the majority of the signatories to that petition to have their petition brought into this Chamber is detrimental——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must stop the hon. Gentleman, because he is taking up the time of Back Benchers. It is not a question of a visual impact. We must differentiate between a demonstration of the kind that the hon. Gentleman mentioned and parliamentary practice. It has never been our practice to have that kind of demonstration. We proceed by debate, not be demonstration, and in presenting his petition, the hon. Member for Livingston stated the very large number of signatories to it.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): I do not challenge your ruling, Mr. Speaker, but—*[Interruption.]* If some of the yobs on the Conservative Benches listened rather than sneered, the House might make better progress.

As a member of the Select Committee on Procedure, I should like to raise with you, Mr. Speaker, one or two points and ask you to reflect upon them. You said, Mr. Speaker, that it is your duty to protect the business of this

House. I agree. You know, Mr. Speaker, that there is no one more anxious to assist you in that than myself, because you have frequently referred to some of my methods as maintaining good order and discipline—not always by the most popular means.

I put it to you, Mr. Speaker, that the business of the House includes the presentation of petitions in full, if that is the wish of the petitioners. The points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) concerning the size of the ambulance dispute petition and the effort that has gone into collecting those signatures nationally are most important.

As to the dissent expressed by Government Members in seeking not to allow the size of the petition to be visually demonstrated, I can only agree with the view expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North. If we allow television cameras in this Chamber, the electorate should be allowed to see what happens in this Chamber and——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am constantly enjoined—not least by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner)—not to take account of the television cameras. Am I not?

Mr. Skinner: I will tell you in a moment, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Well, I am constantly enjoined not to take account of the television cameras, but it is true that the television cameras should now show what happens in the Chamber. Nevertheless, I am concerned—as is the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook), as a member of the Procedure Committee—to protect the interests of the whole House. The wise thing would be for the Procedure Committee, of which the hon. Gentleman is a distinguished, important and influential member, to consider the matter in terms of the future. I ask the House to reflect on what might happen to our procedures if the presentation of large petitions became a regular practice.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield) *rose*——

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East) *rose*——

Mr. Frank Cook *rose*——

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I call Mr. Leigh.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It would seem from the words of the hon. Members for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) and for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) that, although the presentation of petitions is one of the most cherished rights of Back Benchers, certain hon. Members are more concerned this morning with providing an event for the media than with seriously influencing the House.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The House exists to protect the rights of the people of this country, who are not expected to modify their demands in the interests of parliamentary business on any one day. Your judgment, or decision, and subsequent announcement, Mr. Speaker, sets an absolute precedent in the history of parliamentary procedure.

When petitions were initiated, it no doubt annoyed the King very much that he had to listen to what was said by his subjects; he probably regarded that as a great embarrassment. The right was won, however, although it fell into desuetude because no one took any notice of petitions. People popped them into the box and told their constituents that they had done so; sometimes the petitions were presented in the House.

There is no shame in referring to the televising of the House: *Hansard* also covers its proceedings. Now, for the first time, people can see the link between what they do and what happens here, and if that link is broken on the ground that it interferes with the order of business, it is an affront to parliamentary democracy.

Mr. Speaker *rose*——

Mr. Benn: Let me finish, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Gentleman is going well beyond the bounds of what he should say in a point of order; however, he may continue.

Mr. Benn: I do not wish to give offence to you, Mr. Speaker; I wish to assert an ancient right. The fact is that three quarters of a million people who signed that petition believing that it would be presented physically to Parliament have been told today that, because of the business of the House, it cannot be brought in. If 4·5 million people had signed a petition in Prague or Warsaw, all the news media in Britain would have featured programmes about it for a week.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Benn: But, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: No. The right hon. Gentleman, whose historical memories and judgment we all respect, should reflect on the nature of the ancient custom of presenting petitions. I am seeking to protect that. Whenever what may be considered an abuse occurs, new rules are introduced.

Mr. Allen: Presenting a petition is not an abuse.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I agree, and am anxious to preserve this ancient practice, but it has always been the custom to place petitions in the Bag, and it is patently not possible to place 100 boxes of petitions in the Bag.

Our practice today is really a symbolic procedure. As I have said, the number of petitions brought into the Chamber is irrelevant. The televising of the House may well provide a visual demonstration of the procedure, but the hon. Members for Livingston (Mr. Cook) and for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) correctly stated the number of signatures, and the number of boxes that is brought in does not really matter.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I have the highest regard for the tradition of presenting petitions in the House—and, indeed, for the ambulance men whose action prompted today's petition. Is it not the case, however, that you are faced with the difficult task of balancing the rights of petitioners with those of hon. Members? It is particularly regrettable—and, I am sure, would not be appreciated by the ambulance men—that, on a day devoted to Back-Bench motions, the Opposition Front Bench should try to take time from Back Benchers.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I think that it is all a matter of judgment. The television argument can be looked at both ways. An experimental period lasting a few months has now begun, after which the House will make a decision. Surely this is neither the time nor the place for a decision to cut the number of petitions about such a sensitive issue as the case of the ambulance crews, which is a political hot potato both inside and outside the House.

Contrary to what you said in response to my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), the fact that the cut has happened during the experimental period is, in a sense, due to the intrusion of the television cameras. It has been said that business has been disrupted by petitions, and such procedures can inconvenience many people, but I would argue that private Bills offend many people and could also be regarded as an intrusion. Indeed, I have said as much many times.

There are two reasons why today's judgment should not have been made. First, the cameras are here and it looks as though you, Mr. Speaker, have acted in a certain way because they are here; secondly, this was not just a run-of-the-mill all-party petition, but one that represented the views of the Opposition versus those of the Government.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let me repeat—I think that the whole House will understand the point—that this is a debating Chamber, where we argue out our differences. That is the object of the petition presented by the hon. Member for Livingston this morning. He put his case very strongly, and I have no doubt that the 100 boxes contained a great many, but not all the signatures: that is not in dispute. I repeat, however, that it is not absolutely necessary to bring all of them into the Chamber. The hon. Gentleman placed the top sheet of his petition in the Bag, which is proper parliamentary procedure.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As you know, today's business is a motion on an important topic, set down in my name. I thank you for the protection that you have attempted to give me—and, through me, all Back Benchers whose day for debate this is—against what is evidently an organised attempt by Opposition Members to frustrate the order of business.

It is extraordinary that Opposition Members should apparently be far more interested in debating whether a few dozen cardboard boxes should be brought into the Chamber than in debating the future of Socialism. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have not yet called the hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) to make his opening speech, but I hope to do so shortly. What is his point of order?

Mr. Hamilton: I merely wished to thank you for protecting me, and for protecting other hon. Members on both sides of the House.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that it would be wise, and would protect the procedures of the House, if this whole matter of petitions were drawn to the attention of the Procedure Committee. I am very willing to be guided by the Committee, which is already considering the number of petitions that may reasonably be presented on any one day. I think that its scope should be widened to enable it also to consider the number of boxes that may be brought into the Chamber on any one day.

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): On a separate point of order, Mr. Speaker. Would it be in order for me to draw to the House's attention the death last night of my predecessor, Laurie Pavitt? He first came to the House in 1959 as Member for Willesden, West and subsequently served as Member for Brent, South until the last general election. He was a doughty champion of the National Health Service, and will be remembered with warm affection by hon. Members on both sides of the House. His life represented all that is best in Socialism—peace, justice and joy. He was a warm and kind man, and I know that the House will wish to pass on its condolences to his widow Rose and his two children.

Mr. Speaker: The whole House will subscribe to what the hon. Gentleman has said about his predecessor. whose friendships spanned the Chamber, and who was greatly respected here.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it on a different matter?

Mr. Barnes: It is on the matter mentioned earlier.

Mr. Speaker: No, I shall not take any more points of order on that.

Future of Socialism

9.57 am

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I beg to move,

That this House takes note of the incalculable cost in human lives and poverty imposed upon the world by communist regimes and socialism in all its forms; welcomes the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the withering away of socialism in Western democracies; and recognises the important role played in these processes by Her Majesty's Government, firstly through its determination to maintain strong defences, thereby creating the conditions for political change in Eastern Europe, and, secondly, through the success of its free market policies in inspiring socialist parties in the East and West to abandon much of their ideology in order to secure peace and prosperity.

I think that there will still be time for me to finish my speech, despite the attempt at organised disruption with which our proceeding began this morning.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As a conscientious Member of the House, I resent hearing efforts by my hon. Friends and myself to protect the rights of the electorate described by a Conservative Member as "organised disruption."

Mr. Speaker: Order. Who said that? [HON. MEMBERS: "He did".] Order. Today is Friday, and it is a private Members' day. I am not disposed to allow organised disruption of any kind. I should tell the House that I have not selected the amendment in the name of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn).

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I am taking no more points of order.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for protecting me also from my hon. Friends.

I begin my speech on a sombre note, introduced by the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng), but the gentleman whose memory I should like to salute today is that of Dr. Andrei Sakharov, whose death was announced on the radio this morning. Dr. Sakharov represented the indomitable spirit of individual liberty. He survived decades of attempts by a monstrous tyranny to crush him and the principles of freedom, democracy and liberty for which he stood. In that, if in nothing else that I shall say, I hope that I carry the whole House with me in saluting his memory and sending our best wishes and condolences to his widow and to all those for whom Dr. Sakharov, in the Soviet Union and throughout the world, was an inspiration.

Sixty-six years ago, another Back-Bench Member drew first place in the ballot for private Member's Bills—Mr. Philip Snowden, the first Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer. He introduced rather a different kind of motion on Socialism from mine. It drew attention to what he called the failure of capitalism. I have decided to introduce the debate to exorcise the notion that Mr. Snowden introduced all those years ago. His biography gives some of the background to that debate.

Most interestingly, it shows that in the days before television there was considerable interest in the proceedings of this House. Mr. Snowden said:

"The interest in the debate I was to raise was . . . intense, both in Parliament and in the country. For a week before it took place the newspapers had paragraphs and articles every day, and members of Parliament were inundated with requests from their constituents for tickets for the Strangers' Gallery. Socialists from all parts of the country were ready to come to London for this historic occasion".

I regret to say that there seem to be very few Socialists, particularly Labour Members, who have been prepared to come to London today to participate in this important debate. There are only five here today—admittedly, five distinguished Labour Members. It is a matter of particular regret that only such a small number seem to be interested in the future of the grand political philosophy in which they believe.

Mr. Snowden then said:

"On the day the debate was to take place the Outer Lobbies were crowded with men and women who had come down in the vain expectation that by some fortunate accident they might be able to get admission to the House."

In consequence of the intense interest in the debate, Mr. Bonar Law, who was then Prime Minister, was asked if he would give further time for the debate to be continued and properly discussed. I am happy to say that in those more enlightened days, he gave a whole day of Government time to debate the future of Socialism in this country.

Mr. Tim Boswell (Daventry): I was disappointed by something that my hon. Friend said at the beginning of his remarks before the first interruption and by the general tenor of his argument so far. Surely, this message should not take very long to get over. Why does my hon. Friend need additional time to debate what is already on the way out?

Mr. Hamilton: I have to admit that it is difficult to get the message across, although not to my hon. Friends. Despite decades of experience of Socialism and its failure in this country, it does not yet seem to have got through to Opposition Members that what they believe in has been a disaster for the people of this country and for people throughout the world. I hope that the way in which I wish to rationalise the experience of the last 50 or 60 years will at last convince them that their true path lies in crossing the Floor of the House and joining us.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Before my hon. Friend leaves the subject of Philip Snowden, does he recollect that he betrayed Socialism by joining the national Government in 1931, and that he died a convinced capitalist?

Mr. Hamilton: I am sure that that point will appeal to at least two hon. Gentlemen and one hon. Lady on the Opposition Benches. The hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), who is sitting on the Opposition Front Bench, may take a different view, because I imagine that he intends to tread a rather different path

I wondered who might answer the debate from the Treasury Bench. Which Minister, I asked myself, is responsible in our Government for the future of Socialism? There is, of course, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, whose Department is responsible for endangered species. Would it be my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) whose responsibility within the Department of Trade and Industry is for matters concerning intellectual property? However, I did not think that that would be quite apposite in this instance. Then there is my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood), another Minister in the Department of Trade and Industry, whose responsibility is for bankruptcy. If we had conflated those two

[Mr. Hamilton]

responsibilities, one of them could have come here today with responsibility for intellectual bankruptcy and adequately answered this debate.

However, I am delighted to see that my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) is on the Treasury Bench—the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the county of the red rose. I am certain that that is the reason why he has been selected, in addition to his formidable debating abilities, to be with us today.

I am sure that you will agree with me, Madam Deputy Speaker, that a crisis exists in the Communist world and, I contend, in the Socialist world more widely. A few redoubts of the old regime still exist. Romania comes instantly to mind. Unfortunately, I no longer have quite enough time to emulate President Ceausescu's great six-hour oration before the latest party congress. However, I may be able to say as much as he did, if my hon. Friends will control themselves and not give me the 67 standing ovations that President Ceausescu won on that occasion.

In addition to Romania, there are Chesterfield, Bolsover, Liverpool, Walton and a few other redoubts of Socialism left in this country. I think it is fair to say that the international Socialist movement has suffered a stroke and that the left side of its body is completely paralysed.

The hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) recognises that that has happened in the Labour party. In the edition of *Militant* which was published on 1 December —a newspaper that is still widely read in Birkenhead and other parts of the country—the hon. Gentleman is quoted as saying that the Labour party has swung to the Right. He complains of

> "the abandonment of genuine socialist concepts, a trend which has developed throughout the European socialist movement".

I am delighted to have confirmation of the first part of my motion.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): I have been saying that for years.

Mr. Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman says that he has been saying that for years. The hon. Gentleman has been instrumental in teaching me that, in truth, the Socialist movement has collapsed and is in terminal decline. I have the greatest possible respect for the hon. Gentleman. I am sure that, in this also, I carry all my hon. Friends with me when I say that he is a valued Member of the House. I was very sorry to hear that he has decided to retire at the next general election. In the terminology of Marxism, the hon. Gentleman is a worker and an intellectual. He is certainly not, in my opinion, a peasant. There are those on that side of the House to whom that description might apply, although happily none of them has thought fit to be with us today.

As for the extent to which the change in the Labour party to which the hon. Member for Walton referred has taken place, I began by musing on which Minister would be on the Treasury Bench to answer the debate. A more interesting question was who would be sitting on the Opposition Front Bench to speak for Socialism. We might have chosen many candidates for that august position. The hon. Member for Hamilton, who no doubt wandered in out of curiosity to see what would happen today, found himself unwittingly in the position of having to give us the Labour party's views on the future of Socialism.

Perhaps it is only a coincidence, although it may not be, that he is the Member of Parliament for the Hamilton constituency. *[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), who is rarely heard in this House so I am delighted to refer to his remark and get it on record, says that that is a tribute to me. I am delighted that there is now a shadow spokesman for Hamilton. I hope that we shall see the hon. Gentleman very much more frequently in that position.

Not everyone accepts that Socialism is collapsing. I refer to the debate in the House on eastern Europe on 1 December in which a number of distinguished speeches were made by Opposition Members, including the hon. Member for Walton. The hon. Gentleman does not believe that Socialism is in a state of collapse, as he believes that all the countries in eastern Europe that are now in crisis are not Socialist countries. He said:

> "Many of us who are, I hope, genuine Socialists, have never believed that what has existed in the Soviet Union is a Socialist society."—*[Official Report*, 1 December 1989; Vol. 162, c. 978.]

He considers that neither the countries behind the Iron Curtain—East Germany, Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, the Soviet Union—nor those countries where moderate Socialist Governments have abandoned their theories, such as New Zealand, Australia, Spain or West Germany—I could list a catalogue of them around the world—are Socialist countries.

So it appears that the countries that we have accepted as Socialist or Communist are not Communist because they have never been Communist, and those countries which have never had Communist Governments are not Socialist because they are capitalist. So the hon. Member for Walton imagines that there has never been a true democratic Socialist country. I believe that there are good reasons for accepting that view, because wherever voters are given the opportunity to reject Socialism, they do so, and that is now happening throughout eastern Europe.

The pursuit of abstractions such as those that no doubt will be voiced today by Opposition Members has produced all the tyrannies that are now throwing off their shackles. It was said of Robespierre that mankind was everything to him and men were nothing. Despite the humane and tolerant attitudes of individual Opposition Members, those ideals have produced some of the more bestial tyrannies in the world in the past 200 years.

It is an inconstestable fact that there are no refugees from liberal capitalist countries such as ours or any of the other countries that have followed our example. All refugees come from countries that in some shape or form are in thrall to some variety of Communism or Socialism. I hope that Opposition Members now reproach themselves for the line that they took in the 1960s and 1970s when, however inadequately and efficiently, we were attempting to create some form of democratic or liberal capitalist system in Vietnam, which was ultimately overthrown by invasion from the north, and now a Socialist, Communist tyranny has been imposed upon its people from which the only escape is to get into small boats and sail across the ocean.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): On the very day that the Chilean republic has elected its first democratic president following a despotic Right-wing military regime, will the hon. Gentleman now face the fact that large numbers of refugees from that capitalist free market model litter all the countries of the free world willing to give them asylum?

Mr. Hamilton: President Pinochet has accepted the result of the plebiscite in Chile, and I am sure that we all approve of that. I am delighted that today we have heard the results of a free election. President Pinochet, whom I have not come here to defend, took over the Government of Chile in the midst of much turmoil and confusion. I am delighted that his undemocratic regime has now been translated into a democratic one, and, in the process, over the past 15 years through the application of Thatcherite nostrums, the economy of Chile has transformed from one of the most shambolic countries in south America into one of the most advanced.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): Will my hon. Friend note that it is significant that the Opposition in Chile did not field a Socialist candidate? Does he consider that that is particularly relevant to the situation there?

Mr. Hamilton: I certainly do. My hon. Friend has a very deep knowledge of South America and speaks from personal experience.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way, but I have forgotten the point I was about to raise.

Mr. Hamilton: In the debate on eastern Europe, on 1 December, the hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields) made a very distinguished speech. In some respects he joined the hon. Member for Walton in his analysis of the political changes in eastern Europe, but, unlike almost all other commentators, who say that it is undoubtedly a crisis of Communism and Socialism, the hon. Member for Broadgreen reached the conclusion that the turmoil in the Soviet Union and eastern Europe shows

> "that there is an international crisis of capitalism".

Conservative Members may find it difficult to follow the logic of that.

Mr. Harry Barnes *rose*——

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Is my hon. Friend aware that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) has just remembered his point? Will my hon. Friend therefore give way to him immediately?

Mr. Hamilton: My hon. Friend obviously believes that it will add force to my remarks, so I certainly shall give way to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East.

Mr. Harry Barnes: I refer to the hon. Gentleman's point about Thatcherism in connection with Chile. He claimed that, because of correct monetarist policies, as the hon. Gentleman sees them, under the Pinochet regime the economy of Chile has improved, making it possible for democracy to be introduced. Is it not interesting that the major impact of Thatcherism, which claims to be associated with individualism, seems to have worked most effectively in a dictatorial system? Is that not relevant to the notion of Thatcherism in Britain?

Mr. Hamilton: No, that is not correct, because the best examples of the workings of Thatcherism are in the country that gave rise to it. We have led the way in the economic policy which has transformed Britain—and many other Socialist countries which were on the verge of collapse—from the shambles of 1979 into mainstream economic success.

The hon. Member for Broadgreen believes that there is an international crisis of capitalism. He said:

> "The crisis in eastern Europe has nothing to do with Socialism or Communism".

He referred to the Soviet Union, saying:

> "All went well under the plan until about 10 years ago."—[*Official Report*, 1 December 1989; Vol. 162, c. 988.]

Presumably, for the hon. Member for Broadgreen, the disaster was the death of President Brezhnev. That is a somewhat unusual view, but we should devote a small amount of time to it, as it is evidently a view which is of some importance in the Labour party.

The hon. Gentleman has tabled an early-day motion calling for the true spirit of the October revolution of 1917 to be restored in the Soviet Union. I do not know what the hon. Member for Hamilton will have to say about that. No doubt, appealing to his own Back Benchers, he will devote a certain amount of time to it. The truth is that, for 70-odd years, until very recently the Soviet Union was a prison which enslaved millions of its people and caused millions of deaths under the Leninist and Stalinist dictatorships and what succeeded them, including the deaths of many distinguished men such as Dr. Sakharov. Chronic incompetence in economic affairs turned a country which was a major exporter of grain under the Tsars into a major importer that cannot feed its own people, where the staples of ordinary everyday life are unavailable to ordinary workers and citizens. It has been a militarist totalitarian dictatorship. Although we all welcome its imminent demise, I am sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House recognise that the October revolution, in so far as it gave rise to that, was an unmitigated disaster for the entire human race.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Thousands, if not millions, of peasants starved under the Tsars while they were exporting grain. What does the hon. Gentleman have to say about that?

Mr. Hamilton: I am not supporting feudalism: the chairman of the Feudal party stood against me at the last general election. However, the rate of economic advance in Russia in the early years of the century was considerable. Had liberal capitalist economic and political structures been allowed to develop, instead of being nipped in the bud by the October revolution in 1917, Russia would today be one of the richest countries in the world, enjoying one of the highest standards of living.

The political effects of the October revolution gave rise to a monstrous tyranny. The hon. Member for Broadgreen admires the late Leon Trotsky. An analysis of Trotsky's works shows why the October revolution inevitably gave rise to a political tyranny on the back of an incompetent economic tyranny. Trotsky said:

> "In a country where the sole employer is the State, opposition means death by slow starvation. The old principle —who does not work shall not eat has been replaced by a new one: who does not obey shall not eat."

That is the history of the past 70 years in the Soviet Union.

It is the suppression of markets in Russia that has produced the poverty and the tyranny.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does my hon. Friend recall that John Bright, whose centenary was celebrated

[Mr. William Cash]

this year—the advocate of free trade and democracy—was Karl Marx's greatest opponent in the 1840s and 1850s, when Marx was developing his notions of Communism which lie at the root of the demise of the Soviet Union today?

Mr. Hamilton: I accept entirely what my hon. Friend says.

It is the suppression of markets that has produced the political conditions in the Soviet Union. I forget who said that, if the Soviet Union successfully invaded the Sahara desert, nothing would happen for 10 years and then there would be a shortage of sand. That is the story of the Soviet Union. It is richly endowed with natural resources but has been constitutionally incapable of exploiting them successfully.

The human face of Socialism, which is authentically represented by the hon. Member for Walton is an impossibility because of the nature of mankind. When we centralise power, we encourage the worst instincts of humankind and produce the kind of state that we now see withering away.

There is no example of a state with a centralised or command economy that has managed to preserve political liberties. E. H. Carr—no Right-wing Conservative—said:

> "It is significant that the nationalisation of thought has proceeded everywhere pari passu with the nationalisation of industry."

The philosophy espoused by the hon. Member for Walton is a fantasy that can never be translated into a reality. As we know well, power corrupts—or tends to—and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

The scale of corruption in eastern Europe is now being revealed. I am sure that all hon. Members have read with interest the recent reports from East Germany about the standard of living which was enjoyed by the top dogs of the political system—a system supposedly based on equality—which contrasts markedly with the miserable living conditions of the people groaning under their yoke. I am sure that we have all seen television photographs of Mr. Honecker's magnificent country estate at Wandlitz outside Berlin. It has now been turned into a 400-bed hospital for the handicapped.

The top Communist party officials in East Germany had 6,745 miles of territory in New Brandenberg designated as their hunting reserves. Some £2 million is said to have been diverted from a special state fund in 1988 for the upkeep of those estates for the privileged. The veteran trade union leader Mr. Harry Tisch had a sprawling hunting estate which required 35 full-time gamekeepers to look after the lodge.

The *Berliner Zeitung* newspaper reported that a luxury home was being built for Gerhard Nemmstiel, the leader of the country's metalworkers' union. The paper also revealed that DM 250,000 were held illegally in foreign bank accounts by another trade union leader. Mr. Alexander Schalck-Golodkowski, who ran the foreign trade agency of East Germany, who has also achieved some celebrity because of the kickbacks that he was being paid by countries in Latin America, the middle east and Africa, which were then paid into Swiss bank accounts. He announced that he is willing to return to East Germany up to £22 million which had been siphoned off, to partly repay his depredations. However, he is not keen to return to answer the charges now that the country is no longer controlled by the Communist party.

I know that some Opposition Members are true Socialists who do not seek personal enrichment but there are many cases of personal enrichment among those who espouse even a very Left-wing brand of Socialism. Mr. Clive Jenkins has now taken his millions off to Australia.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): His minions?

Mr. Hamilton: Millions, not minions—my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne may be referring to his mistress.

We can find many similar examples. The decentralisation of economic decision-taking reduces corruption and political power and hence the chance of tyranny. The great John Keynes, although no Right-wing Conservative, said in "The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money":

> "There are valuable human activities which require the motive of money-making and the environment of private wealth-ownership for their full fruition . . . Dangerous human proclivities can be canalized, into comparatively harmless channels by the existence of opportunities for money-making and private wealth, which, if they cannot be satisfied in this way, may find their outlet in cruelty, the reckless pursuit of personal power and authority, and other forms of self-aggrandisement.
>
> It is better that a man should tyrannize over his bank balance than over his fellow citizens."

That is a true analysis of the circumstances we are debating.

The collapse in eastern Europe owes much to the unity and firmness of western countries, particularly over the past 10 years.

Through our strong defence policies, as my motion says, and through our successful economies, we have shown that the Soviet bloc is incapable of keeping up with us because it does not have the same rate of economic advance as us. It cannot compete with weapons modernisation and the quantity of armaments required to oppress its own people and to extend that repression around the world.

We owe a debt to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and to President Reagan. Had it not been for them, I do not believe that the NATO Alliance would have been so successful in the past 10 years in the defence of freedom against the real threat of Communist tyranny from the East.

The Labour party showed no firmness of resolve on defence in the 1973 or 1987 general elections. No doubt the Soviet Union was looking carefully at the 1987 election because if we had a Labour Government now who were not committed to a strong defence policy, one part of the incentive for change in eastern Europe would not have existed. After all it was my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister who first recognised the leadership qualities of President Gorbachev when he was a member of the Politburo. She said that she could do business with him.

President Reagan, like the Leader of the Opposition, was not a man for detail but he was able to grasp the simplicities of freedom. We owe him a great debt of gratitude. The strategic defence initiative and the modernisation programme of nuclear weapons ultimately showed the Soviet bloc that it could not win. The bankruptcy of Communism is now recognised worldwide.

That leads me to the second part of my motion, referring to the "withering away" of Socialism outside the Communist bloc. I believe that 1975-76 saw the beginning of this great movement. The election of my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) as the leader of the Conservative party in 1972 brought about a significant change in the political ethos of the United Kingdom. Since 1979, we have introduced many permanent changes. it has been the sort of irreversible shift, although in a different direction, to which the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) frequently refers. In 1976, my hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced that she was undertaking a crusade not merely to put a temporary block on Socialism but to stop its onward march once and for all. I believe that that is what we are achieving.

Socialist parties throughout the world are now in headlong retreat. In Australia, there is a Labour Government under the leadership of Mr. Hawke. They have decided to float the dollar. They have reduced taxes and they have a budget surplus of A$5·5 billion. They have cut tariffs and they have targeted welfare spending.

The same is true in New Zealand. The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) is a distinguished export from New Zealand. No doubt anticipating the death of Socialism in his country, he decided that his only future was in the Labour party in Britain, which is one of the few Socialist parties in the world in which a significant number of members remain wedded to outmoded and exploded class-war concepts.

In New Zealand, an even more radical Thatcherite programme has been pushed through in the past four years. The Government have abolished exchange controls, subsidies for industry and agriculture, an incomes policy and rent controls and energy price controls. There has been a mammoth programme of privatisation. There have been massive tax reductions, and the top income tax rate is now 33p in the pound.

Spain, too, has a Socialist Government. My hon. Friend the Treasurer of Her Majesty's Household, who sits in his place on the Government Front Bench, has no doubt had an important part to play in the conversion of the Socialist party in Spain into a Thatcherite party. The Spanish Government are engaged in a mammoth privatisation programme that includes the coal and electricity industries.

Mr. Gow: Is it not part of the complaint of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) and of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) that the occupants of the Opposition Front Bench have been partly converted to Thatcherism?

Mr. Hamilton: My hon. Friend, with his usual perspicacity, has anticipated the next part of my speech. I intend to devote some attention to the somewhat embarrassing position in which the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) finds himself as he languishes on the Opposition Front Bench.

Germany abandoned any pretence of Socialism long ago. Even France, recoiling from the disaster of the early years of the leadership of President Mitterrand, is now engaged in the demolition of the Socialist state.

In Latin America, apart from some revolutionary paradises of the sort represented by Nicaragua, Socialism is in headlong retreat throughout the continent. I have a great expert on Latin America sitting behind me in the form of my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold). In Honduras, a free-market, United States-trained economist has been elected President. In Uruguay, a privatisation advocate has been elected in the first free elections since 1971. In Peru, Mario Vargos Llosa leads in the election campaign, despite the worst excesses of Marxist guerrillas there. Chile has already been mentioned this morning.

In Mexico, President Portillo—no relation, I am sure, of my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo), the Minister for Public Transport—nationalised the banks in 1982. He having been succeeded by a more free-market leader, Mexico has been denationalising on a large scale. Opposition Members may have read in *The Economist* not so long ago that Aeromexico had a strike as a result of a protest about the cancellation of uneconomic routes and the sale of 13 airliners. The Mexican Government responded by declaring the company bankrupt, sacking all the employees and putting all the aeroplanes up for sale. I believe that that is symptomatic of changes that are taking place in Socialist movements throughout the world.

In Britain, the Labour party has spent the last 10 years in implacable opposition to all the changes, of whatever sort, that the Government have introduced, on the basis of which a transformation has taken place. If matters were left to them, we would still be stuck in the world of the 1970s of corporatism, failure and decline. In answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), there has been some superficial change in the leadership of the Labour party. It is now only the Bourbons of Bexley and Sidcup who support unreconstructed and arbitrary interventionism without apology. The leader of the Labour party deserves some credit for dragging the Labour party into the 20th century, just in time for the rest of us to enter the 21st century.

Mr. Gow: Is it not a complaint of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield that the Leader of the Opposition will abandon any principle and change any policy in pursuit of his overriding objective, which is to secure power at any price? Is that not also the complaint of the hon. Member for Walton?

Mr. Hamilton: I believe that there is much common ground between the hon. Member for Walton, the right hon. Member for Chesterfield and my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne. I believe that we shall hear a considerable amount of agreement expressed across the Floor of the House during this debate. Although the hon. Member for Hamilton is being subjected to a barrage of criticism from my hon. Friends and me, he is about to be subjected to an even greater barrage from those who sit behind him. He will be ground between the upper and the nether millstones of the Government and the leader of the opposition to the Leader of the Opposition.

The Labour party has been engaged in a policy review for some time. This has resulted in the dropping of many of its policies, and they have not been replaced by new policies. I am beginning to think that the policy review was about whether the Labour party should have any policy at all. Some Labour Members do not like the results of the review. The hon. Member for Walton said not so long ago:

> "There are . . . suggestions that policies on housing, defence, etc., must be further changed to make them more

[Mr. Hamilton]

> palatable to the Establishment and the USA. I trust that the party will reject such false advice . . . and that our policies will not be further watered down."

The right hon. Member for Chesterfield said:

> "There is a real risk that . . . we could come to be seen as a purely opportunistic party that is prepared to say anything to get into office and is ready to sacrifice good policies when the opinion polls swing against us."

The Government Front Bench and the Conservative party represent the principle of equality of opportunity. Those who occupy the Opposition Front Bench represent nothing but the equality of opportunism; I agree with the right hon. Member for Chesterfield about that.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) made this announcement on 16 June:

> "There is not a single policy issue or a cause, no matter how worth while, which . . . is more important to us than winning the next general election."

Therein lies the key to what is going on in the Labour party. There are some men of principle on the Opposition Benches who cannot stomach this. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas), who I am sorry not to see in his place, said recently:

> "I sadly fundamentally find myself at odds with the current Labour credo that power and the desire to win is more important than principle."

As a result, the hon. Gentleman has decided that he will not seek re-election to the House at the next general election.

We have been seeing a sort of Boston tea party, with the Labour party jettisoning electoral liabilities wherever they are discovered. The Labour party is attempting to convince the British people that it has changed. The reality is that, if it were ever to form a Government, the same old Labour party would once again be revealed.

Nowhere do we see this trickery more blatantly than with the Labour party's defence policy. It has decided, supposedly, to drop its unilateral nuclear disarmament policy, but the Leader of the Opposition remains a member of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. Either he believes in the policy of the CND or he believes in what is supposed to be the policy of his party. He cannot believe in both; he has to make the choice.

The Labour party has said that there should be no something-for-nothing disarmament, but the Leader of the Opposition has said:

> "There are no circumstances in which I would order or permit the firing of a nuclear weapon."

If we have a Prime Minister who supports that view, we shall effectively have disarmed, although we may still have nuclear weapons. If they are not to be used, they will be useless. By retaining nuclear weapons on that basis, the Labour party is retaining a worthless extravagance. In so far as it has changed its defence policy, it has done so not to improve the defensive capabilities of this country but to improve its chances of defending itself against the British electorate at the next election.

Mr. Bruce Kent, who is now a member of the Labour party——

Mr. Gow: Monsignor.

Mr. Hamilton: I think that he is an ex-monsignor. Just before the Labour party conference, he put an advertisement in a newspaper, in which he offered £50 for information leading to the discovery of any Labour party national executive committee members willing to defend in open public debate their defence policy review before the party conference. There were no takers; it may be that £50 is no longer an attraction to Labour Members, and that, because of Thatcherite prosperity their expectations are far higher. However, it was significant that no one was prepared to debate that with Bruce Kent, the great guru of CND.

In a dramatic outbreak of fraternity, the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone), who regrettably is not present today—in that, at least, he is consistent—recently said of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman):

> "You do not seek Kaufman any more. He has crawled so far up the backside of NATO you can't see the soles of his feet."

In his usual elegant manner of speech, the hon. Member exposed the dilemma in which the Labour party finds itself today: it dare not speak the language of Socialism, although it still harbours thoughts of it.

As with its defence policy—it has remained the same while attempting to appear different—with its economic policy the Labour party has changed its tune, although the same song is still hummed in private. No longer does it talk of privatisation—now, it is social ownership. We know that it got itself into some difficulties recently over the highly successful flotation of the water companies.

Conservative Members need no reminding that the hon. Member for Dagenham let the cat out of the bag. He hinted that, if Labour were to win the next election, dividend controls would be placed on the water companies, which might result in no dividends being paid. That would rob millions of ordinary people and pension funds, on which many more ordinary people will depend in years to come for the fruits of their investments and, as a result, water shares would fall rapidly in price.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Does not the fact that, in spite of those threats, millions of people were prepared to buy water shares show just how far away they think a Labour Government may be?

Mr. Hamilton: That is true. I attempted to buy water shares to express my confidence in that view. Unfortunately, as I forgot to sign the form, I shall not benefit from my investment perspicuity.

Mr. Oppenheim: Is my hon. Friend aware that he is in extremely good company in that respect? The chief whip and one of the leading lights of the Labour group on Derbyshire county council not only acquired shares when British Telecom was privatised but has acquired further shares in it since? That shows that it is not too late to learn, even for Labour Members.

Mr. Hamilton: I should not be at all suprised if, in the secrecy of the ballot box, he votes for my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim).

The Leader of the Opposition swiftly rebuked the hon. Member for Dagenham for his honesty in revealing the truth about the Labour party's policy on nationalisation. But is that the same right hon. Gentleman who only a few years ago said that there was

> "No need to be apologetic about the extension of public ownership or the establishment of workers' control"?

Of course, that was before he joined the ambitious tendency. Now that he smells office he thinks that he can no longer afford the price of his former principles.

Not every change in the Labour party policy review is a fudge, because the union paymasters will still claim their post-dated cheques. The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), who was and may still be for all I know, its employment spokesman, finds it difficult to adjust to the new regime of the voter-friendly Labour leadership. He said:

> "There can be no justification for limiting the freedom of workers to seek external assistance"

in industrial disputes.

Speaking on behalf of the Labour party on employment matters, he has committed it, in effect, to the repeal of all the trade union legislation that we have introduced over the past 10 years to enfranchise the ordinary trade union member against the tyranny of the trade union bosses, to the immeasurable advantage of British industry. That has been a major ingredient in the transformation of a failing and demoralised industrial sector into one of the leading industrial sectors in the world.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West has said that the Labour party will scrap the limit of six pickets in disputes. We shall return to the mass intimidation that we saw during the miners' strike, which was not opposed but supported by the Labour party at the time. We shall return to things such as the Saltley coke works picket, to riots and to the Grunwick picket lines. The Labour party has made it clear that, if it wins the next election, it will undo all the good work that we have done over the past few years.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West was even more unequivocal about judges, on whom he is not very keen. He thinks that they are class-based and anti-trade union. In *Tribune* on 1 September, he proposed regular assessments of judges to ensure that they conformed to the Socialist norms that he wishes to introduce.

I shall not go on for much longer, because I am anxious to allow Labour Members to add to the telling points that I have been making, but I cannot resist examining, for just a few minutes, the economic policy of the Labour party, as adumbrated by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith).

The Labour party believes that a number of cardinal principles must be applied to economic policy. Taxes and spending are always too low, and interest rates are always too high. It is always opposed to sensible economic policies and believes in high spending. It went before the British electorate in 1987 with a £34 billion programme, on the basis of which it was resoundingly rejected. It has not resiled from that high spending, although it is being rather more canny about its commitments.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East—the Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer—was recently asked about his policies on credit controls. He found it difficult to say what he would do if, when the Labour party took office, it was faced with rampaging inflation. His idea was that he would appeal to the international banks for their co-operation in restricting lending. Japanese bankers were to be approached, no doubt over a jolly good lunch of beer and sandwiches at No. 10——

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Over sake and sandwiches.

Mr. Hamilton: —over sake and sandwiches at No. 10—and asked to co-operate with a Labour Government to reduce inflation. Past Labour Governments have had close relationships with banks. I am sure that older hon. Members will recall the gnomes of Zurich during the first period of office of Lord Wilson of Rievaulx. The leaders of the last Labour Government had close relations with the international banks.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East misunderstands the nature of the relationship between the Labour party and the banks. It is not the Labour party that persuades the banks to do its bidding, but the Labour party that is ordered by the international banks to return to sensible economic policies. Mr. Johannes Witteveen, who I believe is well known to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne, was obliged to rescue the British people from the depredations of the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), who I am sorry to say will leave the House at the next election. *[Interruption.]*

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Hamilton: We welcome the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) to the Chamber.

I should like to imagine the circumstances in which this appeal would be made to the international bankers. There would be the Leader of the Opposition, who presumably would be the Prime Minister if the Labour party won the next election, and who, in the 1970s, referred in a speech to the City of London as an army of brokers and jobbers and other quaintly named parasites. Imagine the letter that would go out to the international bankers in order to rescue the Labour Government. It would read: "I am inviting you to a luncheon at No. 10 Downing street so that you can rescue our Government from the disastrous economic policies that we have been implementing since the last general election." I do not believe that the international bankers would do anything but laugh in a false, hollow way at any appeal by a Labour Government. They would be obliged to come to the rescue once again, like the seventh cavalry.

The Labour party's economic policy is as threadbare and shot full of holes as the rest of its policies. At a time when the Labour party was execrating the Government for inadequate credit controls, it was launching its own credit card and marketing it widely. The truth has been revealed by another Labour Member, the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies), who regrettably is not here today, who said:

> "The Labour Party idea that you should have credit controls is rubbish. There is no way you can control credit except by controlling the price of credit, and the price of credit is the Bank Rate."

There are some sensible Labour Members, but they no longer seem to find favour on the Opposition Front Bench. The right hon. Member for Llanelli was obliged to resign his defence portfolio because the Leader of the Opposition would not talk to him or listen to his advice. That is the story of the Labour party all over.

The Labour party's industrial policy is merely a resuscitation of the National Enterprise Board. We as taxpayers will be obliged to pour our money into other wizard investments like De Lorean, the Meriden motor cycle co-operative and Court Line. The history of the last Labour Governments show their fatal weaknesses. Referring to the right hon. Members for Chesterfield and for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), Richard Crossman described them in his diaries as

> "young men who, with carefree arrogance, think they can enter the business world and make it more efficient. It is the amateurishness of Harold and his young men that gets me down."

[Mr. Hamilton]

I hope that they will not get us down in the future, because I do not believe that they have any chance of forming a Government.

The Labour party's policy is to dump its policies as soon as they are noticed by the electorate. Hence the policy to introduce a two-tax system for local government and to introduce mortgage restrictions. The truth has again been revealed by the hon. Member for Oldham, West in an article in *Tribune* on 1 December when, referring to the future of the Labour party's policy, he said:

> "We can expect it to be slimmed down if we are going to have a campaign document next year, and slimmed down even further if we are to have a costed manifesto."

That was the most blatant portrayal of the cynicism with which the Labour party treats the people.

On that basis, I propose to end my speech, in the time-honoured manner of a Labour party conference, by singing "The Red Flag"—although an updated version to take account of changes introduced by the policy review. I am not sure whether the words of "The Red Flag" were part of the policy review for reconsideration.

As I believe that it would not be in order to sing, despite the fact that the hon. Member for Bolsover burst into song when the cardboard boxes of petitions were brought in, I shall read the words of this new Labour party song which adequately sets out its change of policy:

"The people's flag is palest pink
We're not as red as you might think
So we can triumph at the polls
We've dumped our former Left-wing goals.

Ban the bomb? Not on your life!
We'll outlaw strikes in place of strife
We'll keep your taxes well controlled
Free enterprise will be extolled.

In office we'll reveal the trick
We'll tax and spend and live on tick.
We'll nationalise by smash and grab
And City slickers we'll kebab.

Through Labour's platform's total fudge
We're Lefties still and will not budge.
We're hoping you'll be taken in
By Mandelson's PR machine."

10.54 am

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): The first time I attended the House was in 1937 when, as a little boy of 12, I sat in the Strangers Gallery. Neville Chamberlain was Prime Minister. He was a strong supporter of Hitler and sent Lord Halifax to see him, and the captured German Foreign Office documents reveal that he congratulated Hitler on behalf of the British Government for destroying Communism in Germany and being a bulwark against Communism in the Soviet Union. I heard the then discredited Churchill speak. He warned against the dangers of Fascism. At that time, Clem Attlee, the Labour leader, sat with 150 Labour Members—a small minority, which had been reduced to 50 by the 1931 election and had increased by only 100 in 1935. Two and a half years later, Chamberlain was gone and Churchill had been created Prime Minister by the Labour Government, who would not serve under anyone else.

In 1945, I campaigned in Westminster against Churchill. He was a popular figure—after all, he had won the war with his cigar and his siren suit. We did not have pollsters to mislead us or "Newsnight" to tell us what the public wanted. We absolutely destroyed the Tory party. With the defeat of Hitler and Fascism, people in Britain turned their back on appeasement, the means test and unemployment and decided to build a better Britain.

It is appropriate that today, when we are told to celebrate the death of Socialism, 4·5 million names were recorded on a petition to the House expressing their commitment to the National Health Service—the greatest Socialist monument of that post-war Government. I was proud to sit at the end of that Government as a Back Bencher under Mr. Attlee as Prime Minister and Aneurin Bevan as Minister of Health. Today we have witnessed one of the regular funerals of Socialism. So many coffins for Socialism go through Fleet street every day that one wonders why the newspapers have to keep having these funerals. They have to do so because Socialism is not dead.

Today Mr. Speaker had to rule—I think that he was unwise to do so—that because so many people supported the ambulance drivers the lists of their names could not all be brought to the House. I watched the Government Front Bench as box after box of petitions were brought in, showing the popular rejection of the Government's attitude towards the NHS.

This is the first time that we have discussed Socialism in the nearly 40 years during which I have been here, and I strongly welcome it. I am not surprised that there were no buses coming from all over the country, as when Snowden moved his resolution, because the hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) had tabled such a rotten motion. However, the motion has allowed this debate to take place.

I have already ordered the entire debate from the sound archives of the House of Commons, because I have often said that if capitalism depended on the intellectual quality of the Conservative party it would end about lunchtime tomorrow. When the long speech of the hon. Member for Tatton is made available in Chesterfield and elsewhere, it will confirm my view that the ideas of capitalism are not well espoused and do not truthfully rest on the intellectual capacities of Conservative Members.

This is the first time that we have been able to debate Socialism without having to wear makeup, without having to depend upon the courtesy of a BBC producer and without having Robin Day trying to help us to bring out what we are really trying to say, and our speeches are reported in *Hansard,* which is my favourite newspaper because it is not owned by Murdoch, Maxwell or Stevens. The video will be available, although I doubt that the debate will feature on the television news bulletins today, because the television companies will be off trying to find people in Leipzig and Warsaw who are critical of their Governments so as not to publicise the ambulance drivers' petition.

I shall not devote a lot of time to the speech of the hon. Member for Tatton. However, it is an absurd theory to suggest that events in eastern Europe are because people there have been studying capitalism from the time of Selsdon park through to the present Government's new philosophy. Does the hon. Member for Tatton honestly believe that what happened in Warsaw was because Poles were longing for a poll tax, that people in Uzbekistan are yearning to sell of their water supply, that there is an almost irresistible demand for the YTS in Romania, or that they need more homeless people in East Berlin to prove the wisdom of market forces or that they are longing to have the Tsar back.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes) *rose*——

Mr. Benn: I shall not give way because I do not want to take up too much time, although I shall be surprised if I take as long as the hon. Member for Tatton.

If Gorbachev announced that his son was to succeed him, as the system that we have in Britain, would that be a democratic gain? If the supreme Soviet divided itself into two, half by patronage and half by heredity, as in Britain, would that be a great gain? Do Conservative Members really believe the arguments put forward in the hon. Gentleman's speech? Does the hon. Gentleman honestly believe that the people in Warsaw, East Germany and Hungary have demanded their human rights only because we had a cruise missile on hire purchase from Washington? Does he believe that those living in Hungary would not want the vote except for the knowledge that the British Prime Minister, with the permission of the United States president, is allowed to press a button to sink them all into oblivion? What nonsense the Conservative party has been propagating!

I put forward an amendment. I was told that I could do so, but that it would not be called. That is the fate of most people in the House with something useful to say. I am, however, allowed to refer to the amendment although it will not be tested in the Lobbies—we shall have to wait until the next general election for that. The amendment welcomes the development of democracy in eastern Europe and states something which any serious person is bound to say—that throughout the whole of human history there has been a consistent repression of human rights by every known system of government.

When William the Conqueror arrived here in 1066 and went to Westminster Abbey on Christmas day, he announced how he would govern the country. Nobody ever spoke of democracy in the name of monarchy. Feudalism in Britain included slavery. In 19th century Britain there was no democracy in the sense in which we mean it. In 1832, only 2 per cent. of men—all rich—had the vote. When I was born in 1925 the whole of India was governed from this country. Nobody in this House, least of all the Tories, talked about the democratic rights of Indians. The British arrested Gandhi and Nehru. It was interesting that at a recent dinner organised by the Indian High Commission, the Prince of Wales and the deputy Prime Minister turned up to celebrate the life and work of Pandit Nehru, who was a Socialist and was regularly arrested. When Gandhi began negotiating in Dehli, Churchill used his immortal phrase about the "half-naked fakir loping up the steps of the vice-regal lodge to parley on equal terms with the representatives of the King Emperor." So much for the British attitude to democracy in the empire.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): We still have to sort out democracy here. There are 1,000 unelected people in the House of Lords.

Mr. Benn: I referred to the House of Lords. If we privatised the House of Lords and sold seats in that Chamber, many people would pay half a crown for the right to go there. That might be the way to deal with the second Chamber. I would not rule out the Tories selling off anything—they would sell off the Royal Family if they thought that they could make a quick buck out of it.

Democracy is the struggle for political rights. Power can be abused under any system of government. To purport to say, in a serious motion in this Chamber, that the only repression of human rights that there has ever been has been in the name of Stalinism is wholly false. The hon. Member for Tatton gave me one good thing—his warm approval of Trotsky and Trotsky's critique of Stalinism, which will affect the interest of the national executive committee of the Labour party, from whom the hon. Gentleman may hear in due course. Trotsky was one of the first critics of Stalinism. The Conservative party, which from day one has never understood Socialism, is beginning to realise that there has always been an interesting debate about Socialism within the Labour party.

Under this Government many democratic rights have been taken away. For example, in Britain trade unions now have fewer rights to organise than they do in eastern Europe. The destruction of the Greater London council and the Inner London education authority was one of the greatest attacks of the rights of people in the capital city. Ours is the only country in the western world which does not allow its citizens to elect their local authority.

We have 30,000 American troops in Britain. They were brought in under various Governments. I say that because, as must be obvious, I am not making a party political speech. There are 30,000 American troops here, which is three times as many as we had in India when we occupied that country. We are also controlled by Brussels. Some Conservative Members are beginning to realise that Jacques Delors was not elected. That is an interesting thought, but the IMF was not elected either—nor did we elect President Bush or Vice-President Quayle who command those forces. Only one heartbeat lies between Quayle and his command of the American troops in Britain, which causes me some concern.

I do not believe that the Russians will shift from the dictatorship of the proletariat to the Dow Jones industrial average as their guidance, or from the Gosplan to the Bundesbank because democratic arguments are going on everywhere. I listen—as everyone does, because we cannot do anything about it—to the BBC "Financial World Tonight" with Dominic Harrod saying what has happened to the pound sterling, to three points of decimals, against a basket of European currencies. I have never seen a basket of European currencies, but I shall take one on holiday next time I go. Yet on the basis of the fluctuations of the pound sterling, we are told that we must close a hospital or try to repress the ambulance drivers' pay claim. It is nonsense to say that we live in a democracy, particularly when we have just voted £21 billion for weapons—£371 per man, woman and child—when no one in Britain now believes that there is a military threat.

I shall say a word or two about the roots of Socialism. One strange idea emanating from Conservative central office is that Socialism was invented in Russia in 1917. The roots of Socialism go back a little further than that. Those who were brought up on the book of Genesis, as I was, will remember that when Cain killed Abel and the Lord had a quiet word with him about it, Cain asked whether he was "his brother's keeper." The answer to the question whether a person is his brother's or sister's keeper lies at the root of modern British Socialism. It can be presented in various other ways—for instance, "an injury to one is an injury to all," "united we stand, divided we fall" and "you do not cross a picket line"—and that directive came not from

[Mr. Benn]

Brezhnev, but from the book of Genesis. Anyone who thinks that solidarity does not have an ancient religious root had better study history a bit more.

The Church has sometimes got around the question of equality by saying, "Don't worry—if the rich are kind and the poor are patient, it will be all right when we are dead and the angels bring us a cup of tea in the morning." The difference between Socialism and such episcopal fudges is that the Socialists would like the cup of tea before they die. That was how Socialism became a political force.

What about economic democracy? The Conservative party has often criticised nationalisation and I have criticised it strongly myself. I never believed that the Alf Robens version of nationalisation was democratic. But what are people in the City of London doing all the time? They are the bureaucrats of international capitalism, moving money about and closing factories to make more money. If a factory is closed for a week by a strike, that is disruption. If it is closed for ever by multinationals, that is market forces at work.

The Glasgow media group did a brilliant piece of work on the language of the media. They pointed out that in the media employers "offer and plead" whereas workers "demand and threaten". Let us turn it the other way round and consider the ambulance dispute in that light. The ambulance workers are "offering" to provide an emergency service and "pleading" with the Government not to cut their wages. The Government are "demanding" that they do what they are told and "threatening" to deny them income if they do not. There is a lot more to the argument than we are normally told.

Take economic power. What democracy is there in market forces? The Prime Minister is supposed not to like Jacques Delors because he is not elected, and that is true, but who elects the bankers? I am sorry to say that I was a member of the Cabinet that gave way to the bankers in 1976. We should have told them where to get off. The oil was bubbling ashore, and in my opinion we would have won the 1979 election if we had not imposed an unfair incomes policy on our people to satisfy the IMF. But we learn from our experience. Of course economic democracy, workers' control and industrial democracy are the future, just as political democracy was the great revolution of the 19th century. Whoever believed, before the middle of the 19th century, that the poor had a right to the vote? The country had been run by the rich—the landowners and wealthy gentry in this place. The old political demands of the chartists are now to be replaced by economic chartism.

Socialism is international in character——

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Benn: Perhaps I may finish my point before giving way to the great-grandson of Tom Mann, who is about to intervene to remind us of the terrible family transformation that has occurred since his great-grandfather gave inspiration to the trade union movement. Socialism is international, but that is not surprising, because capitalism is international, too. Business men in Britain have no loyalty to the future of this country. If they could make more money by moving their cash abroad, they would have no hesitation in doing so, even though the profits were created here. Similarly, although the solidarity of labour may be a bit imperfect, there is much more in common between miners worldwide than between miners and their Governments, whether Russian, British or Polish. I give way to the hon. Member for Pembroke.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I wonder whether the right hon. Gentleman can answer two questions. He has told us that the last Labour Government should have told the IMF to get lost. Why does he say, at page 589 of the second volume of his diaries:

> "I told the meeting that my paper emphasised that the survival of the Government depended on the maintenance of a relationship of confidence both with the TUC and the IMF"?

What confidence could the IMF have had if the right hon. Gentleman's policy had been followed? Secondly, why in 11 years of Labour Government did the right hon. Gentleman never resign?

Mr. Benn: I am flattered that the hon. Gentleman should read the diaries. I hope that he will read them all, and not just the passages drawn to his attention by Tory central office. I recall that passage very well; it was an abstract of about 2 million words. I said that we should have told the IMF that, with the oil coming ashore, our economy was fundamentally strong and that if it threatened us, we would take the necessary remedial action. I shall not pursue that, because that would be an abuse, but perhaps the hon. Gentleman and I could continue the discussion in the Library of the House or, better still, in the bookshop, where he will no doubt be buying further copies to give to his constituents.

Socialism is indestructible because it is based on the belief that people have inherent rights. Whether they are rich or poor, black or white, disabled or healthy, they have the right to useful work and a living income. They have a right to a good home and to a life-long education. I am all for raising the school leaving age to 95. That is an inch or two ahead of the policy review, so I hope that no one will tell my leader that that is my view. Health care should be available free at the point of need. After all, how many people could afford to meet the cost of ill health without the Health Service? People also have the right to dignity when they are old.

They used to say to me on the BBC, "Where is this Socialism, Mr. Benn?" One need only go to a hospital where people are treated according to their needs; there one finds Socialism. One need only go to a school, where children have access to the full range of knowledge without paying fees; there one finds Socialism. The ambulance drivers look after people; that is Socialism and no amount of private Member's motions will kill it. It is amusing to hear the hon. Member for Tatton try, but I somehow do not think that he will succeed.

In the 20th century, technology has completely transformed the world, with enormous new powers. We have nuclear weapons and nuclear energy and our communications and transport systems have improved enormously. We live in a very small world, any part of which could be destroyed by the use of power by any other part. There are new threats to the environment. The environmental argument is not just about banning diesel smoke in central London. It is about whether the planet is to be used by us as stewards or parcelled up and sold off for profit. The whole environmental argument is about that.

We need new institutions in the world. I am a strong believer in making two changes in the United Nations. First, we should abolish the veto in the Security Council for matters concerning planetary protection, such as nuclear and chemical weapons, nuclear power and the environment. I should be content to be governed by a Security Council which safeguarded the planet. Secondly, we should elect the United Nations General Assembly, with perhaps one representative per 5 million people. That would represent a popular United Nations General Assembly.

Certain things should also be decided at continental level. I do not believe that the Commission in Brussels should decide whether we may or may not return to full employment. It should, however, consider environmental and energy questions. Then there are national functions. Local government, too, should be given a full discretion to do whatever is necessary. I have introduced a Bill, the Local Authorities (General Powers) Bill, which would abolish the district auditor. Why should local authorities which have the support of their communities not be allowed to perform their functions? If they are corrupt, take them to the police station; if they are unpopular, take them to the polling station; but there should not be one between the polling station and the police station able to prevent local authorities from providing the services that they need to provide.

As must be obvious, we are not having a debate about the policies of the two major parties. We are talking about Socialism, and that is not necessarily the same thing. Nevertheless, I believe that the incoming Labour Government will face formidable problems which have been concealed from us in the past few years. The oil revenues are running out. Investment in manufacturing industry on which we depend has been stagnant since 1979. We have a balance of payments deficit so massive that some direct action will have to be taken. If one uses interest rates, one destroys industry and makes people homeless. Some people say that we could try credit control, but that would mean that the poor could not afford to buy what the rich could buy. We shall have to take direct action, and that will mean import planning. To use the Prime Minister's corner shop parallel, "You can't buy what you can't afford." We cannot afford the mass of imports. We do not have the means to pay for them. And we shall have to have exchange controls because we cannot allow wealth created in Britain to be exported to Korea or South Africa to make a bigger profit for the owners at the expense of the national interest. We shall also have to have very big defence cuts because we cannot afford £21 billion —£371 per man, woman and child in Britain—to pay to fight off a threat that does not exist.

All progress comes from below. I cannot think of a single gain in human history that was first promoted in the Chamber of the House of Commons. We all got here up a ladder labelled "status quo" and the status quo is quite attractive when one has arrived by virtue of it. Some of my colleagues who became Ministers thought that Socialism had arrived when they arrived, and it was an understandable error. When the Permanent Secretary said, "Yes Minister, No Minister" they thought that Socialism had arrived. Herbert Morrison once said that Socialism is what a Labour Government does, which was rather candid. Let us take some examples to show that change comes from below. The war widows cause was fought for and the Government changed their policy. On Sunday shopping, a combination of the churches, the trade unions and the women's movement defeated the Government's campaign. The same is true for the environment—the Prime Minister was never a Green until it looked as though the Greens were going to win.

The demand for social change goes through certain stages. First, it is ignored. Then it is mad—the loony Left. Then it is dangerous—Militant. Then there is a pause. And then it is impossible to find anyone who was not in favour of it in the first place. That is how all social change occurs. This Parliament is a mirror of the state of play in 1987. It is completely out of date.

I believe that in the 1990s we will see the renewal of Socialism in this country. What is happening in eastern Europe with the democratisation of Socialism is as important as the parliamentary changes which had some impact on Victorian capitalism.

We live in a period of history when for the first time there is enough for everyone in the world. There is enough to eat and enough to give people clean water and proper clinics. There is enough to give them at least elementary education. There is enough, but the distribution of wealth cannot be achieved if it is based on market forces and a jungle philosophy. It can be achieved only by planning, consent, Socialism, democracy and internationalism, all of which Conservative Members loath and hate to the essence of their beings.

11.20 am

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): I have seen the glories of Socialism. Just over a year ago I was being driven in my rather plebian Toyota on a small, dusty road just outside Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea, when, all of a sudden my car was forced off the road by a large black Mercedes driven at very high speed. When my taxi driver had recovered sufficiently and had dusted himself off, he told me that in North Korea the centre lane of all major roads was reserved not just for members of the North Korean Communist party, but for the close family of the North Korean leader, Kim Il Sung, whose name translates roughly as Kim the leader or Kim the sun.

The leader of another neo-Stalinist type regime, the leader of Derbyshire county council, David Bookbinder, is apparently a great admirer of North Korea. I am pleased to see that there has been a very good turnout of Derbyshire Socialists in the Chamber today.

Mr. Harry Barnes *rose*——

Mr. Oppenheim: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment.

The leader of Derbyshire council council sent a delegation to North Korea at the taxpayers' expense. He has also been very closely involved with the North Korean friendship society, which promotes the interests of North Korea and Kim Il Sung's regime.

Mr Barnes *rose*——

Mr. Oppenheim: I will gladly give way to the hon. Gentleman, but I hope that he has remembered what point he wants to make.

Mr. Barnes: If previously I forgot what point I wanted to make, at least I had the grace to resume my seat. As the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) has nothing to say, I hope that he will do the same.

[Mr. Barnes]

However, I want to make a point about North Korea. People went to North Korea thanks to Derbyshire county council to attend a youth and student festival. It was a great experience and they did not come back with any illusions. I discussed what happened with those people at a meeting and I was told that the experience widened their education and understanding and that they met people from many other countries, many of whom were critical of centralised regimes.

Mr. Oppenheim: Some of the people whom the visitors to North Korea would have met would have been a delegation from Sinn Fein. I wonder how that meeting would have enlarged or broadened their minds. The festival in North Korea was not a broad liberal festival in the sense that it included all shades of opinion. It was set up to promote the interests of a vicious and repressive Stalinist regime.

Although the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East and the leader of Derbyshire county council do not appear to be dissillusioned with North Korea, I had the good fortune to meet recently in a pub in my constituency a former Communist who was once the head of the North Korean friendship society to which I have referred. He told me that he was in a state of total despair about Socialism and Communism. He had visited North Korea on several occasions, and realised what a complete mess Communism was making of things. He confided in me that he would probably vote Conservative at the next general election.

Mr. Barnes *rose*——

Mr. Oppenheim: I have given way to the hon. Gentleman already. I am sure that he will have an opportunity to make his point later. With respect, I will make progress because other hon. Members want to speak.

What has gone wrong with Socialism? I believe that there is much in the well-known saying, "The road to hell is paved with good intentions." Most Conservative Members accept that most genuine Socialists are well meaning and well intentioned although somewhat misguided individuals. That is why Socialism always leads to disaster. That is why the well-intentioned hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) tied himself in knots earlier trying to claim that Socialism has never been tried.

Socialism has been tried in a variety of forms in both democratic and totalitarian countries, and it has failed. It is the ultimate in hiding one's head in the sand not to accept that there have been many experiments with Socialism. It is nonsense to consider the rubble of regimes in the east or the complete failure of Socialism to deliver in western democracies and then claim that Socialism has not been tried.

The well-known American writer, Mencken, wrote:

> "For every complex problem, there is a solution which is neat, plausible and wrong."

Socialism is such a solution. It is neat, superficially attractive, plausible and it appeals to idealists, but it is completely and utterly wrong and misguided.

The problem with which Marx could not come to terms was that of surplus labour value. He could not accept the fact that someone might make a profit from someone else's labour. He forgot that the capitalist might make a profit from someone else's labour, but he also provides capital to make that labour more productive, so everyone benefits as a result.

Marx claimed that he was a scientific Socialist. In fact, he was a hopeless 19th century romantic, struggling to find a simple solution to the imperfectibility of mankind. That is why the result of Socialism in the many countries in which it has been tried is that effort is not put into wealth creation as it is in capitalist countries to the benefit of everyone. Efforts in Socialist countries are expended in climbing the party ladder. Keen, intelligent young people in Communist regimes often expend huge amounts of energy trying to grease their way up the party machine in an unproductive way while the same people in capitalist countries are creating wealth—for themselves of course, but much of it goes to the economy at large to benefit everyone.

In Socialist countries there is not less privilege but more. Similarly, there is more inequality and less wealth than in the west. That is the great irony. That supposedly egalitarian system creates more privilege and inequality and less wealth than capitalist systems. The crowning irony of Socialism is that if we really want to go somewhere where the dollar is king, we should go to a Socialist or Communist country. If we have a few dollares in our pockets in Poland, the Soviet Union or China, we are kings and can buy almost anything. That is the crowning irony and crowning failure of Socialism.

In the early 20th century, the Soviet Union was the growing economy in Europe. However, it now produces less food per head of the population than it did in 1915 when Russia was embroiled in the great war. Eastern Europe has sunk into a degraded state of poverty and pollution. China is an environmental disaster in which forests are devasted and rare and endangered animals are killed cruelly and needlessly.

I have seen pandas—the Chinese national animal—in China, kept in tiny concrete cages while Socialist youths threw cigarette butts at them. We hear much from Opposition Members about the fate of blacks in South Africa. That may be a worthy cause, but we rarely hear from Opposition Members about the vicious oppression of minorities in Communist countries such as China. Some Opposition Members need their eyes opening. If they spent less time going on about South Africa—no matter how worthy a cause it might be—and saw what happened to the Tibetans or perhaps went to Xin Jiang and saw what happened to the indigenous Turkish people there, their eyes might be opened and their views might be a little more balanced.

Hon. Members may have gathered that this is a tough time for aficionados of the old school of Socialism. Those who like old-style Stalinist Socialism are finding the scope of their travels greatly reduced. We have heard a little about North Korea. I refer also to Albania, Romania, and China, but there are not many more. Not many regimes now cling to the old certainties. Regimes in the West attempted to impose Socialism through social democratic means, but New Zealand, Australia, Sweden, Spain and France have almost wholly rejected that philosophy and are turning to policies not so different from the policies which Opposition Members criticised as Thatcherism.

If hon. Members conclude from my comments and from those of my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) that Socialism is dead, they are wrong.

Socialism is alive and well, and in some of the oddest places. I shall enlarge on that seemingly unprofitable theme.

There is a large Ministry called Gosplan in the Soviet Union, nobody knows how many bureaucrats Gosplan has, but the number is probably well in excess of 100,000. Gosplan was set up by Leon Trotsky, who said that markets cannot deliver what the people need in a sophisticated modern economy. Gosplan was designed to control an economy centrally, to ensure that it delivered what people wanted. The great irony is that, as Gosplan is slowly being dismantled in the Soviet Union, we are hearing American capitalists echo Leon Trotsky's words. They are now telling us that markets cannot be allowed to determine the fate of strategic industries in which they have a financial interest. They are telling the United States Government that they need state support and protection from the Japanese, who have committed the ultimate sin of out-competing them in the marketplace. If the Americans listen to the siren voices of industrial special pleading, and move to more state control, they will ultimately realise that they are making the same mistakes as have been made in Socialist countries over the past few decades.

Disguised Socialism is not limited to the United States. The European Community spends vast sums on subsidising industry. Day by day, the Community sets up trade barriers against Japanese goods on the spurious ground that the Japanese have unfairly competed. That is a form of Socialism. Bureaucrats in the EEC are saying, "We must protect our industrial interests. We must control the economy. We must not allow consumers and markets to decide whether we will buy Japanese goods." That is why at this very moment there is a European Commission proposal that the Community, rather than the consumer and the marketplace, should control the price and flow of Japanese microchips into Europe. That is nothing more nor less than Socialism in disguise. I sincerely hope that my comments will be taken on board and that such pernicious policies will be rejected by the Government in the Council of Europe.

Having listened to the highly amusing speech of my fellow Derbyshire Member, the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), I can well understand the view that was expressed by two of his former colleagues. One of them, Hugh Gaitskell, referred to the right hon. Gentleman as a clever fool. The former Prime Minister, Lord Wilson of Rievaulx, opined that he had immatured with age. I shall enlarge on why those comments are particularly apposite.

The right hon. Member for Chesterfield, a doughty defender of Derbyshire county council and all its Socialist pretensions, claimed that people in Poland and Estonia do not want privatisation and free markets. What nonsense. It is exactly what they want. That is why people in Poland and Hungary are just beginning to embark on a massive round of privatisation. They realise that state ownership, central control and nationalisation do not work. That is exactly why they are taking measures to free their markets and to introduce market mechanisms. The right hon. Gentleman smiles, but he should go to those countries and listen to what the people say. They will tell him that Socialism has failed them. The right hon. Gentleman looks rather well-fed and well-dressed. He has benefited from capitalism all his life. Those people have not benefited from capitalism. They have suffered from Socialism. It is a shame that the right hon. Gentleman begrudges their chance to benefit from a freer market.

The right hon. Member for Chesterfield bitterly criticised the policies of the former Labour Government in which he served. He said that they should not have run to the International Monetary Fund in 1976. He said that, on several other counts, he disagreed with their policies. If he disagreed with such major policies, why did he not have the guts to resign and stick up for Socialism as he saw it?

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Exactly.

Mr. Oppenheim: I thank my hon. Friend for his support.

The right hon. Member for Chesterfield criticises the Government's handling of the ambulance men's dispute. I shall gladly give way to any Opposition Member who wishes to tell me when the Labour Government paid ambulance men better than this Government have and whether the Labour Government provided arbitration for any group of National Health Service workers. The deafening silence is the judge and jury.

The right hon. Member for Chesterfield bitterly criticised the Government's arms spending and spending on nuclear weapons. Again, when he was in power, he did not resign because the Labour Government spent a vast sum on nuclear weapons and wanted to update the old Polaris system in an expensive way to produce the Chevaline system. Once again, we see the right hon. Gentleman's double standards.

The right hon. Gentleman may sit securely on the Opposition Benches and criticise the Government for their arms spending. No one likes spending money on arms. We all know that, in an ideal world, we could spend that money on other things. However, in an insecure world, it is essential to spend money on arms. Thankfully, the world is more secure and there may be opportunities in the future to spend less money on weapons. If we had not spent that money on defence in earlier ages, we would probably not be in the happy position of looking forward to the growth of democracy, freedom and markets in the East. People in the GDR, Hungary, Poland and the Soviet Union are extremely glad that previous Governments, both Labour and Conservative, took difficult decisions to spend money on weapons to ensure that the West, democracy, liberalism and the free market were kept alive during the difficult days after the war so that people in the East can now benefit from the things from which we have benefited for so long.

11.37 am

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Some speeches have not dealt seriously with the issue that has been raised by the hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton). The issue is the future of Socialism. I have been attacked because, on many occasions, I have said that Socialism has never been tried in the Soviet Union or in Western Europe. Of course Socialist Governments have brought in welfare systems and changed matters slightly to the direction in which they should go, but they have not tried Socialism. Except perhaps for a short period in the early days, Socialism has never been introduced in the Soviet Union. I do not apologise for making that statement again.

I think of Communism as being the same, ultimately, as Socialism. That was clearly expressed by Keir Hardie in an

[Mr. Eric S. Heffer]

excellent pamphlet many years ago. The idea of Socialism and Communism is by no means dead, for the simple reason that, as long as the capitalist system exists, as long as there is class power and privilege, as long as there are establishments that use oppressive measures against the people they control, as long as there is international struggle for markets, as long as there is war, and as long as people live in poverty, there will always be the demand and the fight for Socialism.

In the same way, there will always be the fight for Christianity. People may say that Socialism is dead, but many of my friends believe that Christianity is dead. Christianity has to renew itself from time to time. That is why many people go back to their roots and establish religious orders on the basis of common ownership of everything in that order. They believe in the old ideas of Christ and want to change society and make it a better place in which to live.

Socialism has to renew itself from time to time. I do not for a moment suggest that everything has been wonderful; my whole point is that it has not. We went wrong at certain stages. There are two basic concepts in the Socialist movement. The first is that Socialism is established from above with matters being determined from above; the second is that Socialism is created from below. It took me a long time to grasp the concepts of the Fabians and the Webbs. When I was a young boy I read a book called "Soviet Communism" written by the Webbs. They had been there, they returned and I thought that it must be pretty good in the Soviet Union because they said that it was wonderful. They were two Right-wing, moderate members of the Labour party. They were not revolutionaries and did not want to overthrow society, yet they argued for Soviet Communism. They began with a question mark, but then that was eliminated. I was much influenced by the book.

It took me a long time to work things out. The Webbs actually believed that ideas should be imposed from an elitist position on the working class, whether or not the working class liked it. I am reminded of the old story about the Socialist orator at Hyde park who said, "When we get Socialism you will all have motor cars." The little chap at the back said, "But I don't want a motor car." "You will have a motor car whether you like it or not", said the orator. In essence, that is what the Webbs were saying. The Bolsheviks, or at least the Stalinists, were very much attracted by that. It was the sort of society that they wanted.

It took me a long time to work it out—right through my period in the Communist party. I learned by bitter experience and I was expelled because finally I did not accept that view. I then began to study what was really happening in the Socialist movement, and it was a great thing at last to understand. Following the October Bolshevik revolution, Socialists throughout the world adhered to it. Other than the Paris commune, which was the first workers' revolution and was successful for a short time, the October revolution was the first time that the workers established a state of their own, where they would come into their own, and get the fruits of their labours, where oppression would be eliminated, where there would be freedom and democracy, and so on.

However, although Socialist workers throughout the world adhered to the October revolution, there were voices, equally Socialist, which were beginning to say that the concept of the Bolshevik leaders would lead to the reverse of democratic Socialism. As I said in our debate two weeks ago, one of the greatest voices was that of a wonderful woman, who was ultimately murdered by Right-wing military forces with the blessing of some of the Right-wing Socialists of the time. I am referring to Rosa Luxembourg. It is worth quoting a little of what she said because it expresses what Socialism is all about:

> "Freedom only for the supporters of the Government, only for the members of one party—however numerous they may be—is no freedom at all. Freedom is always and exclusively freedom for the one who thinks differently. Not because of any fanatical concept of justice but because all that is instructive, wholesome and purifying in political freedom depends on that essential characteristic; and its effectiveness vanishes when freedom becomes a special privilege."

That is the essence of what democratic Socialism is all about.

Why have I, from the day that I entered this House, been a critic not just of the Tory party but very often of my own party—some say, far too often? It is because I believe in the concept of democratic Socialism. If something is wrong, or if we simply think that something is wrong—and it may be we who are wrong—we must stand up, be counted and fight for what we believe in. If we do not do that, we are not worthy to be tribunes of the people who put us here. They put us here precisely to do that.

Over the years, my people in Walton have finally—although it was probably from the word go—come to like the idea of having a Member of Parliament who is prepared to do that. They believe in the concept of democratic Socialism, and they have proved it time and again with their votes. What was installed in the Soviet Union was not democratic Socialism, but bureaucratic authoritarian rule by people who, unfortunately, usurped the Socialist idea to a large extent.

I turned to the Concise Oxford Dictionary for a definition of Socialism. Its definition is wrong, so I understand why people misunderstand the true meaning of Socialism. That dictionary states that it is a

> "political and economic theory of social organization"

which advocates state ownership and control of

> "the means of production, distribution and exchange."

We never said that Socialism is a matter of state ownership. Public ownership is one thing but state ownership is another. There can be state ownership without Socialism. In Europe and in many other parts of the world where Socialists are not in power, there are many state-owned industries. Nationalisation in itself is a way of running industry that could, in certain circumstances, make the conditions of the workers worse. We have explained that so many times, but unfortunately Conservative Members never listen.

We agree that some industries may need to be nationalised as a form of public ownership. My own view is that nationalisation should be kept to a minimum, that there should be varying forms of public ownership instead, and that white collar and blue collar workers should control those industries through real forms of democratic management.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Why?

Mr. Heffer: I shall not go into detail now, because many right hon. and hon. Members wish to speak. If the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) will read his grandfather's works, he will find the answer. It is a pity that he has not done so.

Varying forms of public ownership are needed. Why should industry be taken out of the hands of individual private owners or groups of private owners, or away from the institutions? That must be done because we want to transform society. If we want to rid ourselves of class rule, of advantages for the minority at the expense of the majority, and of poverty, and if we want to ensure that everyone has a decent home, good educational opportunities and access to a free National Health Service, industry must be brought under a form of public ownership.

Why do public schools exist?

Mr. Bennett: Because people want them.

Mr. Heffer: Public schools exist only because there is class rule in this country. I am not against public schools. I want to see every educational institution offering a high standard of education.

Mr. Bennett: The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) is an ex-public school boy.

Mr. Heffer: Let us try to keep the debate at a serious level. I am trying to argue a serious case for Socialism, and I refuse to respond to silly jokes and statements. The debate is far too important for that.

I refer to the words of James Connolly—who was shot by the British because of his participation in the 1916 uprising.

Mr. Bennett: He was a Trotskyist.

Mr. Heffer: The hon. Member for Pembroke knows nothing about the Socialist movement. Connolly was killed before Trotsky was even heard of. In James Connolly's booklet, "Socialism Made Easy", he wrote:

> "The local and national Government, or rather, administrative bodies, of Socialism will approach every question with impartial minds, armed with the fullest expert knowledge born of experience; the governing bodies of capitalist society have to call in an expensive professional expert to instruct them on every technical question, and know that the impartiality of such an expert varies with, and depends upon, the size of his fee."

Connolly went on to say:

> "It will be seen that this conception of Socialism destroys at one blow all the fears of a bureaucratic State, ruling and ordering the lives of every individual from above".

We do not want a state apparatus controlling the whole of society like a vast octopus.

The hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) is not even listening. He equates state ownership and state control with Socialism; let me tell him that in Fascist Italy there was a great deal of state control, but there was no Socialism. There was capitalism, though. What was in operation was a method of supporting and maintaining the capitalist system. Similarly, there was no Socialism in Nazi Germany——

Mr. Bennett: There was National Socialism.

Mr. Heffer: They called themselves National Socialists, but they were not Socialists. They were protecting capitalism.

There was no Socialism in Franco's Spain. Instead, there was dictatorship, centralisation and administration from above. [Hon. Members: "That is Socialism."] It is not Socialism, but an extreme form of capitalism, which uses oppression to maintain private ownership. That is what it was then, and what it is now. If Conservative Members do not understand that, they really do not know the ABC of politics. It is about time that they began to learn that dictatorship can be established under forms of capitalism, as it was unfortunately established on a socialised industrial basis in the Soviet Union.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman is making a most interesting and thoughtful speech: I am glad that he has raised the level of the debate from that which I introduced.

I am interested in the question of the allocation of capital resources under the kind of economic system that he describes. When public ownership operates without state control, how can capital be allocated to one enterprise rather than another, and how can investment priorities be decided? I cannot for the life of me see how an economic system can operate at all under such a system, as there seems to be no one to make the decisions.

Mr. Heffer: At present no such societies exist, although Sweden has gone part of the way towards establishing one. We need not have a Gosplan—a five-year plan that is worked out in detail but is never put into practice, so that the plan itself becomes everything. The people must be involved in democratic decisions: democracy is the answer to the hon. Gentleman's question.

Mr. Hamilton: How do we work it out?

Mr. Heffer: How do we work out democracy? Democracy, provided that it is genuine, will in time work itself out in its own way. We are here today only because of a fight for democracy that took place in this country. Had there been no such struggle—had the workers not created the Chartist movement and fought for the vote—I would certainly not be here today, and nor would the hon. Member for Tatton.

No doubt the monarch had objected very strongly; no doubt the reaction was, "We cannot have this business of democracy—everything must be left to me." That is the whole point: Socialism is the democratic process, and our criticism is that there has been no democratic process in the countries of eastern Europe.

I am sorry that I have been going on a bit, Madam Deputy Speaker. I had better bring my remarks to a conclusion—with some regret, because I had quite a lot to say. Let me make one more point, however. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield has said that the idea of Socialism was not created by the Russians, and of course it was not. It was created long before that. Moreover, it was not created by Marx. He picked up ideas from other people. He was a highly intelligent person and wrote brilliant material in the British museum. Keir Hardie came later. He said:

> "Socialism implies the inherent equality of human beings. It does not assume that all are alike, but only that all are equal. Holding this to be true of individuals, the Socialist applies it also to races."

In some countries where Socialist Governments have been elected, advances have been made. Let us consider what happened in this country between 1945 and 1950. Conservative Members say that this country gained nothing from Socialist Governments, but a Socialist Government introduced the National Health Service. When I came out of the forces after the war, that was one

[Mr. Heffer]

of the first things I wanted, so we set up the NHS. *[Interruption.]* Of course there were White Papers beforehand. Conservative Members must be stupid. A Socialist Government established the NHS, but the Tory party voted against the Bill on Second Reading. Some of us know what went on.

A Socialist Government also introduced the welfare state. Working people, such as my mother, were always terrified that when they reached old age they would have to go into the workhouse. My mother said to me, "Don't let me go into the workhouse, lad. Whatever happens, try and save me from it." Many people could not save their parents from going into the workhouse; they were so poor that they could do nothing about it. However, a Labour Government introduced a welfare system that meant that people did not have to go into workhouses. They transformed the whole scene by building a massive number of houses. Large numbers of houses had been destroyed during the war, so there was a great housing need. A Labour Government met that need.

That was not Socialism, of course. The Labour Government left the class system and power and privilege in the hands of the capitalist class. If they had destroyed that, it would have been the first stage towards real Socialism. Despite their failure, they introduced many beneficial measures—Socialist oases in a capitalist surrounding.

The Government are reversing all the positive measures that Labour Governments introduced. People are again fearful. The old are very worried; unemployment creates fear. People are again finding that they are homeless. They sleep in cardboard boxes at night. Thousands of other people do not sleep in cardboard boxes at night; instead they are crowded into their parents' homes. They live in conditions that create problems and interminable rows. I know; I lived in rooms for nearly 12 years at the end of the second world war because we were unable to get a place of our own.

Labour Governments have made a great contribution to the welfare of people in Britain. My criticism of the leadership of my party is that we do not need to give up our Socialist aspirations and accept the mores of the Conservative Government in order to win power. We can win power on the basis of our Socialist concepts. That is the only point where I part company with those on the Opposition Front Bench, although it is a pretty important difference of opinion. I do not deny the fundamental difference of our approach to these matters.

I conclude with a further quote from Keir Hardie:

> "To the Socialist, the community represents a huge family organisation in which the strong should employ their gifts in promoting the wealth of all, instead of using their strength for their own personal aggrandisement."

Unfortunately, nowadays in Britain, the strong are using their power against the weak, particularly in the anti-trade union legislation. I want to see a Socialist society which, as I said before, I equate with my Christian upbringing and Christian concepts. I do not see any great difference between the two; to me they represent the same transformation of society and the building of something entirely new. That is why I welcome what is happening now in the Soviet Union. Perhaps now at last they can get back to creating what some of them really wanted in the first place, having exposed the nature of Stalinism.

We in Britain, particularly as Socialists, have to learn that we must not follow that path ever and we must always stand up against such degeneration. But neither must we follow the path we are being offered today by the Conservative Government. That is no answer to the problems of Britain or the world. We have to go out there and fight for God's kingdom here, which I believe is a Socialist one.

12.5 pm

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. Kenneth Baker): The hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) has won the respect of the House, not only today but often before, because he represents the tradition of Christian Socialism, about which he has just spoken very movingly.

Before making my own contribution to the debate, I shall start by commenting upon the death of Dr. Sakharov. I am sure I speak for all the House in saying that Dr. Sakharov stood out against the tyranny, the cruelty and the repression of the old regime in Russia. He made a very brave personal stand against that for human rights, knowing full well what the penalties would be—arrest, exile, imprisonment and the victimisation of his family. He carried with him all the hopes of oppressed people in Soviet Russia and throughout eastern Europe. We should pay tribute to his bravery and his personal courage, because he showed the unbreakable spirit of man. He was a symbol of liberty; he was the conscience of his country. Ultimately he found his allies, and reform is his legacy. He is truly a hero of the Soviet Union.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) first on his luck in the ballot and secondly on having the inspiration to introduce the motion. It is very rare that we have a chance to debate foreign and domestic policy together, and almost unknown that we discuss the philosophy of politics. The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) made that point, having been in the House for nearly 40 years now. Is it really as long as that?

Mr. Benn *indicated assent.*

Mr. Baker: That is a long time. He said he has never actually debated Socialism before. I too welcome the debate.

I have always believed that Socialist thought was distinguished by two very clear concepts—first, the conviction that Socialists had that they had possession of the truth, and, secondly, their belief that history was on their side. Listening to today's debate and reading the debate on 1 December, I have discovered another element of Socialism—that Socialism has never been tried anywhere in the world. It has not been tried in Russia since 1917 or in eastern Europe since 1945. No country has ever tried it. Everyone is trying to walk away and dissociate themselves at a rate of knots from what has happened in the past 70 or 80 years in the Socialist republic of Russia. It reminds me of the old music hall song about the drunk and the pig lying in the gutter. The refrain is:

> "You can tell a man who boozes by the company he chooses;
> At which the pig got up and walked away."

That seems to characterise the views of those who are trying to get up and walk away. Reference has already been made to Karl Marx and Marxism but in 1848, in the opening sentence of the "Communist Manifesto" Marx said:

> "A spectre is haunting Europe—the spectre of Communism."

His philosophy developed the belief that revolution would bring the end of capitalism, just as capitalism had brought the end of feudalism. In England at the turn of the century —as the hon. Member for Walton mentioned—that idea was given a new twist by Sidney and Beatrice Webb who invented the phrase, "the inevitability of gradualness." That was the essence of Fabian Socialism. It was believed that it was only a question of time before collectivism and the corporate state took over.

Also in the 1930s, the Webbs wrote a book to which the hon. Member for Walton referred. It was published in 1935 and called "Soviet Communism—A New Civilisation?". However, when that book came to its second edition in 1937, the question mark after the subtitle had been dropped. It was just an assertion—they had seen the future, it was working and it was marvellous. They had seen the promised land and thought that it was wonderful. At that time, the Labour party was not trying to dissociate itself from that—it had seen it and liked it.

After the creation of the welfare state in the 1940s, and after the Attlee Government took into possession vast numbers of industrial companies, Socialists confidently predicted that the ratchet effect was working and that it was inevitable that the corporate power of the state would increase, because more and more of economic and social life would come under the sway of the state.

The Conservative party has always known that truth is not to be found on the side of Socialism. We have never believed that either the success or the defeat of Socialism was inevitable. On the whole,. Tories do not believe in historical inevitability. We still remember vividly those instances—in this country and abroad—where Socialism has "triumphed".

I am aware that there are differences between the Socialism advocated on the Opposition Front Bench and that practised in eastern Europe. There are considerable differences between eastern Europe Socialists and many —although not all—in the Labour party. Undoubtedly Egon Krenz cuts a more decisive and convincing figure as the leader of East Germany's Communists than the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) does as leader of the British Labour party.

In eastern Europe, only a selected few can join the official party, whereas in Britain any old Trotskyist can join the Labour party. In eastern Europe, only a small minority of party hacks can elect the leadership, whereas in the Labour party all members can vote in elections, which are rendered meaningless by the trade union block vote. *[Interruption.]* We believe in the principle of one man, one vote, which we have recently exercised.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross Cromarty and Skye): I apologise for missing the first few minutes of the right hon. Gentleman's speech. Far be it from me to defend Socialism or whatever brand or variety of it within the Labour party the right hon. Gentleman is talking about. However, I noticed that Big Ben has stopped. Does that mean that just as time has run out for Socialism, the clock has stopped on the conservatism of the Government?

Mr. Baker: That is an interesting fact. However, I thought that the hon. Gentleman would use his intervention to explain his political philosophy. Where will he stand in the great divide? When the great divide comes, he may not have a seat left in which to stand. I thought that the hon. Gentleman was on the Left in British politics, but now he is moving further and further——

Mr. Kennedy: Centre Left.

Mr. Baker: Is it still centre Left? The hon. Gentleman is obviously looking for a home, and I do not know whether he will find one in his party.

I want to be fair to the Labour party. It is not fair to say that it is automatically the same as the Socialist parties of eastern Europe. The hon. Member for Walton made that clear.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham): That is decent of you.

Mr. Baker: It might be decent for the hon. Gentleman, but there are other members of his party who stand well to the Left of him, and they are better represented in the Chamber today than those who favour his brand of Socialism.

European Communism has never been mixed, unlike English Liberalism, and it has never given minimum respect for human freedom and human individuality. At the same time, there is no tradition of compromise or settlement of dispute by debate in eastern Europe. Instead, there is diktat. There is, however, a common denominator. All members of the Labour party, from whichever wing, share a basic assumption. Indeed, it is one that is common to all Socialists. They all believe that the state knows best.

Mr. Benn *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Baker: When the state is run by the right hon. Gentleman, he believes that it is right.

All Socialists believe that it is not enough for the Government to set the rules of the game and to let other parties and society generally observe those rules. They all believe—the career of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield is testament to this—that the state and the Government should take a leading role in the game and in the economic life of a civil society.

Mr. Benn: I appreciate that the right hon. Gentleman is being serious for a moment, but if he reads history he will find that the use of state power by the forces of capitalism in Britain has been ruthless. He will find, to take more recent examples, that all campaigns for trade union rights and local government rights and the fight for a referendum on whether the United Kingdom should be in the Common Market came from the Left. It was the Conservative party which took us into Europe without consulting anyone. That which the right hon. Gentleman suggests has never been my view. I have tried throughout my life to push decisions down the line. I have never sought to centralise decision-making. I hope that he will not want to leave an injustice on the record.

Mr. Baker: The right hon. Gentleman may have had that personal desire, but it was not reflected in his performance as a Minister and a member of the Labour Cabinet. He spoke most eloquently of planning as a member of a Cabinet that believed in planning. That Cabinet planned this country into bankruptcy, high inflation and huge cuts in public expenditure. The right hon. Gentleman cannot shake off his past. He cannot disregard it.

[Mr. Baker]

The common thread that binds all Socialists is their belief that the state and the Government have a crucial role in determining policies and economics in society. Like it or not, that is the presupposition of all Socialist programmes, whether they be Communist or Fabian, British or Romanian. The core of Socialist thought—the right hon. Member for Chesterfield made this clear—is that market forces do not work.

Mr. Benn *indicated assent.*

Mr. Baker: I note that the right hon. Gentleman is nodding. Socialists believe that it is not possible to rely on the individual choice and that the state or the Government, whichever body one likes, has to introduce corrections to the inefficiencies and inequalities that emerge. They do not trust the market and they do not trust market forces. Instead, they believe in a command economy.

I do not think that there is anything inevitable about the defeat of Socialism. As I have said, Conservatives do not believe in historical inevitability. There has been nothing inevitable about the retreat of Socialism in the 1980s. In my view, there was nothing inevitable about the collapse of Stalinism in eastern Europe. Equally, there was nothing inevitable about the accession of Mikhail Gorbachev in the Soviet Union. In 1985, the ruling group in the Kremlin had a choice between the reform-minded Mikhail Gorbachev and the old-style hardliner, Grigoriy Romanov. It chose Mikhail Gorbachev because he represented a break with the policies that had failed, and had failed badly. Those policies had led to a bloody and humiliating stalemate in Afghanistan, to the deployment of cruise missiles in the West and to the stagnation and collapse of the Soviet economy.

Mr. Gorbachev came to power because Socialism had failed in the Soviet Union. It failed because we in the West showed that we had the will to match it and because we out-performed it economically. As my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton said, thanks largely to the courage of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, we deployed cruise missiles in 1981, 1982 and 1983 against a massive and unprecedented Soviet propaganda offensive, in which Labour Members and their CND allies were the shock troops. Once the Soviet Union knew that it could not break NATO or the will of its peoples, it knew that it could never win the battle of military spending and that its economy would break under the strain before the economies of the West. Mikhail Gorbachev walked through the door of realisation that opened at that moment.

Never let it be fogotten—this is the point that my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton made—that, if Labour had had its way in 1983, there would have been no cruise deployment, no intermediate nuclear forces deal, no recognition that the old regime had failed, no recognition that a reform movement was needed in Russia, and probably no Mr. Gorbachev.

The events of the past few weeks have marked the end of an age. Future generations will look back and regard 1989 as one of the most remarkable years since the war. It will stand alongside the other great years of European history—1815, 1848, the year of the revolutions, 1918 and 1945. In each of those years, the physical shape of Europe was changed, just as it will be changed by the events of this year.

History does not divide itself neatly into centuries. Historically, the 19th century did not end in 1900 but died in the trenches of the first world war. The 21st century has not waited until the year 2000. We certainly live in most historic times.

In eastern Europe, we are seeing the collapse and end of 40 years of oppression, as the remnants of the Communist leadership try to cling to office. Like all revolutions, this one began with intellectuals—Solzhenitsyn, Sakharov and the woman poet Irina Ratushinskaya. They were brave people because they spoke against arbitrary arrest, labour camps and psychiatric hospitals, and they got their message out to the world and to the Soviet Union itself. There were also political heroes, such as Imre Nagy, Dubcek and Lech Walesa. I remember hearing, when I was a student at Oxford in 1956, that most tragic and moving radio broadcast by Imre Nagy, saying that the tanks were moving to Budapest and begging for help from anyone in the world.

Help did not come, so, in effect, Hungary lost 30 years, just as Czechoslovakia lost 20 years when the tanks moved into Prague. *[Interruption.]* The West was not prepared to move because at that time the Soviet military might seemed supreme. There were times in recent history when Socialism seemed to be triumphant and when the values that the West respected and lived by seemed in the descendent.

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Baker: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment, but I want to finish this piece about the developments in recent years.

Mr. Gorbachev's unique contribution is that, instead of crushing dissent with the Red army, he has allowed the forces in Eastern Europe to break through and do their own thing. He has rejected the Brezhnev doctrine, which was to use military might to bring the satellites to heel. The Kremlin's chief spokesman, Mr. Gennady Gerasimov, said recently that eastern countries were free to conduct their own affairs, which he called the "Sinatra doctrine" —"You can do it your way." Incidentally, that is about the best joke to come out of the Soviet Union since Mr. Khrushchev published his grain forecasts.

Any Communist leader who wants to reform today faces an inexplicable and inescapable dilemma: how does one implement crucial economic reforms in the eastern bloc without opening a Pandora's box and without unleashing political reforms that will take away the Communist party? That is the Gorbachev dilemma. As developments unfold in Poland, Czechoslovakia, East Germany and Bulgaria, it is clear that nowhere in eastern Europe has anybody found th solution to that dilemma: how to bring about economic reform without escalating a further phase of political reform.

People have lost patience. Moscow stands by as the old guard crumbles. The West must watch closely and listen carefully, for in eastern Europe today the cloth of history is being cut.

Mr. Tony Banks: I should like to take the right hon. Gentleman back to what happened in 1956. Perhaps he would like to inform the House where the well-scrubbed young Baker stood then. We know what he thought about the invasion of Hungary, but what did he think in 1956 about British aggression in the Suez canal area in conjuction with the Israelis?

Mr. Baker: We had vigorous debates in the Oxford university Conservative association. I was an official of that association, and we supported the Government of the day and their actions. That is all on record. The hon. Gentleman cannot divert the attention of the House from the point that I was making. There has been consistent repression in Europe for 40 years. The hon Gentleman would be one of the first to object to that and would be on the side of the freedom fighters.

The national motto of Czechoslovakia is "Pravda Zvitezi"—"Truth will prevail". Would that it would always prevail. It certainly did not prevail in 1968, when the Soviet tanks crushed the Prague spring uprising. Among those who were arrested and imprisoned was the playwright Vaclav Havel. Six months ago, it would have been preposterously fanciful to think that he could be considered as President of his country. Only about two months ago, the then Prime Minister, Ladislav Adamec, dismissed Havel as absolute zero. Now Havel is waiting for his country's call. Havel is a man of ideas who, to use his own phrase, understands that words are capable of shaping the entire structure of government.

Of course, the words of the dissidents found a ready audience in societies that were rotten to the core with inefficiency and corruption after 40 years of central planning. The right hon. Member for Chesterfield waxed eloquent about planning, saying how it was an essential part of a Socialist society. They have had 40 years of it in the eastern bloc; now they do not want any more.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: My right hon. Friend's point about planning is important. Does he recall that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) was part of the Government in 1964 who introduced a national plan? On the day that the national plan was published, Her Majesty's Stationery Office ran out of copies because it had not printed enough. The Labour Government could not even forecast how many copies of the plan they would need. It was not exactly a good augury. It underlines the fundamental failure of the planning process of that time.

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend has a good memory. He is correct. Within about two years, the Labour Government abandoned the national plan. They created the Department of Economic Affairs to implement the plan. I think that it was invented during a taxi ride between this place and St. Ermin's hotel. It was not an effective plan.

No one can pretend that Socialism has been anything other than an unmitigated disaster for the countries of eastern Europe. In 1956, Khrushchev said, "We will bury you." He forecast that Soviet production by 1980 would be greater than American production. In fact, America's GDP in 1980 was three times that of the Soviet Union.

The Soviets failed in that part of the economy which is most dear to Socialists: the producing industries. Marx writes about production again and again, and Socialist thought has focused on production again and again. Why did Socialist policies fail? They failed because the Sociaists believed too much in the producer and put producer interests above consumer interests. That point was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim). They failed because they did not realise the dynamism of innovation which comes from the market place. Socialists wanted to eliminate the inefficiencies of private ownership, but they created new pinnacles of inefficiency.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tatton could well have told the story about the tractor factories in Russia. There are 3 million tractors in Russia of which the Russians are proud as a symbol of agricultural progress. However, of the 3 million tractors in Russia, at any one time 250,000 are being repaired, not because they have broken down but because, when planning the output of the tractor factory repair shops, a planner said that the shops should repair so many tractors each month. If the shops fall down on that target, the tractors have to be taken back off the land. As a result, at any one time in western Siberia, half of the tractors being repaired have not broken down. That is the consequence of Socialist planning.

Not only has Socialism failed economically, but it has dramatically failed environmentally, as my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley said. When the planners decided to increase cotton output in——

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South) *rose*——

Mr. Baker: No, I certainly shall not give way. The hon. Gentleman has just strolled in and, like the Ancient Mariner, he "stoppeth one of three". I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman; he can stroll out again and go and have a cup of coffee.

When the planners decided to increase cotton production in the southern republics, they diverted for irrigation purposes, two main rivers which supplied the Aral sea. As a result, the level of the Aral sea in southern Russia has fallen by a third since 1960, and if nothing is done it will not exist by the year 2010.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): What about the North sea?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman should pay attention. He is interested in environmental matters and should see just how badly Socialism has treated the environment in this case. In the areas from which the sea has now receded, poisonous salt dust blows over the surrounding districts, many of the flora and fauna have been killed, there is a high rate of typhoid, cholera, hepatitis and throat cancer and there is one of the highest infant mortality rates anywhere in Asia.

Large multinational western companies are frequently attacked by Socialists like the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) because of their environmental policies. I can think of no clearer indication of the law of unintended consequences and no clearer indictment of central planning than the laying waste of the Aral sea by the Socialist planners of the Soviet Union.

Mr. Corbyn: The right hon. Gentleman should be aware that, two weeks ago, I had an interesting meeting with an environmental campaigning group from the Soviet Union who openly admitted that the industrial policies followed in the past by the Soviet Union and many countries in central and eastern Europe had done a great deal of environmental damage. The difference is that those people felt that they had the power to change the policies to stop the destruction of their own environment. The policies of free-market economies which the right hon. Gentleman propounds have led to the pollution of the North sea and the Irish sea, the destruction of the rain

[Mr. Corbyn]

forests in Brazil and Malaysia and long-term serious environmental damage by multinational companies all over the southern countries of this planet.

Mr. Baker: I am glad to say that some people in Russia now recognise the environmental damage. When I was there a year ago, I was shown computer models of the lakes and seas in Russia. It is a disgrace, and as far as I know, nothing has been done about it. The difference between Britain and the Soviet Union is that we are getting on with solving the problem of environmental pollution.

The lesson to be drawn from the analogies that I have used is clear: the more Socialist medicine is forced down a country's throat, the weaker that country becomes. In eastern Europe, undiluted Socialism has been forced down many countries' throats. In Great Britain at the next election, the Labour party will peddle its own brand of Socialism, and that, too, would make our country weaker. At heart, the Labour party is still a Socialist party. For all the repackaging, and for all the duplicity of the policy review, the party is the same underneath. It does not matter what one calls it—market Socialism, designer Socialism, filofax Socialism or even cordless telephone Socialism—it is still Socialism.

The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) has written a book entitled "The Future of Socialism". Where is he today? I thought that he would at least have the decency to come and answer this debate. He has thought about the future of Socialism and is trying to plan Socialism out of the Labour party. We are not to have a reply from one of the Labour party ideologues today; instead we have heard the Back-Bench ideologues. I believe that the book written by the hon. Member for Dagenham, "The Future of Socialism" is about to be remaindered, along with Socialism itself.

When Labour Members talk about fair taxes, they mean crushing taxes. When they talk of a charter of employees' rights, they mean giving more power to the trade union bosses. When they talk of public interest companies—their latest phrase—they mean renationalised private industry. Let there be no mistake about it: the Labour party still believes that a Labour Government should have a leading role to play in the economy. That belief runs through the whole of the policy review. The analysis of the policy review is simple: market forces and individual choice have failed and all that Thatcherism has done in the past 10 years has failed, and the answer is to bring back all the planning mechanisms—regional investment banks, directed investment, controls on business. How old and quaint all that now sounds.

The Labour party's policies are in sharp contradistinction to everything that the leaders of the eastern European countries now want. When I met Lech Walesa a fortnight ago, he said, "We want British, German and French companies to tell us how to run our industries." He actually used the word "capitalists", because he realises that Socialism has failed. Those countries want the advantages of a market economy and all the advantages that capitalism can bring, such as property rights that are properly protected, shareholders, freedom to invest, dividends and freedom to make money and keep it. They have realised that state subsidy is not the way to prosperity. They also want an end to the system that has been described in the following terms: "We pretend to work and they pretend to pay us." That is what eastern European leaders want.

It is ironic, is it not, that, at a time when eastern European leaders want shareholders, the Labour Front Bench team threatens dividends? They do not believe in shareholders. They want to abolish dividends and would like to reduce the role of the shareholder to no role at all.

Mr. Skinner: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Baker: No. Is it not ironic——

Hon. Members: Give way.

Mr. Michael Brown: Go on. One chairman to another.

Mr. Baker: Of course I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Skinner: As chairman of the Labour party, I was elected, unlike the right hon. Gentleman, who got the job on the nod from the Prime Minister, and I am unpaid, unlike the right hon. Gentleman, who is on a big fat Cabinet salary. In that capacity, let me ask him this. Is he now going to tell us that those in eastern Europe want the poll tax, the cardboard boxes, the drugs and all the rest associated with the capitalist society that he is so happy to defend? Are they requesting them, too?

Mr. Baker: If the hon. Gentleman is making the absurd proposition that there are no down-and-outs in Russia, and that Russia does not have a drug problem, he has no understanding of what is happening in the world. I am glad that I gave way to him. I suppose that, as chairman of the Labour party, he is my shadow, and he speaks with the authentic voice of the Left wing, which is very much larger than the Labour party would like to think.

Is it not ironic that, while Poland is to open its first private school this year, the Labour party wants to strangle private schools? Is it not extradordinary that, while Hungary and Poland are talking about privatising state industries, all we hear from the Labour party are threats of nationalisation? I hope the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) will tell us his list of industries to be nationalised. Will it be British Water, British Gas or British Telecom? Let him publish his list because everyone else has published one. He should add his twopenn'orth as well, because we want to know.

How can the Opposition want to shackle the market now, when eastern Europe wants to free the markets? When will the Labour party realise that Socialism does not work and that no example of a successful Socialist country exists? What creed posseses the Labour party to make it decide that we in Britain should now start imitating eastern Europe when eastern Europe wants to imitate us? Where has the Labour party been sleeping for the past 10 years?

The world is on the move again, and it is moving our way. In the dark years, this Government kept the torch of liberty burning bright. Now millions upon millions of fellow Europeans are emerging from that twilight. They are coming to embrace us and to live in a common European home governed by values and principles which this Government have held dear for decades. My colleagues and I are proud to belong to a party, a Government and a country which have been so steadfast in the defence of freedom.

12.41 pm

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): During my political career—in 1986—I attended the congress of the Communist party of the Soviet Union in Moscow and the congress of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany in the German Democratic Republic. I then had the pleasure —if that is the right word—of listening to Mr. Gorbachev speak to his congress for six hours and listening to Mr. Honecker speak for four hours to his congress. Having heard the 57-minute speech with which the hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) opened the debate, I must tell him that his speech was certainly east European in its length, but it lacked the spontaneity and the standing ovations which mark such speeches in eastern bloc countries. Having listened to marathon speeches, I reflected on the fact that the House of Commons teaches us how to make speeches of gargantuan length but not how to listen to or absorb them.

The hon. Member for Tatton, whose good fortune has led to this historic debate, asked a question which is worthy of a reply. He asked why I had been called upon to speak from the Opposition Front Bench in this debate. That question deserves some consideration. The hon. Member for Tatton is conceited if he believes that I am complementing him in this debate because I am the hon Member for Hamilton. Perhaps I am a more appropriate choice as the Opposition Front Bench spokesman because Kier Hardie, to whom my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) referred several times in his contribution, worked in my constituency. Indeed, Kier Hardie lost his job in the coal mining industry in my constituency and was forced to open a tobacconist and confectioner's shop to make ends meet before he went on to greater things. Perhaps I am an appropriate choice because part of my constituency formed the Mid-Lanark seat. In that historic by-election in 1888 Kier Hardie stood as the first Labour candidate, and started a process which led to the foundation of the Scottish and then the British Labour parties. Perhaps I am an appropriate choice as Opposition Front Bench spokesman because Alexander MacDonald, a Member of Parliament in the middle of last century and president of the miners' union, was born and brought up and finally died in my constituency.

Perhaps a better explanation, however, lies with the election of my first predecessor in the constituency of Hamilton. The first hon. Member of Parliament for Hamilton, Mr. Duncan Graham, was elected in 1918, in what was called the coupon election. The coalition swept the country, but Mr. Duncan Graham won the Hamilton seat because the Conservative Whips issued two coupons to two candidates who split their vote equally and thus allowed Mr. Duncan Graham, the Labour candidate, to be elected. Labour won Hamilton in 1918 because of a foul-up in the Whips Office, and that tradition goes on to this day.

The debate has inevitably been sparked off by events in eastern Europe. I associate myself with the sentiments expressed by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and by the hon. Member for Tatton about Dr. Andrei Sakharov. I met Dr. Sakharov in July this year when he spoke at the Royal Institute of International Affairs. His death today is an event of considerable significance. He blazed a trail in the Soviet Union, and his bravery is without comparison. He not only survived persecution, imprisonment and banishment, but went on to serve as a distinguished member of what is increasingly becoming a free and open Parliament in the Soviet Union. Credit is due to Mr. Gorbachev for his recognition of that courage and the return of Andrei Sakharov from exile in Gorky.

When I was in Leningrad in September, in the official shop I purchased a poster published by the Communist party of the Soviet Union illustrating the work of the Congress of People's Deputies and the Supreme Soviet. Among all the usual photographs of the hierarchy, there was a photograph of Dr. Sakharov, with other members of the Opposition in that Parliament, arguing with the President of the Supreme Soviet, Mikhail Gorbachev. If the Conservative party published such posters featuring its former leaders, one would regard it as more open.

We should note the dignified, peaceful and orderly way in which the people of eastern Europe have taken back their lives. We must admire the lack of vengeance, violence and retribution against those who gaoled, tortured, persecuted and oppressed their people for so many years and who, it is now revealed in graphic detail, robbed them at the same time. What all the missiles, tanks, troops and ships that we deployed against those countries for 40 years failed to do, the people did for themselves simply by saying, "Enough." They politely but emphatically told the Stasi in East Germany and the secret police or party militia which existed in so many other countries the local equivalent of, "Get stuffed". The architects of repression, oppression, internal security and control immediately bowed before the earthquake of popular support, gales of liberated laughter and the derision of people from whom, after four decades, the yoke had finally been lifted.

I regret to say that the opening speech in this debate, though witty in part, was in stark contrast with the brave and inspiring example that we have seen in eastern Europe in the last year of this decade. It is sad that the traumatic and reviving events among the brave people of eastern Europe are being used as a ramp in a trivial and superficial attack on the British Labour party and on democratic Socialism. In no way does it diminish those who have fought for their freedom and are continuing to do so even on this very day. The hon. Member for Tatton was in the witness box in the High Court in 1986. In his defence he said that he and other hon. Members on the trip about which accusations had been made, for which he received handsome damages from the BBC, were winding down during the parliamentary recess and that there was a little larking about. His contribution today fell into that category, rather than representing a sensible contribution to a major subject before the House, the nation and the world.

It is appropriate that the chairman of the Conservative party should have been singled out by the Government to give their view in this debate. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) said, the right hon. Gentleman has even less credibility than Mr. Egon Krenz, about whom he spoke earlier. At least Mr. Krenz, for the brief period he was in power, was elected by the party that he represented, and removed pretty quickly——

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Oh yes?

Mr. Robertson: Yes, Mr. Krenz was elected by the party, undemocratic though that may be. The Conservative party does not go through any form of election. Its chairman, picked by Mrs. Honecker at No 10 Downing street, was the architect of the abolition of the

[Mr. Robertson]

Greater London council. He disagreed with the people, thought that the people were not capable of making a decision about local government, and swept away the GLC. Who could be more appropriate than the unelected abolitionist to represent the voice of free enterprise?

Mr. Kenneth Baker: No one has regretted the demise of the Greater London council—with the exception of its former chairman, the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), who actually has the regalia of his former office tucked away in a trunk awaiting the opportunity to don it once again. As the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) has been waxing eloquent about the Greater London council, can he say whether it is Labour party policy to restore it?

Mr. Robertson: There is a commitment to restore proper government to London. Proper elections are the hallmark of the Labour party, whereas the unelected chairman of the Conservative party sits here as the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the hallmark of the Conservative view being to abolish elections when the election result is likely to be inconvenient to the party.

Mr. Tony Banks: Perhaps I can help my hon. Friend. Our policy documents are copious and perhaps not read all the way through by everyone. At a meeting of the London group of Labour Members, of which I am the chair, our hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould)—the Shadow Secretary of State for the Environment—made it clear that when a Labour Government are elected, city-wide government in London will also be restored.

Mr. Robertson: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's clarification. We shall also restore government to Scotland in a Scottish assembly. The Government prattle on about freedom and champion the cause of self-determination in the Baltic republics, but cannot even fulfil the Standing Orders of the House and establish a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. A little hollowness can be detected in all their protestations about freedom.

There is one favour that the right hon. Gentleman can do for the people of Czechoslovakia. I shall be visiting Prague next week, and I understand that the Czechoslovak Communist party is, in its reorganisation, looking for a new name. It might be worth suggesting "Conservative and Unionist party" as being admirably suitable. It will not have escaped the notice of Conservative Members and people in the country that almost universally those who are losing their positions in the great revolution of the people throughout eastern Europe—all those who have propped up the dreary, drab regimes over the years—are called conservatives, and they are not conservatives for nothing. The regimes that they have propped up have all the usual characteristics.

My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) looked in the "Concise Oxford Dictionary" for a definition of Socialism, which was a worthy objective. I looked for a definition of Conservatism in a book written by the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) called "Right Thinking"—something of a contradiction in terms. It was published some time ago.

Mr. Tony Banks: It is now being remaindered by W. H. Smith.

Mr. Robertson: It was remaindered a long time ago. I bought my copy in a second-hand book shop. Its antiquity is amply evidenced by the fact that it has two equally lyrical prefaces—one by Margaret Thatcher and the other by Sir Ian Gilmour, who at that time were apparently even speaking to each other. I read through the book for inspiration and found a definition of Conservatism taken from an address given by Abraham Lincoln in 1860:

> "What is Conservatism? Is it not adherence to the old and tried against the new and untried?"

There is the epitaph for all the collapsing Conservatives in eastern Europe and those who are about to go out of fashion in the West.

Mr. Michael Brown: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Robertson: No, not just now.

Mr. Brown: But the hon. Gentleman misquoted Abraham Lincoln.

Mr. Robertson: No, I have not.

Mr. Brown: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) can decide whether or not he wants to give way.

Mr. Michael Brown: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertston) misquoted Abraham Lincoln. He used the words, "Is it not" whereas the quote states, "It is not".

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) must not try to intervene in the debate.

Mr. Robertson: As one witnesses the inspiring scenes shown on our television sets in the past few weeks, one has detected an instinctive sympathy at No. 10 Downing street with the beleaguered leaderships and establishments of eastern Europe, rather than with the noisy, ordinary, impudent, protesting rabble in the streets demanding the resignation of those leaders.

One may consider, for example, the fate of Erich Honecker, currently under popular house arrest as there appears to be no existing law permitting him to be charged. He is accused of amassing huge personal wealth and of owning a number of dachas—private houses in the country. I understand that Mr. Willi Stoph, the former Prime Minister, has also been accused of keeping 100 different brands of whisky in his cellar. In our part of the world, that would be regarded as trade advertising. In any event, it is not difficult to make a comparison with the British Prime Minister and her own private wealth, with her dacha in Dulwich and at Chequers, as well as a very fashionable flat in the most expensive part of Westminster. At this very moment it is being fortified and having railings put around it—which must make the members of the East German politburo green with envy.

The peoples of eastern Europe are turning their backs on Communism but not on Socialism. Certainly they are rejecting the one-party, bureaucratic, centralised state, with its tyranny, oppression, economic failure and crushing censorship. But the people are not turning their back on social welfare and on justice. The people are demanding something new. They want more freedom, more choice and greater democracy, but they are not demanding Thatcherism. They foresee not the blueprint of the unregulated market system, with all its inequalities and injustices, but rather the example of what they know to be democratic Socialism. They do not want to exchange one form of tyranny for another. That is why Alexander Dubcek, whom the Chancellor of the Duchy mentioned, spoke in 1968 of

"Socialism with a human face."

That is what is required now. It means dismantling the dead weight of the state apparatus, introducing multi-party democracy and decentralising power in those countries; it does not mean embracing cut-throat laissez-faire, with no provision for the wellbeing of the community and no support for the weak and needy.

In the streets of Leipzig and in Wenceslas square the crowds shouted, "Gorby, Gorby, Gorby." No one shouted, "Maggie, Maggie, Maggie." Even Lech Walesa does not think like the Prime Minister, although she admires him, and he admires her in some ways. In September I visited the Soviet Republic of Georgia and met the former deputy Speaker of the Georgian Parliament, a man of great distinction who reached the age of 80 last month and has clearly been a power in the land for many of those 80 years. He said to me, "Mr. Robertson, I have to tell you that Mrs. Thatcher is very popular in this area." I told him that I was not a bit surprised to learn that Mrs. Thatcher had struck a chord in the land which gave birth to Joseph Stalin and to Beria.

Lech Walesa, however, sees another side of the Prime Minister's image. He described her, in the presence of my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), as "Mrs. Hyde", and explained, "We cannot transfer your system to Poland, because we do not like human and legal aspects of it." Walesa, a democratic Socialist himself, prefers the positive ideals of western Socialism. Only a few weeks ago he was in this country as a guest of the TUC, speaking out for the values of free trade unionism—values that our Prime Minister certainly does not share, and indeed has undermined considerably by banning trade union membership at GCHQ.

What those brave and visionary people in eastern Europe are demanding is far more akin to western democratic Socialism than to any concept of free-market Thatcherism. Not surprisingly, they have little time for the fruits of Thatcherism that are enjoyed in this country—unemployment, social strife and water shares. True, they want to privatise, but on a wholly different basis from ours. Their aim is to unlock a locked and rusty system of total state ownership, rather than simply selling off the family silver. Let members of the Adam Smith institute go to Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia or Bulgaria and try to peddle the idea of selling the nuclear power stations and the water in the taps.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: They have been there.

Mr. Robertson: Of course they have, but I bet that they did not try to sell such crazy ideas. If they did, they would have got short shrift.

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): The hon. Gentleman has taken us on an interesting tour of east European cities that he has visited recently and people whom he has met. I have been wondering whether he will ever return to the subject of Socialism in the United Kingdom.

Conservative Members are faced with a genuine dilemma, with which the hon. Gentleman may be able to help us. We do not know whether to take Labour's policy review seriously. Are we to believe what the review says, or are we to suspect that nothing has changed underneath? If I asked the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) whether, in the light of the review, the Leader of the Opposition is still a Socialist, what does the hon. Gentleman think that his right hon. Friend would say?

Mr. Robertson: I advise the hon. Gentleman to go on listening to my speech, which will give him the answer to his question. I also recommend that he read the policy review, from which he will discover why we are consistently ahead in the opinion polls, and why our victory at the next election is guaranteed.

The real divide in eastern Europe is still between the reformers and conservatives—between those with vision, like Mikhail Gorbachev, and reactionaries like President Ceaucescu. Thatcherism, with its Little England rhetoric and its worn-out cold war attitudes, sometimes has more in common with the rigidities of Ceaucescu than with the trail-blazing radicalism of Gorbachev. The socialist parties are the parties of modernisation and reform. We alone want to encourage dialogue and new systems to cope with the sweeping changes that are transforming Europe. That is why democratic socialism is in the vanguard of the new Europe.

The motion refers to the withering away of Socialism in the Western world. I remind the House that there are Socialist parties in Government, either on their own or in coalition, in the following European countries: Spain, France, Sweden, Austria, Italy, Luxembourg, Belgium, Holland, Greece, Iceland and Finland. Since the people of those democratic countries of western Europe have all chosen Socialist parties to govern them, the preposterous idea that Socialism is withering away underlines the negative and empty basis of the motion.

Thatcherism has been consistently lacking in its ability to encourage British exports. We need only to consider the largest trade deficit in British history to see that all too clearly. Nowhere, however, has Thatcherism failed so conspicuously as in its failure to export itself. Thatcherism has been well and truly rejected, even by our closest European Community partners who regularly and universally isolate and marginalise our Prime Minister at their gatherings. Britain has become the outpost, the last bastion of an outdated and backward-looking creed. The European social charter is defined by the British Prime Minister, and only by her, as "Marxist." For the Prime Minister, anything that attempts to replace the economic free-for-all with social rights and responsibilities is to be labelled in that sloganistic way.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: A moment ago, the hon. Gentleman referred to France as a Socialist country. I believe that it was at the top of his list. France has a very successful economy. Does he accept that in France income tax is very low, that it has a very high proportion of nuclear power and that it has an independent nuclear deterrent? Does he regard those as characteristics of Socialism?

Mr. Robertson: Socialism has different manifestations, but its common characteristic is that it believes in a proper place for the market and in a social infrastructure which provides help those who need it. Socialist Governments throughout the world do not accept the narrow ideology that the Conservative party seems to believe is worth

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exporting to other countries. Socialist Governments believe in people being free to make their own choice within the Socialist system. Although there are points of difference between each of the Governments that I have mentioned, they are all Socialist in their title, in their ethos and philosophy, and in the message that they put forward. The idea that Socialism is withering away is completely and utterly silly.

Mr. Benn: My hon. Friend may wish to point out that Dr. Sakharov, warmly praised by the chairman of the Conservative party, was totally opposed to nuclear weapons. To quote Dr. Sakharov as an example of the model that we should follow is thus to confirm the Labour party's view that nuclear weapons should neither be possessed nor used.

Mr. Robertson: The mighty Dr. Sakharov was a Socialist and held a number of views that I am sure the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), if he took more time, would find profoundly embarrassing.

Even with the European Community there are those who disagree with the Prime Minister—the great new ideologue who stomps the world stage labelling people Marxist even if, like Chancellor Kohl, Prime Minister De Mita of Italy or Prime Minister Silva of Portugal, they are as Right wing as she is.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Robertson: No. I have given way more than adequately and I should like other hon. Members to be able to contribute to the debate.

The ideas being put forward in Europe are the ideas of tomorrow and are relevant to the future. We are Socialists because we know that things could be much better. On its own, the market delivers fear and uncertainty. I return to a quotation from the book compiled by the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle from Mr. Ian MacLeod, a former Conservative Minister, who said in 1969:

> "On the general point that everything has its price, I am a keen believer in market forces, but I do not go as far as this. Indeed I think that basically over the years, this is a Whig rather than a Tory doctrine. Everything has its price. Yes, but that would mean no regional policy. It would mean a disastrous future for the regions. It is an excellent policy for the strong, but we are also concerned with the weak."

Those words should haunt Conservative Members and they should consider how far away from that ideal they have drifted.

We live in a society where preventable—I stress that word—poverty and injustice are allowed to go unchecked. We live in a society which is able to shorten hideously long hospital waiting lists, house its increasing numbers of homeless, educate and train its wasted and forgotten young people, but does not do so because it naively and foolishly believes that the all-powerful market will deliver the goods. The market, however, has not delivered and the number of homeless young people living in cardboard boxes on the streets of London has reached a record and shameful level, our old people live on a pension which is the lowest among all our European partners and too many of our sick go untreated due to lack of resources.

In his opening remarks, the hon. Member for Tatton described as organised disruption the largest petition that has ever been presented to Parliament containing 4·5 million signatures in support of the nation's ambulance crews.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I certainly did not describe the petition as organised disruption. I have no objection whatever to the presentation of that petition to the House, or to the explanation by the hon. Gentleman who presented the petition pointing out the number of people who had signed it. I resented the number of Opposition Members who, under the guise of points of order, tried to have a debate about how many cardboard boxes should be placed on the Floor of the House.

Mr. Robertson: When the hon. Gentleman reads his own words, he will realise that the protests about the boxes occurred because only one third of the 4·5 million signatures were able to be presented because of a ruling from the Chair. The hon. Gentleman described the protests against that ruling as organised disruption, and I think that what he said will be interpreted in that way.

Far too many children in Britain still go uneducated due to lack of staff and books. With top-up loans, our higher education system will soon become the province only of the wealthy.

Modern Toryism—Thatcherism—is based on a narrow and false assumption that human nature is unalterably selfish, acquisitive and competitive, and that we are all driven only by the desire to maximise our wealth and income and that the next man can go hang—the "me-now" society that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition described. We believe, as do the newly liberated peoples of eastern Europe that human beings are civilised, that they have a sense of individuality but also of community and of the greater good. They want to banish uncertainty, dishonesty and injustice and create a better world in place of fear, as Bevan said. They believe in essential human equality, justice and self-respect. They do not want a society based on antagonism; they want more sharing, and more co-operation, which is what democratic Socialism will bring. It stands for democracy, decentralisation and real power for ordinary people to control their lives, whether they live here or in the newly liberated countries. Of course it means redistribution of wealth so that all the people can fulfil themselves.

Socialism, despite what many of its opponents caricature it to be, is truly about the individual. It is about individual personal choice, personal growth and universal betterment and it is an idea that is currently sweeping Europe, both East and West. Thatcherism—a concept unique to this country—is unexportable with its values of antagonism and selfish acquisitiveness and has become a thing of the past. The language of conflict and narrow prejudice both at home and abroad is not appropriate for the brave new world which we see developing in this last year of the 1980s where co-operation and understanding will be central tenets.

Even though 10 years of Thatcherism will leave scars, in the fulness of time it will be seen merely as a blip in British history.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. Time is getting short and I have the impression that many fiery speeches are waiting to be delivered.

1.15 pm

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): I was honoured that the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) referred to the modest little tome that I wrote when I had the honour to serve on the Greater London council with the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone), who I am delighted to see in his place today. As a real author is sitting on the Government Front Bench, I feel as Queen Victoria must have felt when Disraeli said "We authors, Ma'am". All my book tried to do was to reveal the nature of Conservative politics through what people had said. I am delighted to have heard good speeches from two notable Left-wing Labour Members—the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) and the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer).

Richard Crossman wrote in his diary in 1959 that

> "The definition of the Left is of a group of people who will never be happy unless they convince themselves that they are about to be betrayed by their leaders."

When he wrote that, he was intending to be facetious. However, those words ring true today. They are not about to be betrayed by their leaders but are being betrayed by their leaders.

I was also interested in what the hon. Member for Walton said about nationalisation. Apparently, the Labour party no longer believes in it. We have not read that degree of historical revisionism since George Orwell's "1984". In 1957 Richard Crossman wrote:

> "The two most important emotions of the Labour party are a doctrinaire faith in nationalisation, without knowing what it means, and a doctrinaire faith in pacifism without facing its consequences."

Those wise words could be listened to with good effect by the hon. Member for Walton.

In the Labour party and Socialism generally we are seeing the belief that, if one sticks up for one's principles and fights elections on what one believes, one will not become the governing party. That is a dose of realism but it is sad for hon. Members such as the hon. Member for Walton. That was not always so. In his younger days the leader of the Labour party wrote in the "Broad Left Alliance Journal" of October 1982:

> "I must emphasise . . . that there is nothing in the Labour Party constitution that could, or should, prevent people from holding opinions which favour Leninist-Trotskyism . . . Certainly Marxism has and will continue to have an important function in the Labour Party."

He believed that then, but does he believe it now?

We know that the Labour party fought an election on a truly Socialist manifesto in 1983. In March 1983, the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) wrote in the *New Socialist:*

> "The Labour Party can go into the next election united behind the most radical manifesto on which we have ever campaigned."

The result of that campaign was the greatest defeat that the Labour party had suffered in 50 years. The Leader of the Opposition has become a "desiccated calculating machine". Those are not my words but those of Aneurin Bevan who said in 1954 that that is what every successful leader of the Labour party had to become.

I am sure that the hon. Member for Walton is right. If one fights an election without believing in what one is saying, one will come a cropper and have to change policies overnight. That is what we have seen with previous Labour Governments and it will happen again.

There are some wonderful quotations on this subject, but I shall give only one or two. Lord Wilson said:

> "I myself have always deprecated . . . in crisis after crisis, appeals to the Dunkirk spirit as an answer to our problem."—[*Official Report*, 26 July 1961; Vol. 645, c. 451.]

On 12 December 1964, he said:

> "I believe that the spirit of Dunkirk will once again carry us through to success."

It would be a disaster if, just as eastern Europe is emerging from Socialism, we were to become an inward-looking community too much wedded to bureaucratic mechanisms, whether they be central banks or a common currency. It would be a disaster if we were to turn our backs on what is happening in eastern Europe. This is the opportunity to help it become a member of an outward-looking Europe, a Europe of concentric circles, a Europe of borders but not barriers. There should be a Europe of free trade, in which goods and services, labour and people can circulate freely.

So much of what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has said in recent years has been vindicated by recent events. Events in eastern Europe provide her with an historic opportunity to lead opinion in Europe. The Government and Conservative Members generally—I fear that we shall not receive any support from the Opposition—must lead that opinion. I referred earlier to the necessity of creating intellectual consensus so that it is possible successfully to implement domestic policies. It is necessary also for us to create that consensus in Europe, and I believe that we can do it. The plans that we have advanced for competing currencies and freely floating currencies in a Europe that is moving towards free trade are part of a value system that can take Europe from the dark ages of Socialism to a much brighter future.

There has been what I would describe as a chocolate economy in eastern Europe. An article headed "Bitterness on Chocolate Express" states:

> "The 'Chocolate Express', the Berlin-Warsaw-Moscow train favoured by Soviet-bloc smugglers, was the scene of fierce argument and fisticuffs yesterday as East Germany tried to shield itself from the Solidarity virus."

That was before East Germany started to reform itself. The article continues:

> "The Chocolate Express—so called because returning Polish workers bring out large satchels of East German chocolate and sell it en bloc, so to speak, to black-market leaders on the Polish side of the frontier—is being delayed for two to four hours every night."

That was the economy of Socialist eastern Europe before we started to see the changes that are now taking place.

The changes are resulting in the former leadership having to change its entire life style. Another article states:

> "Mr. Edward Gierek, who lives in a sprawling villa in Katowice, complains that he can make ends meet thanks only to a small hard currency pension he receives for when he worked as a coal miner in France and Belgium."

One's heart bleeds for him. The article continues:

> "At 7 am at the hopelessly understocked food shop on First Polish Army Avenue in Warsaw, the usual queue includes three former Ministers, (sent by their wives to buy fresh bread), an ex-Council of State member and a number of senior Solidarity activists who inherited their apartments from Communist parents."

Eastern Europe is emerging from the chocolate economy, but countries such as Poland and

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Czechoslovakia are struggling with enormous inherited problems, with which only we in the European Community can help.

The new Czechoslovak Finance Minister, Vaclav Klaus, who until a few weeks ago was a barely tolerated dissident, was recently asked whether he would like to institute a heavy dose of monetarism. He replied, "I would like to". This is the new Czechoslovak Minister for Finance. But he said that he doubted that he had the resources to do so. Fears are being expressed in Poland about whether it has the institutions and mechanisms, whatever the will for change may be, to enable it to move forward. All that proves that the collapse of Socialism which we are now witnessing must be our stimulus and opportunity.

I have talked about the history of Socialism in this country and events in eastern Europe, but the collapse of Socialism—the collapse of the international consensus that has sustained it over the years—is our opportunity to begin to move the debate from our point of view. Conservatism is nothing if it is not about caring for those who hitherto have not had many of the privileges that some of us have enjoyed. A hundred years ago, it would have been inconceivable for an ordinary working man to have owned his home, but now 68 per cent. of our population do so. We must take the debate forward, at a time when erstwhile Socialists seem to be adopting the tenets of Thatcherism.

We cannot afford to stand still or to consolidate; we must move forward, and I believe that the way to do so is to open opportunities that previously did not exist. The Conservative party has been most successful when it has provided a gangway, such as into home ownership, which is now enjoyed by 68 per cent. of our population. We can talk now about people enjoying the opportunities of private health care, which they never did before, and of private education. We should be putting forward such ideas. The collapse of Socialism gives us the opportunity to do so, and we must take it.

1.27 pm

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): I shall not follow the hon. Gentleman the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) along the gangplank of Conservatism, because it my come to a worrying end.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), who made a most eloquent speech, that we are witnessing a historic series of events in eastern Europe. We are witnessing a successful 1848. a successful democratic revolution has toppled Communist regimes in Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, and I believe that it will lead to democratic Governments in East Germany and Bulgaria. Clearly, we have witnessed historic events.

I enjoyed the amusing speech of the hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton), although perhaps it was somewhat long. Occasionally, I felt that he was not living up to the level of events, particularly when he suggested that everything that was happening in eastern Europe was a consequence of the example of the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher). That astonishing claim was made by the right hon. Lady herself in her rather extraordinary speech to her party conference, when she claimed to have lit the torch of freedom in eastern Europe—this was just after we had all the laser beams and Nuremberg rally stuff that now goes on in the modern Conservative party.

Watching on television, I noted the keen support of the chairman of the Tory party. No doubt he was still then in his St. Crispin's day mood. The right hon. and learned Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe) was somewhat less enthusiastic. His hands went through the clapping motion, but the body language told us something different. It is always useful to watch the right hon. and learned Gentleman's body language. I noticed it recently on television, when the Prime Minister was speaking. His body language and the distance that he keeps between himself and the Prime Minister on the Government Front Bench are always revealing. It told us that in this case the right hon. and learned Gentleman felt that she had made a boast too many.

I am glad to say that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster did not claim this time that everything that was happening in eastern Europe was happening because of the Prime Minister. He knows, as all of us do if we are honest, that the real architect of what has happened in eastern Europe is Mr. Gorbachev. Mr. Gorbachev has made it clear to all the leaders of the Communist regimes in eastern Europe that the Soviet Union is no longer prepared to support Communist regimes with Russian troops.

In effect, Mr. Gorbachev has told the Communist leaders that they are on their own. The withdrawal of this threat has encouraged the peoples of Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and East Germany to insist on a democratic revolution in their countries. They want free elections, a pluralistic system and legal democratic rights—the kind of things that one wants in a civilised democratic society. They want an end, too, to the arthritic command economies which have kept back their living standards. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton said, that does not mean that they want a totally free market. They may not want a command economy, but they want to keep the welfare system that exists in their countries. They do not want the unemployment that we have in ours.

We are wise to conclude that their revolution is very much their own. Many views are held and there will be many political parties. If they have a model of society that they seek to emulate, it is certainly not Thatcherite Britain. It is probably the welfare democracy of West Germany, which has been greatly criticised by the Conservative Government in recent years, especially by the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson), who claimed that it was arthritic and had many features that stopped the market working properly. I am glad that it has. That is why the people of West Germany are able to enjoy a decent standard of living and get something out of the growth of their economy. We are seeing a democratic revolution in eastern Europe. It is not what the hon. Member for Tatton said it was: it is not so much the death of Socialism as the birth of democracy in eastern Europe.

It is true that our western European democracies are imperfect. Certainly the system in this country is imperfect: I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) that tiers of local government have been abolished under the rule of this Conservative Government. Other countries in western Europe do not understand how one can get rid of a tier of government and get rid of the government of London. We have seen rights diminished in many features of life in this country.

In western Europe we have one crucial advantage—or have had—over the peoples of eastern Europe: we can replace our Governments at general elections by putting a cross on the ballot paper and putting it in the ballot box. The ballot box shows that there is a clear trend against the Right in European political opinion. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton said, in France the Right has been decisively rejected and the French Socialists are in power. In Spain, the Right has been defeated in three successive general elections and the Socialists are in power. In Sweden and Austria, Socialists and Social Democrats are in power. Even in West Germany, a centre-Right Government are in power who are different in character from the British Government. We should hear what the Prime Minister has to say about Mr. Genscher or Mr. Kohl. The West German Government are different in character from Britain's Conservative Government.

The European elections showed that, far from a tide of Thatcherism sweeping across Europe, as one might have thought after listening to the hon. Member for Tatton, the Right is being decisively rejected in other European countries. That is why the biggest single group in the European Paliament is the Socialist group, not a group from the Right.

Part of the Prime Minister's problem at successive European summits has been her ideological isolation. The other countries of the European Community want a social Europe and a social charter to secure the social rights of the people of Europe. That is precisely what the Prime Minister rejects. No wonder that she feels so alone when her views are so decisively rejected by the rest of Europe.

Despite three Conservative election victories in Britain, the polls show that the values of Thatcherism are still not supported by the British people. The polls show that people believe in fairness and social justice, want to see a strong National Health Service, a state education system, and selective Government intervention. They do not believe in letting the free market go totally unregulated and untrammelled. The Government's increasing unpopularity, the big Labour lead in the public opinion polls and the changing political agenda all suggest that, far from seeing the end of Socialism, we are beginning to see the end of Thatcherism in this country.

The fact that Socialists have changed their policies and agendas in West Germany, France, Spain, Scandinavia and this country is nothing to be ashamed of. On the contrary, the ability to renew itself is Socialism's abiding strength. A new political agenda is emerging in west Europe, and also in east Europe, based on more active government, good public services, a proper benefit system for those who are less well off, proper environmental protection and enhanced citizens' rights.

That is what is being asked for in eastern Europe, and that is what we need in western Europe. Europeans are also asking for greater political co-ordination and co-operation across national frontiers, which is why Europe is now much more popular than it has ever been and the Conservatives are so isolated on this issue, not just in western Europe, but in this country.

The agenda which is emerging is rejected by Thatcherites and most Conservative Members, but it is gaining support, not only in this country but across Europe. It is not Socialism which is on the defensive, but Right-wing Conservatism. The coming decade will be not Thatcherite but Socialist—one in which Socialist ideas will dominate the policital agenda and political debate, and Socialists will be in power across Europe.

1.40 pm

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): We owe a debt of gratitude to my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) for introducing this debate, which records the end of an era. Throughout the 20th century, Socialism has flowed through the politics, history and economics of the world. The Socialists have obtained power but now the Socialist states have withered. What has Socialism left in its wake? Millions of dead, economies in ruin, and failure and disillusionment in much of the Third world. Opposition Members have celebrated the departures of various Socialist Governments in eastern Europe, but we in the House must judge Socialism by its achievements. The proof of the pudding is in the eating.

Let us look as some of the brand names. In the Soviet Union, we had Marxism, then Leninism and then Stalinism, and all of them were identified as sub-branches of Socialism. Socialism led to widespread oppression and to the slaughter of millions of Kulaks, peasants, intellectuals and religious leaders in the Soviet Union. It also led to the cynical deal that the Soviet Union put together with those other Socialists—the National Socialists in Germany.

The economy of Russia was growing fast before the Russian revolution, but since then there has been stagnation and decline. A recent study in *The Economist* tried to find reasons for the decline of the economy of the Soviet Union, where production is running 2·5 per cent. lower than last year. Coal production, for instance, is 5·5 per cent. down. *The Economist* study says:

> "The steel ministry has been refusing to supply steel to the railway industry, because the railway ministry failed to supply enough trains to the steel ministry. The coal ministry is complaining about the same thing. The steel and railway ministries in turn say it is all the fault of the coal ministry, because it did not send them enough coal, thanks to this summer's strikes. And so on—and, for once in Soviet official history, they are all probably telling something like the truth."

Why has all this happened? The industries of the Soviet Union have been managed by political hacks who refer to their political party for their marching orders. They are not run by managers, and that it why they are in such a mess.

I shall give the House an example of Socialist state planning. Shortly before the era of glasnost began, reports came in of some confusion at the railway marshalling yard in Kiev. There were trains in the marshalling yard loaded with organic fertiliser—a delicate way of saying animal dung—and trains loaded with coffee. Thanks to Socialist management's incompetence the trains went to the wrong destinations. Glasnost or no glasnost, the collective farms which thought that they were getting the fertiliser complained that what they had received did not work. Because glasnost had not yet arrived, consumers of coffee knew that they should not complain and simply swallowed it.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Are not railways rather a bad example? Compare the Socialist railways in France, which are delivering the goods with a substantial Government subsidy and contributing much to regional development in France, with what has happened to British Rail over the past decade.

Mr. Arnold: What happened to British Rail over the past decade was that it failed as a nationalised industry, as it failed in the decades before. It is incapable of keeping the freight off the roads and on the railways. It is incapable of providing a flexible service, which private road hauliers have been able to do.

The hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) told us that what has happened in the Soviet Union, and in western Europe for that matter, is not Socialism. He told us that the French Socialism of which the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) spoke is not Socialism.

Where do we go to find examples of different kinds of Socialism and what they deliver? Do we go to China, where Socialism has delivered poverty, rebellion and finally Tiananmen square? Do we go to their Socialist surrogates and Pol Pot, the self-avowed Socialist, and his killing fields in Cambodia? Perhaps we should go to the Soviet Union's surrogates in Vietnam, where that brand of Socialism brought economic failure and caused the population to flee to capitalist Hong Kong. We are concerned about people fleeing from Vietnamese Socialism to capitalist Hong Kong where they create a problem for us.

Mr. Heffer: The hon. Gentleman knows damn well that I do not agree with what happened in Tiananmen square. I include all the countries to which the hon. Gentleman has referred in the same breath as I referred to the Soviet Union. The hon. Gentleman should apologise for trying to suggest otherwise.

Mr. Arnold: I will not apologise. I acknowledge that the hon. Member for Walton referred to the practice of Socialism in western Europe and the Soviet Union. However, for the sake of argument, he does not recognise that in China, Cambodia or Vietnam.

What about the brands of Socialism in the new world? For 30 years Cuba has been a Socialist country. But what has become of Cuba now that it no longer has the Soviet Union's subsidy which the Soviet Union can no longer afford? Cuba is a bankrupt backwater presided over by an aged prima donna. It cannot provide a decent standard of living for its people. But it seems that it does achieve exports. It exported revolution to the rest of Latin America. Was that successful? Not a bit of it. It saw the death of Che Guevara, but what has that achieved? Che Guevara has served only as a sartorial example for the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn).

If we reject Cubá as an example of Socialism, what about Nicaragua? Socialism in that country has led to economic failure and to political prisoners. Nicaragua needs help from the capitalist world outside and that is forcing it to the ballot box. At last there might be democratic elections in that Socialist state.

What effect has Socialism had on Africa? Let us consider what happened in the Portuguese terrorities that turned to Marxism. I travelled to Mozambique to find out what was happening there, and I found nothing in the market places except lettuce. However, there was a new breed of British Socialist there. They had gone to Marxist Mozambique to take part in the great Socialist future of that country. They were quaintly called co-operands. Even in the Ministries which they were assisting, those co-operands discovered that they were hungry. Their Meticais, the Mozambican currency in which they were paid, bought them no food. Before they knew it, they were dabbling in the foreign exchange black market. In the end, they were humiliated and had to make regular weekly expeditions to the supermarkets across the border in South Africa. What price Socialism there?

What about Angola, where Socialism is propped up by the bayonets of Cuban troops? What about the Marxist Government in Ethiopia? Earlier this week we debated the consequences of the policies of that Marxist Government. What price starvation there? Everywhere we look for examples of Socialism in action we find failure or worse.

What about Socialism in this country? The Opposition saw the light about Socialism along time ago. The right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), the Leader of the Opposition, in a debate on industry 15 years ago, said that the British people

"know that at the end of the day the system which has failed will not bring us to a new prosperity. A new system must be tried".

He may have been right.

Mr. Heffer: He was right.

Mr. Arnold: Was he? How did he come to that conclusion? The answer is in the very same speech. He said:

"The simple assertion, therefore, is that we have tried the private enterprise system for a long time. It does not meet the needs of a modern civilisation".

He went on to state:

"Therefore, that system"—

that is, the private enterprise system—

"must be moved aside, and it is best replaced by a Socialist system".—[*Official Report*, 4 November 1974; Vol. 880, c. 770-75.]

Everywhere we look we see examples of what happens with Socialist systems. The great Leader of the Opposition would have blundered with the best of the Kremlin by trying to impose Socialism on this country. He knows that his case is so untenable that he does not try to defend it today. It is significant that there is no Opposition Front Bench amendment, and not even a member of the shadow Cabinet present. It has been up to the tired old warhorses of the Left, like first world war generals, to move an amendment and carry on as though there is no experience of what Socialism means in practice.

At least we cannot accuse the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) of double standards. In his maiden speech on 7 February 1951, he said:

"We on this side are a Socialist party—we have been for some time. We have never made any secret of the fact. In 1945, when our election programme was published, we made no secret of it".—[*Official Report*, 7 February 1951; Vol. 483, c.1782.]

It seems that the right hon. Gentleman is consistent. Today, the right hon. Member for Chesterfield expanded on that statement when he said that some people think that Socialism is whatever a Labour Government are doing at the time. As an extension, it seems that Socialism is whatever is proposed by Labour Front Bench Members at the time. If the Labour party is to win the next election it must somehow convince the country that what it is peddling is Socialism and of value. But what is the likelihood that the Leader of the Opposition will be able to put that message across? What are his capabilities? I quote no less a person than the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) who, at one of the marvellous Socialist conferences of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield, referred to her Leader as

"a no-talent, weak man."

She scorned his parliamentary debating skill, and said:

"Mrs. Thatcher gobbles him up for breakfast."

That is her judgment. For once, I do not disagree with the hon. Lady. The people of this country do not disagree, either. This week, *The Guardian* told us that, with television cameras in this place weighing up the two Front Benches, the Prime Minister has scored heavily in the presentation of policies.

The debate is about the future of Socialism, but we have not heard what Socialism is about and what future the Labour party sees for it. The future is not one of "isms", it is one of freedom of the individual and the market place. That will be safeguarded by this House, which is a democratic House, not a Socialist House.

1.53 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I will try to practise a bit of Socialism by sharing the remaining time more equitably among hon. Members who still want to speak. I associate myself with the tribute that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster paid to Andrei Sakharov. Andrei Sakharov was a great man who struggled for freedom in the Soviet Union. I remind the right hon. Gentleman that Sakharov died a Socialist, not a capitalist.

Certain events in eastern Europe are most exciting in political terms. They are probably the most important political events that have taken place in Europe for the past half century. Such events are worthy of regular debates in this House so that hon. Members' views can be expressed and heard.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) on being lucky in the ballot, but we could have been better served by another motion. Quite frankly, the wording of his motion is about as useful a contribution to the great events in eastern Europe as the *Beano* would be to a discussion about Aristotelian logic.

Comparing the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), who comes hurriedly to his place, with the speech of the hon. Member for Tatton is rather like comparing Demosthenes with Alf Garnett—[HON. MEMBERS: "Which is which?] I hasten to add that Demosthenes has come from Chesterfield, while Garnett has, presumably, returned to Tatton.

It is ridiculous to suggest in a motion that all the important events in eastern Europe have come about as a result of Thatcherism or because of the retention of nuclear weapons in Britain. It is ludicrous and pathetic, and I am surprised that the hon. Member for Tatton was prepared to suggest it. As my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) said, we know where the tribute belongs—it is with glasnost and with President Gorbachev. The people in Prague, Budapest and East Berlin are not reacting to Britain's nuclear deterrent. They are not envious of our poll tax, our homelessness, our lousy transport system or our hospital waiting queues. They are not inspired by the petty nationalism of the bigot from Grantham.

It is noticeable that the Prime Minister has realised that. The iron lady phase has now been replaced by the soft cuddly toy phase, as can be seen when she comes to the Dispatch Box at Prime Minister's Question Time. She has lost two important things during the past 12 months—first, her friend Ronald Reagan, who was probably the only western European leader who admired her intellect; secondly and more importantly, she has lost her enemies in the Soviet Union and eastern Europe. There is a great deal that will no doubt bind empathetically the Prime Minister to the Conservatives and the Stalinists in the Soviet Union in actually regretting what is happening in that country and throughout eastern Europe. There is a great deal of similarity between the authoritarians of the East and the authoritarians of the West—in this case, the Prime Minister.

The peoples of eastern Europe are directly reacting to Lord Acton's old dictum that all power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. That is what they are rejecting. They do not want Thatcherism and they certainly do not want capitalism. They are aspiring to accountable Socialism. When Vaclav Havel, to whom the Chancellor of the Duchy referred, becomes President of Czechoslovakia, it will be a victory for Socialism, not for Thatcherism and capitalism. I should like to see the day when the people of this country storm No. 10 Downing street, tear down the railings and put in Dennis Potter or Howard Brenton as Prime Minister in her place.

Although we all admit that events in the East are politically exciting, they are also dangerous. Because events are moving so quickly, we do not really know what will happen. I went to a Christmas party at the GDR embassy the other night. We played various party games, such as spin the Honecker and guess the latest leader. It was all good fun. People were in a good mood because progress was being made. However, they also recognise the dangers. The resurgence of nationalism in Europe is a danger to us all.

There is excitement and a great deal of potential, but there is also a great deal of danger because of the instability. It is incumbent upon all in the West not to table triumphalist motions about the destruction of Socialism. We should extend the hand of friendship to those struggling to achieve a more accountable democracy in their countries.

There have been various interpretations, misinterpretations, caricatures and gross caricatures of what Socialism is all about. It comes in many different varieties. Many people claim to be Socialist without being so. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield and my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) spoke of Socialism having its roots in Christianity, and I agree.

To me, Socialism is about equality of opportunity and equality before laws that are accepted as being fair and just. Socialism is about freedom from poverty and homelessness, and about the right to a good education and to a job, as well as to a first-class Health Service. Socialism is about participation at the workplace and in the democratic process by people at all levels. Socialism is also about people having a say in the present and in their futures. Socialism is about uniting a country in its social values, so that it is caring towards the old and the sick. That is why my right hon. and hon. Friends and I espouse Socialism and why we shall continue to campaign for it right up to the next general election.

2 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): I agree that this has been a significant debate and I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) on giving the House an opportunity to discuss such an important matter and to

[Mr. David Amess]

identify at first hand what are the policies of the Labour party. Over the past two and a half years, I for one have grown impatient at waiting to hear the details of what the Labour party is all about. Today, we have been given a flavour of what it is all about.

I regret that no member of the alliance parties saw fit to be present in the Chamber today. So far as I am concerned, the alliance parties are Socialist, and I hope that they are proud to be so. They always vote with the Labour party, and they propped up Labour between 1974 and 1979. I congratulate the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) and the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) on having the guts to speak passionately and sincerely about their Socialist beliefs. I do not criticise them for doing so. In fact, in 1979 the right hon. Member for Chesterfield criticised his own party for the highly personal campaign that it waged against my right hon. Friend the leader of the Conservative party. Unfortunately, over the past 10 years, instead of there being a sensible debate about Socialism versus capitalism, such as that which we have had today, the debate has all been about the personality of a particular individual. I deprecate that, and I hope that in future we can confine our debates to the beliefs of Britain's different political parties, rather than concern ourselves with any particular individual within them.

The Conservative party sets out its various policies in its manifesto. It decides what it believes is right for the country and then follows through those policies regardless of any short-term popularity. I am aghast at the actions of Opposition Members over the past two and a half years, which I call designer Socialism. Communism and Socialism have been rejected throughout the world. I shall describe briefly the policies on which Labour has changed its mind.

At first, Labour opposed home ownership word for word, line for line—but it changed its policy when it realised that that was a vote loser. However, when mortgage interest rates increased, Labour again spoke out against home ownership. Labour was also against share ownership, but then the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) suddenly decided that he favoured it—until the stock market crash, when Labour again changed its policy. On defence, I always understood that Labour stood for unilateral disarmament and that the Leader of the Opposition supported the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. However, when Labour realised that the electorate did not like that policy, it was changed.

Labour was at its most hypocritical in respect of the Common Market. It fought against Britain's membership of the Common Market. When my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister had the guts and courage to fight for British interests within the EEC, the Opposition attacked her. That dishonesty will be clearly revealed at the next general election.

I conclude by commenting on the future of Socialism in local government. I represent a constituency with a Labour council which retains control by only one vote. That is an excellent example of the future of Socialism. For some reason, Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen now seem to be rushing to Basildon. They must see it as a good example of Socialism. Of course, the policy is always the same—raise rates and raise taxes—and the best example is in Basildon, where the rate increase of 57·2 per cent. was the biggest in the country last year. Hon. Members can imagine my disgust when the council's Labour leader had the gall to send a letter to every ratepayer in Basildon. The letter began:

> "I'm writing to warn you and your household that the Government's poll tax system could mean bills of more than £500 for each adult member of your family next April.
>
> I realise this figure will surprise and worry many people, because it certainly shocked me."

It went on:

> "It's because I know many of you are struggling to make ends meet that I'm writing to you now. Everyone needs to have as much warning as possible about the likely level of this tax."

It is not surprising people in Basildon will pay a high community charge, as they are unfortunate enough to have a local authority which spends money irresponsibly. So far, we are in debt to the tune of £125 million. A new civic centre has just been built in Basildon, and the shadow Leader of the House came to open it. Unfortunately, he had not been very well briefed: he should have been told that the new centre had cost £18 million—much of it borrowed from the Banque Paribas, because we had no money of our own to finance it. He should also have been told that the centre cannot house 350 members of the authority's existing staff. Above all, he should have been told that ours was the first local authority in the country to build a civic centre without a council chamber. That shows what the Labour party thinks democracy is worth. I am a great supporter of the arts, but is also strikes me as nonsensical to build a new theatre—at a cost of £11 million—with a foyer bigger than the auditorium. Sadly, that is losing us a great deal of money.

I have always upheld the position of independence adopted by local government officers. For whatever reason, a chief officer recently left the authority. Imagine my horror when his replacement proudly sent me a copy of the authority's magazine, "Waves", containing a piece about himself. Having been in local government for a number of years, he has

> "seen enormous changes, especially the relationships with the public and central government. As the Council has moved to closer working with and involvement of the local communities that make up Basildon District, central government has increasingly tried to make local government toe a conformist line of what it thinks is best.
>
> The Governments I have known, of either political complexion, have never really trusted the ability of local Councils and their employees to do the job. This is despite the fact that in my personal experience Basildon has out-performed Westminster and Whitehall every time."

If local government officers wish to make such statements, they should stand for election as local councillors. I deprecate that kind of political involvement.

A local councillor has presented the Opposition housing spokesman with a petition concerning the transfer of housing in Basildon. It was our Government who gave people the opportunity to choose their future landlords; the man who presented that petition to the House stopped the then Labour Government taking over housing in 1977. That is an example of the crass hypocrisy with which we have to deal.

If the future of Socialism is to be articulated by the actions of the Labour party in Basildon, long may the policies inspired by our Prime Minister prevail.

2.9 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Socialism has many elements. People such as A. J. Ayer have pointed out that Socialism has two elements. One is emotive and the other is descriptive. To the Government, Socialism is a boo word. To the Labour party, it is a hurrah word. People also try to use the word for good or ill-natured purposes. The Government have referred to bad regimes, bad systems and bad results. They have tried to build up the notion that Socialism is a boo word. To counter that attack, one could talk about capitalist nations where there has been exploitation—for example, in Chile and Brazil. However, that does not get us very far. We should analyse the great potential of Socialism.

I believe, with my righ hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), that Socialism and democracy are interlinked. Their values are universal and timeless. Socialism had to formulate its ideas about capitalism and clarify them. Capitalism clarified its ideas in response to feudalism. At that time it was a revolutionary notion. We are responding to the failure of capitalism. When we discuss the future of Socialism, therefore, we have to refer to capitalism.

The Conservative party's capitalist ideas are based on certain assumptions about human nature. The Conservatives build up theories which they believe have firm foundations, but which easily collapse. They believe in individual self-interest. To them, there is no such thing as society beyond the family and individuals must do what they want. Some of them want wealth, while others want power. Some want to exploit people, while others just want to laze around. According to Conservative philosophy, that leads to a self-regulating system in both the economic and the political market place. It leads to the return of the workhouse mentality of the 19th century which said that if people are unable to provide for themselves and their families that is bad, they are both lazy and inadequate and they must be prodded to reform their ways. As a result we hear a lot of the Conservative nonsense about social provision.

The Government have developed the principle of free competition between capitalist countries. They want capitalist Governments to keep control. However, Marx demonstrated that capitalism develops into monopolistic capitalism—that large units become successful and powerful, with influence throughout the world. Exploitation is frequently associated with monopolistic capitalism. The development of capitalism in Britain has been associated with a form of parliamentary democracy, and certainly with parliamentary activity. It was developed to take power from feudalism and to share the spoils among its own class because people could not trust each other. Initially, democracy in Britain consisted of a vote among the property-owning classes who had a stake in the nation—a vote among men who would share things out among themselves. Democracy grew out of the struggle of working people and their organisations. The Chartists' struggle in the 19th century produced three massive petitions, similar to the petition that we saw today but which was not allowed to be presented in full. Those petitions sought to extend the franchise to the people.

Petitioning rights are of great historical interest as, theoretically, they allow working people to express their views without duress. Today, not for the television cameras but so that right hon. and hon. Members could see what was taking place, the petition should have been presented to us in full.

Because the Chartists limited their protests to adult male suffrage, the Suffragettes continued the struggle to extend democracy. What does capitalism do when faced with democracy? It either seeks to kid, con and contain democracy, as the wets did when they controlled the Conservative party, or, as now, it engages in confrontation. It seeks to undermine such institutions as the National Health Service, which is based on the entirely different principle of a mass democracy deciding what it needs for its own benefit and welfare. If democracy becomes uncomfortable for capitalism, capitalists ditch it. That is what happened in Chile. A famous editorial in *The Times* said that democracy in Chile had to go because the economic base of capitalist competition had to remain so that tomorrow democracy could be rebuilt.

When it comes to the crunch, capitalists do not favour a democratic system. In Britain, the democratic system is fiddled and fixed. The poll tax is a deliberate device to limit the franchise. Already, in England alone, 90,000 people are missing from last year's electoral register, due to registration factors, according to the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. Those registration factors must involve poll tax provisions.

People are terrified and worried about having to pay the poll tax, and in desperation many are refusing to register. The Government are seeking to squash them. At the same time, a Bill has been introduced to extend the franchise to 3 million expatriates on a voluntary basis. A voluntary franchise is an obnoxious notion as the franchise should be there for everyone. The people who have been squeezed off the electoral register are replaced by people who live overseas, who are not part of our society, who are not concerned about the services that should be provided, and are not worried about defending the Health Service. I prefer to talk about what people are supposed to get out of the system rather than what they contribute. In any case, that measure is inconsistent with the Government's arguments about accountability in support of the poll tax.

That is only part of what the Government are doing to attack freedom, civil liberties and the rights of the individual. Socialism is a doctrine concerned with the individual's self-fulfilment and benefit and development within a social context. If we believe in society and the need for mutual assistance and help, we should look to Socialist solutions. The values of Socialism are co-operation, mutual assistance, participation and social equality. A pre-Socialist—Rousseau—said that no person should be so weak as to have to sell himself and no one should be powerful enough to be able to purchase him. That is the equality that is needed if a democratic system is to operate properly. Socialists see in human beings the potential for co-operation and collective activity and recognise that those values must be put into practice if we are to tackle the vast problems to be seen throughout the world.

The case for Socialism and the extension of democracy has been expressed by my right hon. and hon. Friends when referring to the problem of homelessness, for example. A recent UNICEF report deals with starvation and death among the children of the world, with one child dying every two minutes. That is one of the many problems which need to be tackled, but it will not be

[Mr. Harry Barnes]

tackled unless we act collectively. We must co-operate and act as moral beings. Individualism, self-help and the feathering of nests is abhorrent to Socialist values.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Barnes: I shall not give way because time is short.

The massive changes that are taking place in eastern Europe present opportunities and possibilities for advancing democracy and, therefore, advancing Socialism.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): There are two Conservative Members in their places who participated with me in a recent weekend study trip to Berlin. I am sure that they will agree with Donald Burton, the political adviser who briefed us in Berlin on the political developments there, that the people of East Berlin do not want the Stalinism of Honecker but neither do they want the capitalism of the West. They seek a third way—a democratic way. Mr. Burton told us also that what had happened in East Berlin had little to do with Governments and the military and everything to do with people power.

Mr. Barnes: That is right.

Eastern Europe faces massive problems, including nationalism and the power of the Church. The Church can exercise hierachical influences and controls, and even clashes of a racist nature. There is, however, the possibility of a new democracy, which means that the people will have a say. In effect, they are saying, "We do not want to be exploited any longer and we shall act together."

We in the West are pleased that we have something to offer. Hungarians and others come to London to watch Parliament operating and to take the lessons that they have learnt back to Hungary. They want to know how we function. That being so, we must take the high ground. We must learn from the developments that are taking place in eastern Europe. We must not think that we have all the answers. We must build upon our tradition of democracy, involvement and participation, including petitions.

Fully-fledged Socialism is not problem-free when it is sought to advance it. There will be a long haul before we can establish Socialism in the United Kingdom or on a pan-European basis. There are problems to overcome here and throughout the western democracies. The values of Conservative Members, the mass media, history and tradition, and the powers that they have exercised have caused their values to be reflected in the views of the people instead of the people reflecting Socialist views. There is a great deal of work to be done and we must start doing it. The Labour and trade union movement must increase its campaigning activities.

There are lessons to be learnt from Keir Hardie, who was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer). Keir Hardie and his supporters used to work like mad. They published a journal entitled "Labour Leader" and carried bundle after bundle of copies of it to distribute. They walked miles and miles to meetings. They used to engage in massive activity with the trade union movement until things started to break in their direction. I see that happening among Democratic Socialists in small areas within Europe. The Workers party in Ireland is now emerging as a powerful force. It has its roots within the community and is growing in strength with every election. In Malta—a smaller area, but of significance recently—the Labour party had to fight the hierarchy of the Church for 16 years. The Maltese nation is Catholic and it was claimed that people would be excommunicated if they associated with the Labour party. The Maltese Labour party introduced a welfare state and transformed the heritage that Britain had left. Campaigning and mobilisation is easier as it is a small nation with different traditions and fine weather. We need to learn from some of those examples in the way we struggle and advance to Socialism.

Mr. Skinner: The Tories who started the debate today have a lot to learn. They came here to launch a massive attack on Socialism but after half an hour the balance of power had swung to the Opposition. Now they are in such a mess that the Whips have been running round the House trying to find more Tory Members to support them. They do not have 100 people in the House to stop the debate —that shows how frail and fragile they have become—and they do not have the guts to vote on the motion.

Mr. Barnes: I am pleased to hear that as I have more points to develop.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) regularly regales the House with how much of a democrat he is. He knows, because he has spoken to his Whip, that there was an agreement between the two sides as to how the debate should go. Yet he is deliberately talking out the debate. Does that not show that he is no democrat, despite his mouthings to the contrary?

Mr. Barnes: A recent report in *The Guardian* showed that Mr. David Hart, an adviser to the Prime Minister, had been supporting a publication called "British Briefing" which maligns certain Labour Members as Communist stooges. Conservative Members have described Communism in such broad terms that people who write for *Marxism Today* and the *Morning Star* could be said to be the same people. Yet those organisations have considerable conflicts.

"British Briefing" described me as

"an emerging, vigorous, Stalinist underminer of Parliamentary democracy".

No doubt that description appeals to the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett), but how can that be consistent with the analysis that I have just given about the need for democracy to be seen to be part of Socialism, and the things that I have done about democracy in the House? I was surprised on coming here to find that I had turned into a bourgeois democrat defending the system in the House. The defence of that system was one of the rights needed by working people. My Re-enfranchisement of the People Bill would extend the franchise and overcome the problem of the poll tax, and my Petitioners' Rights Bill is clearly needed in the light of what has taken place today.

Mr. Robertson: Perhaps Mr. David Hart, whether he works from Downing street or wherever, should know that the hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton)—whose debate this is—visited Czechoslovakia in 1988 as a guest of the Government there. Perhaps "British Briefing" will identify the hon. Member for Tatton, along with my hon. Friends the Members for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) and for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) as being a great danger to the state.

Mr. Barnes: The reason why information is given about me in "British Briefing" is that I opened a *Morning Star* bazaar in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). Some fine comrades work for that organisation, who before the May day organisations, which are massive in Chesterfield, were at the core of the work of the Chesterfield trades council.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A number of times in the House, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) has advocated breaking the law by not paying the community charge. Is it in order for an hon. Member who persistently advocates breaking the law to continue to advocate democracy when he does not believe in it?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is a matter for the hon. Member.

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Wednesday 20th December, Standing Order No. 54 (Consolidated Fund Bills) shall have effect as if for the words 'nine o'clock in the morning', in line 15, there were substituted the words 'eight o'clock in the morning'.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Tuesday 19th December—

(1) Standing Order No. 52 (Consideration of estimates) shall have effect with the insertion, in paragraph (3)(a), after the words "at seven o'clock", of the words "or three hours after the commencement of those proceedings, whichever is the later"; and at the conclusion of those proceedings, notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph (5) of Standing Order No. 52 (Consideration of estimates) and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 53 (Questions on voting of estimates, &c.) regarding the time at which the Question shall be put, Mr. Speaker shall then put successively the Questions necessary to dispose of those proceedings and any Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on all other estimates appointed for consideration that day;

(2) If proceedings under paragraph (1) of this Order have not been completed before seven o'clock, the Private Business set down by direction of the Chairman of Ways and Means for consideration at that hour shall stand over until the conclusion of such proceedings; and

(3) The Private Business may be proceeded with, though opposed, for three hours after it has been entered upon.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

TELEVISING OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That Mr. Alastair Goodlad be discharged from the Select Committee on Televising of Proceedings of the House and Mr. Greg Knight be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

CONSOLIDATION, &C. BILLS (JOINT COMMITTEE)

Ordered,

That Mr. William Cash be discharged from the Select Committee on Consolidation, &c. Bills and Miss Ann Widdecombe be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS (JOINT COMMITTEE)

Ordered,

That Mr. William Cash be discharged from the Select Committee on Statutory Instruments and Miss Ann Widdecombe be added to the Committee—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

EUROPEAN LEGISLATION

Ordered,

That Mr. Alan Meale be discharged from the Select Committee on European Legislation and Dr. Norman A. Godman be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Ordered,

That Mr. John Reid be discharged from the Select Committee on Public Accounts and Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea West) be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

PARLIAMENTARY COMMISSIONER FOR ADMINISTRATION

Ordered,

That Mr. George Howarth be discharged from the Select Committee on Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration and Mr. Mike Watson be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Ordered,

That Mr. Graham Allen be discharged from the Select Committee on Members' Interests and Mr. Harry Barnes be added to the Committee—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

Violence and Pornography

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

2.31 pm

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Violence and children in pornography is not a pleasant subject at any time. I hope that hon. Members will bear with me, because some of the matters that I want to relate are not easy to talk about.

Those issues trouble people deeply. As a scene-setter to the debate, I mention to the House a survey conducted over the past two weekends in my constituency by 20 Liverpool women. It underlines the seriousness with which people regard pornography and the degradation of those who are often involved in violent and repulsive acts.

Five hundred and two women aged between 14 and 60 were surveyed. They were asked their opinion on the sale of soft porn: 72 per cent. found the display of such magazines offensive; 86 per cent. thought that the magazines cheapened women generally; 76 per cent. saw a link between porn magazines and the sexual physical abuse of women; and 80 per cent. would prefer that local newsagents voluntarily stopped selling porn, but 75 per cent. were in favour of a legal ban on newsagents selling such material.

That information is a microcosm of general public opinion. The feeling is shared among hon. Members and many people outside that action is needed to tackle this deep problem. Above all, it is Parliament's duty to cultivate respect for individual human decency in our society.

This afternoon, I want to mention women and children who are portrayed in or who suffer as a result of pornography. All of us will have been sickened at various moments when we have read of some new atrocious crime committed against women or children. The *Liverpool Echo* has reported a number of cases, and perhaps the most graphic occurred in February, when a woman was raped and sexually assaulted by five men in a public house. The circumstances were similar to those in the film "The Accused". Unfortunately, as is often the case, the woman did not press charges, possibly through fear. It is hard to believe that the perpetrators of such offences are members of the same planet, let alone the same country. We must face the fact that there are men who fill their minds with a diet of pornography and then act upon such influences.

Let me give a few examples from the past 18 months. In October 1988, a woman and her 14-year-old daughter were attacked by a hooded man in their home in a Suffolk village. The mother had her clothes cut off with a knife before she was raped and the daughter was indecently assaulted. One may ask: how could a man do such a thing? The police believe that they found a clue to his behaviour when they discovered in his home a scrapbook of cuttings from pornographic magazines and

> "sordid and sinister stories with a recurring theme of complete domination and defilement of woman and young girls."

In Leicester last December, a man who raped his stepdaughter and tried to have intercourse with her younger sister was sentenced to 14 years in gaol. The offences had continued for a six-year period. It is surely legitimate to ask: how did the stepfather influence his young victim? He did so by showing her illustrations from pornographic magazines.

In Lincoln last December, a man who sexually abused a four-year-old girl was put on probation only for a year because the girl was

> "extraordinarily well versed in sexual knowledge".

Where did that four-year-old girl obtain such knowledge? She had been shown pornographic videos in her home.

In Putney in the summer of 1988, a rapist who had committed a series of attacks, involving gagging and threatening a woman with a knife, was sentenced to 18 years in prison. The police believe that he copied his ideas for his rapes from the bondage magazine "The Trap" which he had been reading.

These are not isolated examples. Researchers in the United States of America have identified the stages through which sex offenders go, leading up to their crimes, and the role that pornography can play in them. One of the leading researchers is Dr. Victor Cline, a clinical psychologist at the university of Utah, who has treated several hundred sex offenders over many years. Almost all his clients use pornography, and he describes four common factors that result in this condition.

The first is addiction. In Cline's words, "they got hooked." The pornographic material provided a sexual stimulant. One patient could not stay away from pornography even when he was offered $1,000 to do so for 90 days. The second stage is escalation. Cline's patients could not stop with soft pornography. As time went on, they required more explicit, rougher and more deviant kinds of sexual material. A dramatic example of escalation is the case of Ted Bundy, the serial killer and sex attacker who was executed in Florida in January. Some hon. Members will have seen a video of an interview that he gave the night before he died. Bundy candidly told how he started by buying girlie magazines in a local shop when he was 13 or 14, but by his early 20s he was buying the most shocking material.

The third stage is desensitisation, when shocking materials become commonplace and acceptable. Increasingly, Cline's clients felt, "Everybody does this, so it must be OK." The fourth stage is acting it out sexually. Cline says that eventually clients tended to act out what they had seen. That is what Ted Bundy did. He no longer got satisfaction from merely looking. He felt that he had to carry out those actions.

Addiction, escalation, desensitisation and then emulation. That is why we should be so worried about the growth in pornography. Society is allowing seeds to be sown through the sales of pornography. They are reaped in a harvest of sex crime, violence, sexual harassment and wrong attitudes towards women.

I understand why some feminists describe pornography as causing incitement to sexual hatred. I congratulate the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) on highlighting this issue and in particular on her involvement in the Off the Shelf campaign to get pornography off the shelves of leading newsagents. Although little research has been conducted in the United Kingdom, I think that there would be widespread acceptance of Cline's model. For example, in February Ray Wyre, a former probation officer who has had wide experience of treating sex offenders, spoke at a seminar in the House of Lords, that had been organised by CARE—Christian Action Research Education—about what he called the "normalising" impact of pornography. Rapists, child molesters and others see pornographic magazine and videos available for sale on every high street, think that this is accepted by society and then believe that women want to be dominated by men.

In quoting Cline's research and Ray Wyre's comments I am not trying to suggest that all sex crime can be explained away by the influence of pornography. That would be a naive view which I do not hold. In addition, I do not believe that because a man is addicted to pornography that lessens his crime. Rape is rape and murder is murder. However, if Cline and Wyre are right, and many other researchers believe they are, if we tackle the prevalence and the acceptability of pornography in our society we can only do good and help to prevent further crime.

As the head of the obscene publications squad at Scotland yard until this February, chief superintendent Iain Donaldson, said,

> "The thought is father to the action."

The first step is to ensure that research similar to that of Cline, Zillerman, Malmuth and other American researchers is undertaken in this country.

Welcome though the Minister's announcement in answer to my parliamentary question was when he said yesterday that research is to be commissioned, I want to press him further about the nature of that research. I was also delighted that last week, in response to a written question from me, the Minister said that his Department would review the available evidence of the links between pornography and sex crime. As I have demonstrated today, there is a considerable amount of evidence, anecdotal and academic, that any review should consider.

I am concerned and would like to ask the Minister about the review's terms of reference. Why will it not be open to the public to submit evidence? This matter deeply involves the public and it would be absurd to exclude them from the review and the debate that should follow from it.

Who exactly will undertake the work? Why will it not include the commissioning of new research? How will the Government proceed once the review is completed? In particular, when the review is undertaken, will the Government examine the examples that I presented today? There has been no funding from the Home Office of such work up to now, so unless we look at the type of examples I mentioned and what has happened elsewhere, and accept evidence that can be submitted by outside interested organisations, it is doubtful whether any review of existing research will be sufficient. We could predict the outcome of such an inquiry today.

We need to conduct research into the factors involved in the imprisonment of sex offenders. I know that the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) posed similar questions in a letter to the Home Secretary. We are both concerned that this should not be merely a paper exercise. Many Members are concerned about the issue. The Minister will know that 180 Members have now signed early-day motion 27 calling for a study of the issue. Those Members, like me, were interested in a public review of the matter, so I hope that the Minister will clarify the terms of what he has decided should happen.

Research and the proposed review is the first issue on which I want the Minister to speak today. The second is the present law on obscenity and its enforcement. We received some welcome news last week when the Home Office confirmed that it would like the current law to be tightened with a new definition of obscenity, describing it as something

> "grossly offensive to a reasonable person".

However, it is one thing to announce the need for change and entirely another actually to make the change. I believe that the law needs immediate amendment.

I shall speak particularly about printed material, such as magazines and books. I wonder when the Minister last visited a newsagent and looked at the sort of magazines now being stocked. I hope that he might be too ashamed to do so. I am no prude, but I was deeply shocked when I discovered the sort of material that can be bought even within a mile of this House, without going to a licensed sex shop or specialised mail order firm or asking for material under the counter. Many shops now sell 10, 15 or 20 magazines catering for every whim and fetish.

Two trends particularly disturb me. The Minister has a copy of a magazine called "Razzle" which includes pictures of a woman dressed in leather with her hands in chains. Part of the myth of pornography is that women are portrayed as enjoying such degradation. This is far from the worst example that I could have chosen, but it is just a few steps away from the sort of magazine used by the Putney rapist. Is it acceptable within the terms of the Obscene Publications Act 1959? Would it be caught by the new, "grossly offensive" definition? I certainly find it grossly offensive.

The second matter of concern is the recent appearance of so-called "shaver" material in magazines. "Shaver" denotes the fact that women have had their pubic hair shaved off before posing for photographs. Why do such magazines sell? I can only presume that it is to satisfy the desire of some to fantasise about young girls. I agree with an article in *The Independent* in April that catalogued the kind of material available in a typical high street:

> "What is being represented are female children inviting sexual access and what is being engineered is the sexual arousal of adult males by their bodies."

Child pornography is illegal in this country and I must commend the police for all that they have done, and are doing, to try to stamp it out. But is not a new generation of paedophiles being succoured on this shaver material? How do such magazines measure up against the 1959 Act or the proposed new definition? Is the Minister happy that such material is available freely in newsagents next to school playgrounds where young innocent girls are playing?

What little confidence I had in the Obscene Publications Act 1959 was shattered when I heard of the case of "Under the Rooftops of Paris." This is a book written by Henry Miller which includes scenes of bestiality, sex with children, and a particularly foul scene when during a mass a priest urinates in the communion wine, dips a wafer in the wine, wipes it on the genitalia of a naked woman lying on the altar and then tosses it to the congregation. When the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) sent a summary of the book to the Solicitor-General and asked what action would be taken, he received the reply that the DPP had decided not to institute proceedings. I find the reasoning somewhat difficult. It was to the effect that

> "the DPP has weighed the factors relevant to the discharge of the burden of proof by the prosecution and those bearing upon the public interest in cases of this type".

I presume that this legal gobbledegook means "We do not think we would win". If that is the case, I believe the Government should be ashamed that they have not yet

[Mr. David Alton]

tightened our laws to protect the weak and innocent, women and children who are damaged by those who buy and read such material.

A change in the law is urgently needed. I challenge the Minister to tell the House when he will introduce new legislation to give the police the backing that they need to tackle the rising tide of pornography. He should not rely on private Members' legislation to deal with such an important issue.

The Broadcasting Bill, which is to have its Second Reading on Monday, brings television and radio under the Obscene Publications Act yet the Government have admitted that the existing definition is inadequate. The Minister should use the opportunity presented by that Bill to tighten up the definition of obscenity. I shall listen with interest to the Minister's response.

2.48 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Peter Lloyd): I congratulate the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) on calling our attention to a topic that unites all of us—the menace of child pornography and other objectionable material that glories and promotes sexual violence. He referred to a number of horrifying crimes and unpleasant publications from which he had drawn disturbing conclusions. In responding I shall range a little more widely to say something about our controls on obscene and indecent material in all its various forms. I shall also take the opportunity to respond to the calls for new research into links between pornography and sexual violence. Finally, I shall say something about the international aspects with an eye to the single market in 1992.

First, on child pornography itself, for obvious reasons we cannot say categorically how much child pornography is being supplied, or whether it is getting nastier.

The trade is covert and we can make our assessments only on the basis of material uncovered by police and customs officers. They tell us that they have discovered some very nasty material indeed. There is no argument about the need to stamp that trade out. There are no considerations of freedom of expression or artistic licence. We all join the hon. Member for Mossley Hill in wanting this vile trade ended.

However, when we consider pornography more generally, the arguments may be less clear cut. One man's pornography may be another man's art. It is sobering to think that "Lady Chatterley's Lover" has moved from being fit for a prosecution as obscene to be being fit for bedtime reading on BBC radio all in the space of a very few years. That illustrates the difficulty of balancing the sometimes competing claims of decency and freedom of expression.

The Obscene Publications Act 1959, to which the hon Gentleman referred, remains after 30 years the main instrument for dealing with pornography at its worst. It would be wrong to think that that Act is ineffective. However, the number of people prosecuted under it varies considerably from year to year, for no obvious reason. In 1987, 121 people were proceeded against while 583 were proceeded against in 1984. The number of convictions per year has ranged from 93 to 429. The Act does get results.

However, convictions are only part of the story. The Obscene Publications Act 1959 provides for obscene material to be seized and impounded. Last year, the Metropolitan police seized more than 650,000 items and more than 800,000 items were seized the year before that.

Although the 1959 Act is being used with effect, as the figures show, the Government view is that it could, with benefit, be strengthened. The test of what is obscene laid down in the 1959 Act is material which, taken as a whole, will tend to deprave and corrupt those exposed to it. That is very close indeed in intention to the view expressed by the hon. Gentleman so very eloquently. It can sometimes be difficult for the prosecution to convince a jury that the material in question will have a depraving and corrupting effect.

Legislation on obscenity is by tradition left to private Members and the Government are reluctant—rightly, I believe—to set that tradition aside. As the hon. Gentleman has said, the Government have indicated their support for attempts to strengthen the 1959 Act most recently in 1986-87 by my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth). His Bill would have substituted a test of "grossly offensive to a reasonable person" for the "deprave and corrupt" test, but the House will recall that the attempt failed to make enough progress in the time available.

Whether or not there is any direct and provable link between what people see and what they do, we have acted in numerous ways to uphold standards of public decency. With our support, the Indecent Displays (Control) Act 1981 reached the statute book, prohibiting indecent displays in public places. If the provisions of that Act are used at the minimum people will no longer find themselves or their children confronted with objectionable material in shops and other places. The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 provides, in section 2, for a local authority to take power to restrict sex shops and sex cinemas in its area.

One of the most important measures was the private Member's Bill introduced with Government support by my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South (Mr. Bright) which became the Video Recordings Act 1984. Under the Act, videos which are to be supplied to the public must —unless they come within specified exemptions—have a classification certificate issued by the British Board of Film Classification. As a result the "video nasty" has become, for most people, a thing of the past and the classifications given by the board mean that parents have a good guide to the suitability of a video work for their children. The system has, in our judgment, worked outstandingly well.

We know, of course, that there is still some illicit, under-the-counter trade in such products. The police's resources for tackling that are inevitably limited. That is why, in the Criminal Justice Act 1988 the Government extended powers to enforce the Video Recordings Act 1984 to local authority trading standards officers. The effect has been dramatic, marked by an immediate upsurge in the number of requests from trading standards departments to the British Board of Film Classification for certificates of evidence that particular works were not classified, or were not classified suitably for the age group to which they were being supplied.

The Government are also committed to upholding standards in broadcasting. The new Broadcasting Standards Council has a special role to play. Hon. Members will know that it has been active. The

Government's new Broadcasting Bill will remove from broadcasters their present exemption from the Obscene Publications Act 1959. We do not think that they are broadcasting obscene material in breach of their existing duties, but they should not be in a specially privileged position. The Broadcasting Bill will ensure also that proper standards are adopted as technologies develop from terrestrial broadcasting via cable to satellite.

The police and the Crown prosecution service are independent of Government, but they are alert to the possibility of bringing proceedings against publishers when there is evidence that the law has been broken, for instance, by sending indecent material through the post or by living on immoral earnings. Unfortunately, in the nature of things, those offences are not easy to prove.

The major legislation in addition to the Obscene Publications Act is the Protection of Children Act 1978, which creates offences of producing or supplying indecent photographs of children. The maximum penalty is a term of imprisonment of up to three years'. Some people—I regret that I cannot say how many—guilty of child pornography will have been prosecuted and convicted under the 1959 Act and will be included in the figures that I gave a few moments ago. In addition, there have been prosecutions under the 1978 Act. They have risen from 10 in 1986 to 32 last year.

It has been suggested that the maximum penalty of three years' imprisonment under the Protection of Children Act is inadequate. We are ready to reconsider this, although we are not yet convinced. To date, it has been rare for the courts to use anything approaching that maximum.

One of the difficulties which the police have found with the Protection of Children Act 1978 is that of proving that someone who has indecent photographs of children in his possession has them for the purpose of supply. It was to meet this weakness that we made provision in last year's Criminal Justice Act for a new offence of simple possession of an indecent photograph of a child. It does not matter whether the person is a commercial pornographer or a customer who has the photograph for his own use.

I think that the hon. Gentleman will agree that the powers to deal with child pornography directly, and in particular are strict and wide-ranging. Given the reorganisation which the Commissioner has made in the Metropolitan police's obscene publications branch, we have the necessary arrangements now to crack down heavily on this trade. The hon. Gentleman is interested in the wider effects of pornography. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary told him a few weeks ago, the Home Office is undertaking a further review of the available research on any possible link between pornography and sexual violence. We elaborated on this in the further answer that we gave him yesterday.

Over the years, research into the impact of pornography on people's behaviour has generally produced equivocal results. For many, not least the hon. Gentleman, as he has powerfully argued today, it is common sense that pornography must tend to cause those who see it to regard women or children as sex objects, making them more likely to commit offences against them. Others argue that pornography may have a role as a safety valve for anti-social feelings which might otherwise be expressed in criminal behaviour, and that those who commit such crimes are likely to be interested in pornography, although without the latter being the cause of that interest, but merely a symptom of it.

Although earlier research has generally been inconclusive, we think it only right that we should have the most reliable data available. We therefore intend to draw together reports of research in this country and overseas —not least the Cline report, which, as the hon. Gentleman mentioned, was conducted in the United States—to analyse them and to present any conclusions, with whatever weight of evidence we can find.

The review of research will look broadly at the effects of pornography, including any evidence of its effects on attitudes to women, which have been of particular concern to hon. Members, in addition to the hon. Gentleman. Our intention is that that review should be carried out quickly —within the first half of next year—and that the results should be published, as is our usual practice. We shall most certainly arrange for that work to be done by independent professionals, but we shall not decide whether to commission any original research until we have the findings and can see what gaps need filling.

Mr. Alton: May I press the Minister on interested outside organisations such as CARE, which I mentioned earlier, being allowed to submit evidence to the inquiry?

Mr. Lloyd: We certainly look to the public to supply us with any data which has some scientific basis and which we have can include in the study. However, at this stage we do not want anecdotal evidence and information. It is an exercise to study scientifically based research, and when we publish the results the House can discuss the best way to proceed.

I know that that matter has been exercising the hon. Gentleman's mind, because he has tabled many questions about it. I congratulate him on choosing this topic for discussion; the Home Office and I take it extremely seriously. I congratulate him on putting his case so well.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 4 December 1989

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Golden Shares

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will outline Government policy concerning golden shares held by his Department.

Mr. Redwood: Policy in respect of each special share is a matter for the Secretary of State holding that share, consulting colleagues as necessary.

In the case of the special shares held by my right hon. Friend, decisions on the rights attached to these shares will depend on the particular circumstances of each company.

Financial Services Act

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps have been taken to ensure that the Financial Services Act is being operated to the benefit of the investor.

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps have been taken to ensure that the Financial Services Act is being operated to the benefit of the investor.

Mr. Redwood: I believe that the Financial Services Act has already brought benefits for investors, not least the SIB compensation scheme. However, investors also benefit financially when regulation of the firms with which they deal is least burdensome, and the amendments introduced in the new Companies Act should make the system of investor protection more flexible and cost-effective.

Regional Infrastructure Investment

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received about regional infrastructure investment.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend and I are well aware of the concern in the regions about the quality of regional infrastructure, particularly in relation to transport links with the single market and the Channel tunnel. These are matters on which we make our views known to my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Transport, and colleagues at the Department of Transport.

CBI

Mr. Eastham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next plans to meet representatives of the Confederation of British Industry to discuss the prospects for British business.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My Department maintains regular and frequent contacts with the Confederation of British Industry at all levels on a wide range of business matters.

Cheshire Business and Innovation Centre

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received about the funding of the Cheshire business and innovation centre; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have received representations from my hon. Friend and others who have asked for money from the European regional development fund to be made available for the Cheshire business and innovation centre.

The eligibility of Cheshire business and innovation centre for support from the European regional development fund will be decided in the light of a Community support framework which will determine the level of overall funding for an area and the priorities for support. Discussions on this are currently taking place.

Uranium

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what quantity of uranium has been imported to Britain from Africa since 1979; and what were the national sources of these materials.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested is confidential and cannot be published.

Coffins

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will ask the Director-General of Fair Trading to investigate the price of coffins.

Mr. Redwood: If the hon. Member has any evidence of monopoly abuse or anti-competitive or restrictive trade practices which may be affecting the price of such goods he should draw it to the attention of the Director-General of Fair Trading direct.

Footwear Industry

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement regarding the present state of the British footwear industry.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My Department is fully aware of the difficulties facing United Kingdom footwear manufacturers and of their continuing concern over low-cost imports, particularly from the Far East. The findings and recommendations of the Commission's Community-wide investigation into imports of footwear from Taiwan and South Korea have been circulated to member states. Those recommendations are now being urgently examined and we will reach a decision on appropriate action for the United Kingdom as soon as possible.

Industrial Assistance

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the aid given by his Department to firms in Tameside and Stockport.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Aid to firms in Tameside and Stockport, available from the Department of Trade and Industry under the Enterprise Initiative, is as follows:

The Consultancy Initiative

Encourages small and medium sized firms to develop their key management activities by making use of private sector consultancy. In Stockport (a non-assisted area) and Tameside (an assisted area), the DTI will pay half and two thirds, respectively, of the costs of consultancy;

The Regional Initiative

Provides selective assistance for investment projects undertaken by firms located in assisted areas, such as Tameside. The regional initiative does not apply in Stockport or other non-assisted areas;

The Export Initiative

Offers a comprehensive range of support and advisory services to help firms and businesses develop their markets overseas;

The Research and Technology Initiative

Seeks to support and encourage collaborative research partnerships between business and centres of academic excellence. Additionally, through the annual small firms merit award for research and technology provides financial help to assist with the costs of developing new and novel business ideas.

The Enterprise and Education Initiative

Aims to strengthen and develop at the local level the interface between business employers and schools.

Additionally, firms in Tameside and Stockport can benefit from a broad range of support and technical services available from the DTI either to complement action taken under the Enterprise Initiative, or separately.

House of Fraser

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his policy on publishing the House of Fraser report *(a)* once legal proceedings arising out of it are completed and *(b)* after the serious fraud squad indicates that no prosecutions are appropriate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State, has made it clear that it is his intention to publish the report at the earliest possible moment consistent with the even-handed administration of justice.

Hi-tech Industries

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what initiatives he plans for the improvement of hi-tech British industries.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Government's major initiative for helping United Kingdom hi-tech companies is LINK which supports collaborative projects of strategic research involving companies and science base institutions. There are now 21 LINK programmes in various fields with a total value of almost £300 million, of which Government will contribute 50 per cent. Within these programmes, over 500 projects are in the pipeline. Further programmes will be announced in due course.

Companies Act Investigations

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, for each investigation by his Department since May 1979 into United Kingdom companies, he will list *(a)* the name of the company investigated, *(b)* the date inspectors were appointed, *(c)* the date the inspectors reported to his Department, *(d)* whether prosecution was recommended, *(e)* the amount of fraud involved, *(f)* whether and when prosecution followed, *(g)* the outcome of the prosecution, *(h)* the date the inspectors' report was made public, *(i)* whether it was published in full or only in part, *(j)* the costs of the investigation and *(k)* the costs of the prosecution.

Mr. Redwood: This information in the form requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Information about Companies Act investigations is contained in the annual report prepared in accordance with the provisions of section 729 of the Companies Act 1985. Copies of the report are placed in the Library. Further information will be available in my Department's memorandum on DTI investigations provided to the Trade and Industry Select Committee which will be published by the Committee in due course. There have been 56 inspections under sections 432 and 442 since 1979.

Output Statistics

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what were the increases in real total output, as expressed in index numbers, for the following sectors between the latest available figures and the same period or periods in 1973: steel, heavy and light, bricks, cement, passenger cars, commercial vehicles, construction, textiles and engineering.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Percentage changes in output for the sectors concerned (or, in some cases, the nearest approximation for which figures are available) are given in the following table. The periods of comparison, unless otherwise stated, are the first three quarters of 1973 and 1989 respectively.

	Percentage change
Crude steel	[1] −27
Bricks	−31
Cement	−15
Motor vehicles and parts	−36
Construction	[2] +3
Textiles	−35
Mechanical engineering	−10
Electrical, electronic and instrument engineering	+69

[1] 1989 quarter 1 and 2 compared with 1973 quarter 1 and 2.

[2] 1988 compared with 1973.

Enterprise Initiative

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish *(a)* tables showing the number of projects and total expenditure in each standard region under the enterprise initiative in each case expressed also as a percentage of the national total of expenditure and projects approved and *(b)* similar tables for each programme within the enterprise initiative.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 30 November 1989]*: The Enterprise Initiative is a comprehensive package of DTI services, including the consultancy initiatives, regional selective assistance (RSA), regional enterprise grants (REG), collaborative research programmes, the small firms merit award for research and technology (SMART), the enterprise and education initiative, the managing into the '90s programme and the export initiative.

The information requested for project based programmes is as follows:

Number of Consultancy Initiative Projects Approved and Total Actual Expenditure from 13 January 1988 to 31 October 1989

DTI Region/Country	*Approved Projects*	*Per cent.*	*Actual expenditure (£'000)*	*Per cent.*
Total	26,453		57,887	
NE	1,370	5·2	2,891	5·0
NW	4,126	15·6	10,859	18·8
YH	2,506	9·5	5,974	10·3
WM	2,741	10·4	6,803	11·8
EM	1,693	6·4	3,511	6·1
SW	2,153	8·1	4,074	7·0
SE	8,326	31·5	14,642	25·3
SDA	2,115	8·0	5,680	9·8
WDA	1,423	5·4	3,453	6·0

Notes:

1. A similar breakdown is not applicable to the Enterprise and Education Initiative, the Managing into the '90s programme or the Export Initiative, as these programmes do not offer individual project assistance to firms.
2. Information is provided by DTI Region and for Scotland and Wales as it is not available by standard economic region.

Number of regional selective assistance projects approved and total actual expenditure from 13 January 1988 to 31 October 1989

DTI Region/Country	*Approved projects*	*Per cent.*	*Actual expenditure (£'000)*	*Per cent.*
Total	2,836		36,467	
North East	382	13·5	6,177	16·9
North West	551	19·4	5,092	14·0
Yorkshire and Humberside	251	8·9	3,436	9·4
West Midlands	799	28·2	6,037	16·6
East Midlands	38	1·3	211	0·6
South West	104	3·7	1,107	3·0
South East	0	0·0	0	0·0
Scottish Development Agency	386	13·6	8,045	22·1
Welsh Development Agency	325	11·5	6,362	17·4

Number of regional enterprise grants projects approved and total actual expenditure from 1 April 1988 to 31 October 1989

DTI Region/Country	*Approved projects*	*Per cent.*	*Actual expenditure (£'000)*	*Per cent.*
Total	2,713		5,264	
North East	738	27·2	1,286	24·4
North West	528	19·5	1,108	21·0
Yorkshire and Humberside	344	12·7	788	15·0
West Midlands[1]	0	0·0	0	0·0
East Midlands	59	2·2	145	2·8
South West	212	7·8	272	5·2
South East	0	0·0	0	0·0
Scottish Development Agency	476	17·5	1,036	19·7
Welsh Development Agency	356	13·1	629	11·9

[1] No assisted areas in the West Midlands.

Number of Small Firms Merit Awards for research and technology projects approved and total actual expenditure from 13 January 1988 to 31 October 1989

DTI Region/Country	*Approved projects*	*Per cent.*	*Actual expenditure (£'000)*	*Per cent.*
Total	347	—	13,502	—
North East	27	7·8	1,024	7·6
North West	34	9·8	1,335	9·9
Yorkshire and Humberside	23	6·6	896	6·6
West Midlands	37	10·7	1,471	10·9
East Midlands	30	8·6	1,164	8·6
South West	38	11·0	1,453	10·8
South East	96	27·7	3,773	27·9
Scottish Development Association	27	7·8	1,024	7·6
Welsh Development Association	35	10·1	1,362	10·1

Number of Collaborative Research Projects approved and total actual expenditure from 13 January 1988 to 31 October 1989

DTI Region/Country	*Approved projects*	*Per cent.*	*Actual expenditure (£'000)*	*Per cent.*
Total	396	—	97,416	—
North East	3	0·8	683	0·7
North West	34	8·6	9,476	9·7
Yorkshire and Humberside	21	5·3	3,977	4·1
West Midlands	55	13·9	13,250	13·6
East Midlands	45	11·4	4,700	4·8
South West	18	4·5	5,526	5·7
Eastern	—	—	—	—
South East	212	53·5	59,127	60·7
Scottish Development Association	8	2·0	677	0·7
Welsh Development Association	—	—	—	—

Research and Development

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the size of the research and development budget for each year since 1979 and the proportion of this budget spent in developing defence technology.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 30 November 1989]:* Department of Trade and Industry spend on science and technology since 1979 is as follows:

	£ million
1979-80	245
1980-81	252
1981-82	286
1982-83	283
1983-84	400
1984-85	436
1985-86	458
1986-87	462
1987-88	418
[1]1988-89	407

[1] Estimated.

Notes

(1) Before June 1983 figures relate to Department of Industry.

(2) Source of figures: Cabinet Office annual review of Government funded research and development.

There is no proportion of the budget spent in developing defence technology. Some limited support of research at Ministry of Defence establishments is carried out to promote civil applications of defence technology.

Telecommunications

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what consideration his Department has given to the future deregulation of telecommunications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 30 November 1989]:* The regulatory framework for telecommunications is established by the Telecommunications Act 1984 and certain policy statements made at that time. I have no current plans to make significant changes to this framework. I shall, however, continue to look for further opportunities within the framework for increasing competition.

Footwear

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to investigate the dumping and subsidisation of imports of ladies footwear from various far eastern countries.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 30 November 1989]:* No. Under the Community's anti-dumping and anti-subsidy legislation it is the European Commission that carries out investigations in response to complaints from the Community industries affected. The Commission has recently completed an investigation into safeguard action against certain footwear imports from Taiwan and South Korea and has invited the views of member states.

Korea (Treatment of Animals)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will raise with the President of Korea during his visit to the United Kingdom for trade talks his country's treatment of dogs and cats intended for human consumption and the need to end such practices before stronger trade links are developed.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 1 December 1989]:* While I share the hon. Member's concern about cruelty to animals, wherever it may occur, it is not an appropriate subject for trade talks. I am sure that the President of Korea will have noted the strong and justified views of the British public which were publicised extensively during his visit.

Information Engineering Technology Programme

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement as to the reason for the delays in the allocation of funds to projects in the information engineering advanced technology programme.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 1 December 1989]:* About 80 per cent. of the offers under the first round of this programme have now been made. I am very conscious of the need to get the outstanding projects under way as soon as possible.

A major reason why offers have been delayed is that many companies have been slow to provide supporting information to explain the basis of their costs or to demonstrate their viability. Furthermore, many research consortia have needed reorganisation, following decisions by individual partners not to pursue the project as originally proposed. The Department tries to be helpful in such cases and allow a reasonable time for a revised proposal to be submitted.

Liability Insurance

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will introduce legislation to require all building surveyors to show proof of adequate liability insurance prior to any property surveying work being undertaken for members of the public.

Mr. Chris Patten: I have been asked to reply. This proposal, which reflects a recommendation in the Government's recent report on professional liability, will be examined as legislative opportunities become available.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Zimbabwe

112. **Mr. John L. Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current level of British aid to Zimbabwe.

Mrs. Chalker: In 1988 British gross bilateral aid to Zimbabwe amounted to more than £24 million, including assistance by the Commonwealth Development Corporation.

Ethiopia

113. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, in the light of reports of famine in rebel-held areas of Ethiopia, how Her Majesty's Government will ensure that food supplies they provide will get through to those who need them.

Mrs. Chalker: The food that we have supplied to rebel-held areas has been channelled through British non-governmental organisations with proven capacity to deliver it to those in need. We propose to continue using these channels.

114. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further steps he intends to take to alleviate the famine in Ethiopia.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) on 4 December.

124. **Mr. Hayes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what food aid is provided by Britain to the Tigre area of Ethiopia; and what steps are being taken to make sure supplies reach their destination.

128. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on emergency food supplies provided from British Government funds to Tigre and the surrounding area.

Mrs. Chalker: The food that we have supplied to rebel-held areas has been channelled through British non-governmental organisations with proven capacity to deliver it to those in need. We propose to continue using these channels. It is not the practice to reveal more precise details of such operations.

Amazonian Rain Forests

115. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has made an assessment of the results of the visit to Brazil of the right hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Patten) to discuss Amazonian rain-forest issues with the Brazilian Government.

Mrs. Chalker: Its main purpose was to sign a memorandum of understanding on technical co-operation on environmental matters, which provides the framework for our proposed assistance programme with Brazil in this area. I wrote to the hon. Member on 3 November giving details of progress on the first projects.

Poland

116. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what economic aid is currently given to Poland.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced a know-how fund for Poland during General Jaruzelski's visit in June; and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 29 November that it would be doubled. The fund, in effect a technical co-operation programme, will total £50 million over five years. We expect to spend £3 million in the current financial year. My right hon. Friend also announced a contribution of $100 million to a stabilisation fund for Poland, and finance for an agricultural project costing some £15 million.

Vietnam

117. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government have any plans to restore overseas aid to Vietnam.

119. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last reviewed Her Majesty's Government's aid and development embargo on Vietnam.

Mrs. Chalker: The Government's policy on Vietnam is kept under constant review. The announced withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia is one consideration in resuming an aid programme to Vietnam. In his speech on 31 July to the international conference on Cambodia in Paris the then Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, the right hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major) said that Britain also expected the Vietnamese Government to fulfil their responsibilities towards their own people and to their neighbours before we would be prepared to consider contributing to a programme of assistance for Vietnam.

Non-governmental Organisations

118. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about increases planned in the Overseas Development Agency joint funding scheme and other schemes benefiting United Kingdom non-governmental organisations operating in developing countries.

121. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he plans to

channel further aid funds through United Kingdom non-governmental organisations for projects in developing countries.

Mrs. Chalker: I have recently decided to increase our joint funding scheme, under which we support non-governmental organisations' agreed long-term development projects by 25 per cent. next year to £20 million. I am also increasing support for the United Kingdom volunteer recruiting agencies—most notably VSO—by 10 per cent. to £14·3 million. We will, of course, also consider sympathetically requests for assistance from non-governmental organisations for disaster and emergency relief measures if the need arises.

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what were the principal categories of Overseas Development Administration grants to non-governmental organisations in 1988-89 under the heading "Others" in his reply to the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling on 16 November, *Official Report*, columns *467-70*; and what sum was paid to each non-governmental organisation within each of these categories of grant.

Mrs. Chalker: Grants to non-governmental organisations under the heading of "Others" as contained in my reply on 16 November encompass a wide range of activity which cannot readily be categorised. The principal elements are the volunteer programme and certain development projects implemented by non-governmental organisations but financed from bilateral country programmes. The volunteer programme accounts for 52 per cent. of the "Others" figure and consists of:

Grant 1980 to 1989

	£
British Executive Service Overseas	300,006
Catholic Institute for International Relations	945,000
International Voluntary Service	760,000
United Nation Association International Service	490,000
Voluntary Service Overseas	8,681,533
TOTAL	11,176,539

Cambodia

120. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance is being given to the people of Cambodia; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) on 23 November at column *17*.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will name the diplomat and the Overseas Development Administration official who will be visiting Phnom Penh shortly; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: I have nothing to add to the statement that I made in answer to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) on 23 November at column *17*. It is not the practice to name officials in these circumstances.

Namibia

122. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans his Department has to assist in infrastructure development in Namibia.

123. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what aid Her Majesty's Government propose to make available as a priority to Namibia.

125. **Mr. Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much and what type of economic and development aid Her Majesty's Government gave in 1988, and are proposing to give in the current year, to Namibia.

Mrs. Chalker: British aid for Namibians in 1988 was just over £2 million. It focused on the development of English language teaching skills and scholarships for Namibians both inside and outside the country. This programme has continued in 1989. In addition we have contributed £1·15 million towards the refugee repatriation programme.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister told the House on 26 October at col. 1046 that we would provide assistance to Namibia after independence. The priorities for a future programme will be agreed with the new Government.

The Caribbean

126. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on overseas aid to the Caribbean.

Mrs. Chalker: Our bilateral aid programme to the Commonwealth Caribbean has been running at over £30 million a year for some time. Last year (1988-89) it reached £51 million, mainly because of a substantial increase in investment by the Commonwealth Development Corporation. This year expenditure is expected to remain at a high level.

A new feature is the capital aid programme for Guyana (plus increased technical co-operation) to support that country's economic recovery programme; we expect to spend some £12 million in loans, grants and technical co-operation in Guyana this financial year.

Hurricane damage has required an exceptional response. Last year we gave Jamaica a grant of £3 million after Hurricane Gilbert struck. This year, in the wake of Hurricane Hugo, we have assisted Antigua, St. Kitts and the British Virgin Islands and particularly Montserrat, where we have already spent or committed around £4·5 million in relief and reconstruction aid.

Horn of Africa

127. **Mr. Hayward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will hold discussions with other Governments and non-governmental organisations on the situation in the Horn of Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: At the European Community Development Council on 21 November I drew attention to the serious threat of famine in northern Ethiopia and urged that all possible diplomatic channels be used to exert pressure on the parties to the conflict to secure free access for food supplies. We are also liaising closely with other donor Governments and international agencies. Similar co-ordination takes place on the situation in Sudan. I meet regularly with the British non-governmental organisations working in the Horn of Africa.

Tropical Hardwood Forests

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contribution the United Kingdom is making to the European Community's effort to select the most practical and internationally economically viable options to conserve the tropical hardwood forests.

Mrs. Chalker: The United Kingdom is playing a full part in the Community's discussion of these issues, which were raised both at the Council of Development Ministers on 21 November and at the Council of Environment Ministers on 28 November. We have provided the only expert on tropical forestry in the development directorate of the Commission.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Local Education Authority Inspectors

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he received a copy of the Audit Commission report on the role of local education authority inspectors and advisers; and what response he will be making.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend received a copy of the report on 3 October. My right hon. Friend and I agree with much of the analysis and believe that local authorities will find the report thought-provoking and helpful. We shall be discussing with them how best to follow it up.

School Numbers

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are his estimates of the numbers of *(a)* primary school children and teachers and *(b)* secondary school children and teachers for each year of the 1990s.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The projected numbers of pupils in maintained primary and secondary schools in England and of teachers overall are given in the table. The numbers of teachers in future years will depend upon many factors. The projection is based on an illustrative assumption that the current overall pupil teacher ratio of 17:1 will be maintained in future years. Further assumptions would be needed to disaggregate the overall figure between the nursery, primary and secondary sectors, and no attempt has been made to do this in the figures shown.

Thousands

At January of each year	*Primary schools*	*Secondary schools*	*Teachers overall*
1990	3,967	2,851	397
1991	4,011	2,818	396
1992	4,046	2,833	399
1993	4,093	2,866	404
1994	4,164	2,912	410
1995	4,236	2,967	418
1996	4,316	2,999	424
1997	4,385	3,031	430
1998	4,452	3,063	436
1999	4,512	3,106	442

Notes:

1. Pupils in maintained nursery and special schools are excluded, as are those in independent schools.
2. The projections take account of the mid-1988 population projection provided by the Government Actuary's Department.
3. Pupils of all ages are included. For primary schools, part-time pupils under the age of five are each counted as one.
4. The overall number of teachers employed for service in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools in England is given. Teachers in nursery schools are included, to be consistent with the usual coverage of the overall aggregate employed for public expenditure planning. All full-time equivalent teachers are counted, including student teachers, instructors, occasional teachers and secondments.

International Student Conference, Buenos Aires

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if there was any United Kingdom representative present at the third international student conference on youth building the future in Buenos Aires on 11 to 18 August; and whether he has received any report on decisions taken at the forum.

Mr. Jackson: So far as I have been able to establish, the United Kingdom was not represented. I have received no report of this conference.

Records of Achievement

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to ensure that all school children have an individual record of achievement; what resources he is putting into securing this specific objective; and what advice he is offering to local education authorities on the need for records of achievement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Draft regulations and an accompanying circular on information to parents on their child's achievements are to be issued for consultation shortly. I will arrange for copies to be placed in the Library as soon as they are available.

Teacher Appraisal

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what arrangements have been made by his Department for the report on the evaluation of the school teacher appraisal pilot study, undertaken by the Cambridge Institute of Education, to be made available to those interested bodies who have been invited by his Department to comment on the report of the national steering group; what priority he attaches to such evaluation of school teacher appraisal; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Cambridge Institute of Education report on the evaluation of the school teacher appraisal pilot study was presented to the national steering group (NSG) responsible for overseeing the study in July this year, and was taken into account in the report to the Secretary of State by that group. My right hon. Friend did not send copies of the evaluation report, in addition to the reports of the NSG and Her Majesty's inspectors, to all those consulted on the NSG's recommendations, because he wished to limit the amount of reading required of them. Copies were, however, sent to the local authority and teacher associations and to all local education authorities and grant maintained schools.

My right hon. Friend attaches considerable priority to the evaluation of pilot projects such as those in school teacher appraisal. The Cambridge Institute of Education as evaluators of the pilot projects made an important contribution to the work of the national steering group.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the amount of his Department's expenditure on the evaluation of teacher appraisal pilot projects, including expenditure for work undertaken by the Cambridge Institute of Education; and if he will make a statement on the main findings of this evaluation.

Mrs. Rumbold: A total of £248,843 was spent on external evaluation of the school teacher appraisal pilot study by the Cambridge Institute of Education. The findings of this evaluation are set out in a report by the Cambridge institute, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Child Care Courses

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will introduce legislation to make practical child care courses part of the school curriculum.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Guidance on the place and content of health education in the curriculum as a whole is to be issued to all schools in England in 1990 by the National Curriculum Council. This is likely to include guidance on education about child care.

Barnstaple Schools

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the present and the forecast figure for pupils at the primary schools in Barnstaple Roundswell, Barnstaple Whiddon Valley and Barnstaple Landkey; and what additional funding he will provide for new schools in this area.

Mr. Alan Howarth: According to Devon local education authority, the figures are as follows:

	1989	*1993*
Barnstaple, Roundswell	371	501
Barnstaple, Whiddon Valley	887	1,140
Barnstaple, Landkey	205	218

No proposals for new schools are currently before my right hon. Friend for decision. Priority is given in the distribution of annual capital guidelines for new school places needed as a result of population growth.

New School Buildings

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the guidance his Department gives to local education authorities on planning space and facilities to cater for first aid and sickness of pupils and staff in new school buildings.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Local education authorities are under a duty to provide medical accomodation in both new and existing schools in accordance with the requirements of regulation 12 of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1981.

The Department has not published any separate guidance on planning space and facilities in school buildings for these purposes. Its professional staff are, however, available to offer advice on aspects of the design and planning of school buildings where this is required.

CBI Skills Report

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about the Confederation of British Industry report "Towards a Skills Revolution—A Youth Charter"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend has discussed the work of the Confederation of British Industry's task force on vocational education and training with its chairman, Sir Bryan Nicholson, and with the confederation's director general, Mr. John Banham. The Government have welcomed the final report "Towards a Skills Revolution" and are giving serious consideration to its proposals.

Further Education Colleges

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking and on what timetable to give greater independence to local authority maintained further education colleges; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: Under the Education Reform Act all local education authorities are required to draw up schemes for the planning and funding of their further education colleges, and to delegate substantial authority to reformed college governing bodies. LEAs outside inner London were required to submit proposed schemes, together with articles of government for their colleges, by September 1989 for implementation from April 1990. Those proposed schemes and articles are currently under consideration.

Inner London boroughs will be required to submit proposed schemes and articles of government by September 1991 for implementation from April 1992.

London Museums Education Initiative

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to encourage London education authorities to work with the London museums education unit's new initiative for education in the capital.

Mrs. Rumbold: The London Museums Service has had discussions with the Office of Arts and Libraries about the establishment of the unit and its programme of work. I welcome the steps the unit has taken to establish contact with individual boroughs and local authority associations.

Vocational Education and Training

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to encourage the involvement of employers with further education colleges in the development of vocational education and training.

Mr. Jackson: The reconstitution of college governing bodies required by the Education Reform Act will ensure that governors representing employment interests have no fewer than half of the available places on each new governing body. The Government have taken a number of steps to encourage employers to take up this opportunity to become involved in the development of vocational education and training. The then Secretary of State's speech to the 1988 CBI conference encouraged people from business to get involved and a leaflet "College Governors from the Business Community" was distributed. Earlier this year, an information pack "New Governors for Further Education" was produced by Industry Matters and also a promotional video. Employers can become involved in the work of colleges in many other ways. Through its Pickup initiative the Department has been encouraging colleges to work with employers to develop tailor-made training and updating provision. The changes required by the Education Reform Act will give employers greater oportunity to participate in the planning of such work.

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what targets he is setting for vocational education and training among young people.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend recognises the need for considerable improvement in both the number and the level of vocational qualifications gained by young people. He believes that:

> Every young person should either be in full-time education or in a job with time off for good quality training.
>
> Every young person should achieve a recognised vocational qualification or its equivalent, with greater numbers achieving higher levels of qualification.

Bradford and Ilkley (Colleges)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) how many times since 1979 Her Majesty's inspectors of education have visited Bradford and Ilkley community college; how many times their reports have drawn attention to inadequate accommodation; and what action has been taken;

(2) what location for new accommodation for Bradford college is identified in the bid submitted by Bradford local education authority to replace accommodation lost to Bradford college by vacating the Alexandra hotel building; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what representations he has received from students and others about inadequate accommodation at Bradford college.

Mr. Jackson: The Bradford and Ilkley community college has been visited by HMI on many occasions since it was created in 1982 but most of those visits will not have resulted in a report. There have, however, been four inspections of parts of the college's provision since HMI reports were published in 1983. As is usual all include an assessment of the adequacy and sufficiency of the teaching and other accommodation. Copies of the reports are sent to the authority for its consideration.

The bid from Bradford LEA for a major building project to start in 1990-91 proposes to replace the Alexandra hotel building by converting the Westbrook building on the same site. The bid will be considered on its merits along with those from other education authorities, and allocations will be announced later this month.

The hon. Member recently wrote to my right hon. Friend enclosing a press release and representations from students in respect of accommodation at Bradford and Ilkley community college. My right hon. Friend has not received any other representations this year on this matter.

Scientific Research

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the Government's policy on maintaining and improving the standards of British scientific research.

Mr. Jackson: I refer my hon. Friend to the speech at the first plenary meeting of the Academia Europaea on 26 June by my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State, a copy of which is in the Library.

Student Loans

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science in what way the proposed student loan scheme will apply to students from other European Economic Community countries attending centres of education in the United Kingdom; what arrangements will be made to recover the loans from such students after they have returned to their home countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The rules governing the eligibility of students from the European Community will follow the provisions of the Mandatory Awards Regulations. Students from other member states will be eligible for top-up loans if they are attending relevant courses and satisfy the requirements for ordinary residence within the British Islands. Loans will also be available to students who are British citizens and who do not satisfy the ordinary residence requirements, if their absence resulted from employment, or their parents' employment, elsewhere in the European Community. European Community nationals not meeting the residence requirements will also be eligible if they, or their parents or spouses, can establish worker status under the relevant provisions in EC law. Arrangements will be made for the recovery of outstanding repayments from graduates living overseas. It will be in the interests of all borrowers to repay their loans.

Local Management of Schools

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement of progress to date on approving local education authorities' schemes of local management of schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: LEAs were required to submit their schemes by the end of September, and all did so. It is a great tribute to LEAs that they have got their schemes in on time. I have been impressed by the quality of what I have seen and the hard work that has been put into schemes by authorities, head teachers and governors.

We have now announced our approval decisions on 24 schemes. In each case we have proposed minor modifications, all designed to ensure that our three key objectives of local management are met. These are: the maximum delegation of resources to schools; the funding of schools through a clear, open and objective formula; and the minimum constraints on governors' use of their new powers.

The first 24 LEAs whose schemes we have announced our intention to approve from next April are;

Barking and Dagenham
Bedfordshire
Calderdale
Cambridgeshire
Cheshire
Cumbria
Essex
Harrow
Havering
Kent
Lincolnshire
Newcastle
Norfolk
Northamptonshire
Oxfordshire
Rotherham
Sandwell
Solihull
Suffolk
Sunderland
Surrey
West Sussex
Westminster
Wiltshire

Survey of Parental Awareness

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to publish the survey of parental awareness of school education commissioned by his Department.

Mr. MacGregor: Copies of the interpretative report of the survey of parental awareness of school education are being sent to each chief education officer and to various national education bodies today. Copies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Investment

Mr. Amos: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the investment figure for United Kingdom business for the last year for which figures are available; if he will express the figure as a percentage of gross domestic product; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The level of business investment in 1988 is estimated to have been £58 billion. This was 14·7 per cent. of GDP at factor cost. Total business investment was forecast in the Autumn Statement to increase in real terms by 9¼ per cent. in 1989. As a share of GDP this year it is likely to be the highest ever.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what contribution the increase in investment in manufacturing industry made to the increase in the trade deficit in 1988 and in 1989 to date.

Mr. Norman Lamont: It is not possible to make a precise estimate of the contribution of the increase in manufacturing investment to the increase in the trade deficit. However, with the Autumn Statement forecast of a 9¼ per cent. rise in 1989, business investment will have increased by over 40 per cent. in the three years to 1989 —the largest increase over a three-year period since the war.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the inward and outward investment flows for each of the last five years between the United Kingdom and *(a)* the United States of America, *(b)* Japan, *(c)* West Germany and *(d)* France.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The available information relates to net outward and net inward direct investment flows and is published in tables 1·4 and 2·4 of Business Monitor MA4 1987—"Overseas Transactions". Information on portfolio investment, by country, is not available.

Manufactured Goods

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing (i) in terms of volume and of value at 1985 prices United Kingdom sales in 1973, 1979 and 1988 of the industries wholly or mainly engaged in manufacturing importable and exportable goods, (ii) imports and exports of such goods and (iii) the annual rate of increase in United Kingdom output in the 15 years prior to 1973 and in the period since.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Most manufactured goods can be imported and exported and therefore the question can be considered only in terms of manufacturing as a whole.

(i) United Kingdom sales data are not collected in volume terms, nor at 1985 prices, but the "Report of the Census of Production" summary volume contains current price data for sales and work done. However, a preferred indicator is gross output—that is, sales and work done adjusted for work in progress and goods on hand for sale. No figures are available yet for 1988.

(ii)—Data at 1985 prices are not published for imports and exports, but current price data and volume indices are contained in the "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics".

(iii) Index numbers of output for manufacturing industries at 1985 prices are available in "Economic Trends" and its associated annual supplement.

The above publications are available from the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing in terms of 1985 prices the balance of trade in manufacturing less erratics on a BOP basis in each year from 1970 to 1973, in 1977, and from 1985 to 1988 and this year to date at an annual rate together with the annual increase/decrease in terms of 1985 prices in (i) gross and net investment in manufacturing industry, (ii) savings, (iii) consumer expenditure, (iv) United Kingdom output of capital and consumer goods, (v) imports of consumer and capital goods and (vi) exports of consumer and capital goods; and if he will publish corrective co-efficients with the trade deficit in each case.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Information at constant prices, as is available, from which the balance of trade and percentage changes may be derived, can be found in Government statistical service publications, available from the Library of the House, or on the Central Statistical Office databank, which may be accessed through the Library.

It is not clear what the hon. Member means by "corrective coefficients".

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the increase in the trade deficit in manufactures less erratics on a BOP basis in 1988 and this year to date; and what is his estimate of the contribution made in each case by the increase in investment in manufacturing industry and the fall in personal saving, respectively.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The figures requested can be found on the CSO's computer databank, which can be accessed in the House of Commons Library. It is not possible to make precise estimates of the contribution to the manufacturing trade deficit of the rise in investment and fall in personal saving.

Employment

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the growth in employment over the last five years.

Mr. Lamont: Total employment increased by 2,117,000 in the five years to June 1989.

Government Expenditure

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the value to the Government's spending plans arising from lower interest costs on the national debt.

Mr. Lamont: General Government gross debt interest as a percentage of GDP has fallen from 5 per cent. in 1981-82 to an estimated 3½ per cent. this year and is projected to fall to 2¼ per cent. in 1992-93. The fall in the burden of debt interest costs makes room within the medium-term plans for higher spending on priority programmes.

Income Tax

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has commissioned any research into the Swedish method of taxation for unmarried couples.

Mr. Lilley: No.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proposals he has to enable co-habitants to be taxed on the same basis as married couples where the couples are: *(a)* male/female, *(b)* male/male, and *(c)* female/female.

Mr. Lilley: The Government have no plans to allow unmarried couples to be taxed on the same basis as married couples. An unmarried couple who have a child living with them may qualify for an additional personal allowance, which will bring their total tax allowances to the same level as those available to a married couple.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the delay to the introduction of independent taxation which a revised policy allowing married couples to share the marriage allowance equally would entail.

Mr. Lilley: A change in the rules for giving the married couple's allowance, so that couples could share the allowance equally between them, would delay the introduction of independent taxation for up to two years.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether any surplus from a husband's marriage allowance will be automatically transferred to his wife in the new arrangements for married couple's allowance which are to be introduced in April 1990.

Mr. Lilley: Transfer of surplus married couple's allowance to the wife will normally require her husband to give notice to the tax office. Without such a notice, the tax office will not necessarily know that the husband has, or may have, any surplus allowance.

Balance of Trade

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the reasons for the United Kingdom's deficit on trade in invisibles with the European Economic Community and its surplus with the rest of the world.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The deficit on invisibles transactions with European Community countries and institutions reflects deficits on services, including foreign travel, and transfers. Surpluses on interest profits and dividends and on financial and other services make important contributions to the non-European Community invisibles surplus.

Exchange Rates

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what effect the increase since January 1987 in both the nominal and real exchange rates against the D-mark has had on manufacturing capacity and on the future rate of growth in terms of the balance of payments constraint; and whether this has led him to revise the Treasury model of the economy.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The level of manufacturing investment (including leased assets) in 1989 quarter 3 is provisionally estimated to be about 38 per cent. higher than in 1987 quarter 1; and its cumulative growth over this period has added substantially to manufacturing capacity. The Treasury model is updated when necessary in the light of latest data.

Investment and Consumption

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what projections of net United Kingdom transactions in external liabilities for (i) direct investment, (ii) portfolio investment and (iii) total transactions, underlie the economic prospects for 1990 in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Treasury does not publish forecasts of overseas sector capital flows.

Payroll Giving

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people in England and Wales now participate in payroll giving schemes.

Mr. Lilley: At 5 October 1989, the latest date for which figures are available, the total number of employees throughout the United Kingdom participating in payroll giving schemes was 162,526. Separate figures are not available for England and Wales.

Trade Statistics

Mr. Wall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of British exports is attributable to services, as opposed to manufactures, for the years 1979, 1984, 1988 and 1989; and what was total investment during the same years in these two sectors of the economy.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The most recent estimates of exports of services and manufactured goods in 1979, 1984 and 1988 are contained in the 1989 edition of CSO's "United Kingdom Balance of Payments". The available estimates for investment in these years are contained in the 1989 edition for CSO's "United Kingdom National Accounts". Copies of both publications are available in the Library. They are also on the CSO Databank, which is accessible through the Library. Estimates of exports and manufacturing investment for the first half of 1989 are available from the Library in various CSO publications and from the databank.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the principal differences between the definitions of consumer intermediate and capital goods, for United Kingdom production and for imports, in the national statistics.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 30 November 1989]:* The principal difference is that the import classification applies only to finished manufactures (defined as Sections 7 and 8 of the Standard Industrial Classification, excluding ships, North Sea oil installations and aircraft), whereas the production classification applies to all industrial output. Further information may be obtained from "Industry Statistics: Occasional Paper No. 22" published by the Central Statistical Office in April 1989 and "Classification by broad economic categories" published by the United Nations in 1986, both of which may be found in the House of Commons Library.

Statistics (Social Science)

Mr. Summerson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the report, "Accessibility and other problems relating to statistics used by social scientists", prepared by Professor Benjamin for the Economic and Social Research Council.

Mr. Lilley: I understand that the Economic and Social Research Council has placed a copy of the report in the Library. Officials have prepared a detailed response, which has been sent to the commissioning bodies. This concludes that many of Professor Benjamin's criticisms are unfounded and based on factual inaccuracies and have been made without knowledge of the full range of publications and outputs. A copy of the full response has been placed in the Library.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

High Technology Trading

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of his discussions concerning trade in high technology with eastern Europe with his European Community counterparts at the Paris summit.

Mr. Maude: No such discussions took place.

Nepal

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made to the Nepalese Government concerning abuses of human rights.

Mr. Maude: Her Majesty's embassy in Kathmandu has on a number of occasions, most recently on 12 November this year, made known to the Nepalese Government the concern felt in this country at the treatment of Christians in Nepal.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he intends to make to the Nepalese Government concerning article 18 of the United Nations convention on human rights; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: We have made and will continue to make known to the Nepalese Government our concern for the proper respect of religious liberties.

Bir Zeit University

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations have been made to the Israeli Government concerning the continued closure of Bir Zeit university; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have called regularly on the Israeli authorities, most recently in the EC statement on 6 October, to allow the schools and universities in the Occupied Territories to function normally.

Romania

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government are making to the Romanian Government in respect of the demolition of agricultural villages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We will continue to protest strongly to the Romanian Government on every appropriate occasion about abuses of human rights in Romania, including those involved in President Ceausescu's policy of "systematisation".

Cyprus

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met representatives of the Turkish Government; whether the question of Cyprus was raised; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: I met Mr. Ozceri, under-secretary at the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in London on 17 October. We discussed the Cyprus dispute and agreed on the need for early progress.

Israel

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he intends to pay a visit to the territories occupied by Israel.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has at present no plans to do so.

Korea

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is planned to be discussed when the President of Korea visits the United Kingdom in the coming week; whether he will ensure that the issue of that country's animal welfare record is included on the agenda; and what representations he has received concerning possible trade sanctions related to this issue.

Mr. Maude: President Roh's visit provided the opportunity for a review of Anglo-Korean relations and current international issues. The Koreans are well aware of the strength of feeling in Britain about cruelty to animals. Trade sanctions, as advocated by the International Fund for Animal Welfare, would do nothing to help the situation.

Sri Lanka

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received regarding trade union rights in Sri Lanka; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: We share the concern expressed by many hon. Members about abuses of human rights in Sri Lanka, but trade unions continue to operate normally there.

Hong Kong

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to afford citizenship rights in the United Kingdom to the Indian population now resident in Hong Kong.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs is considering with my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary a package of measures to maintain confidence in Hong Kong and hopes to make an announcement around the turn of the year.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether any steps have been taken to enable the Indian population now living in Hong Kong to become Chinese citizens after 1997.

Mr. Maude: Chinese nationality is a matter for the Chinese Government. However it is our understanding that under Chinese nationality law aliens lawfully resident in China are eligible to apply for Chinese nationality. Those members of the Indian population who have resided in Hong Kong for at least seven years and who have taken Hong Kong as their place of permanent residence will continue to enjoy permanent resident status in the Hong Kong special administrative region after 1997, in line with the Sino-British joint declaration on the question of Hong Kong of 1984.

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will test the acceptability of the basic law in Hong Kong by a referendum of all citizens.

Mr. Maude: The Basic Law will be a Chinese law to be promulgated by the National People's Congress. It is being drafted by the Chinese authorities in consultation with Hong Kong people. A referendum would be neither appropriate nor useful.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many orphans there are at present in the camps in Hong Kong; how they are to be repatriated; and what measures he will take to ensure a satisfactory result.

Mr. Maude: We are seeking information from Hong Kong. I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

EC Council of Ministers

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement of forthcoming business in the European Community Council of Ministers.

Mr. Maude: At the Transport Council on 4 and 5 December, Ministers will further consider the Commission's proposals on stage II of the EC common shipping policy and a report on the present state of discussions with certain west and central African states concerning their cargo allocation policies. A number of road transport items will be discussed including a proposal for a Council regulation on road haulage cabotage; training for drivers of dangerous goods by road; vehicles hired without drivers for the carriage of goods by road; negotiations between the EC and third countries on transit routes; road safety and a note from the presidency on social regulations concerning road transport. It is expected that the Transport Commissioner will make an oral presentation on Commission proposals on railways policy in the Community. A number of matters concerning the development of civil aviation in the Community are to be considered including proposals for Council regulations on fares for scheduled air services and access for air-carriers to scheduled intra-Community air service routes and the sharing of passenger capacity on scheduled services between member states. Ministers will discuss a presidency note on problems relating to the capacity of air traffic systems and aspects of Community transport infrastructure.

The Telecommunications Council will meet on 7 December. Ministers will discuss the opening up to competition of the Community's telecommunications services markets by a Commission directive, and a related proposal for a Council directive on open network provision (ONP) to define the conditions on which telecommunications operators make available monopoly services. A common position on the proposed Council measure is unlikely to be achieved on 7 December. A proposed Council declaration on the establishment of a Commission working group to consider research and development in the field of broad-band technology will also be discussed.

The European Council will meet in Strasbourg on 8 and 9 December. Heads of Government will discuss developments in eastern Europe and the EC response to them, and will discuss economic and monetary union. They will consider a proposal for a charter of fundamental social rights and a number of issues relevant to the completion of the single market. There will also be discussions on audiovisual matters and the free movement of people.

The Agriculture Council will meet on 11 and 12 December to discuss veterinary checks, compound feedingstuffs, pesticide residues, pig semen, monitoring of export refunds and the scrutiny of EACFF accounts. Ministers will be asked to agree on the Commission submission to GATT on long term agricultural reform. The Council may also discuss the sluice gate price for pigmeat.

At the Education Council on 14 December Ministers will be invited to agree the terms of a mixed resolution on measures to combat failure at school, mixed conclusions on technical and vocational education and initial training and on European Schools, and a decision amending the ERASMUS programme. There may also be discussion on the possibility of opening up Community programmes in the education and training fields to eastern European countries.

At the Research Council on 15 December there will be further discussion of a new framework programme of Community activities in research and technological development. The agenda also anticipates the adoption of a common position on a two year programme on human genome analysis.

The Economic and Financial Council will meet on 15 December to consider the economic situation in the Community, including the Commission's annual economic report. The revised financial regulation will be taken at the Council with the aim of reaching agreement by the end of the year. The discussion on taxation of savings will concentrate on mutual assistance. Common position was reached at ECOFIN on 13 November on the proposed revised Council decisions which will replace the 1964 decision on co-ordination between central banks and the 1974 decision on encouraging the convergence of economic policies and performance. Subject to the opinions of the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee it is hoped that the decisions will be adopted at the forthcoming meeting. The Solvency Ratio Directive and Second Banking Co-ordination Directive have received second reading opinions by the European Parliament and now also return to the Council for final adoption. ECOFIN is expected to discuss progress on the Commission's indirect tax proposals and a progress report on key issues of Takeover Directive negotiations in the Council working party.

The Fisheries Council will meet on 18 December to discuss 1990 TACS and quotas, EC/Greenland, EC/Norway, EC/Sweden, EC/Norway/Sweden, EC/Faroes, NAFO, 1990 opportunities in Spanish, Portuguese and member states' waters (Accession Treaties) and 1990 fisheries opportunities in waters off French Guyana. It may also discuss tariff quotas and EC/USSR, EC/GDR, EC/Poland and EC/Latin America.

At the Foreign Affairs Council on 19 December Ministers will be asked to agree to the terms of the EC-USSR agreement. Ministers will consider developments in Eastern Europe and EC-EFTA co-operation. A Ministerial meeting on EC-EFTA matters is expected to take place in the margins of the FAC. The Council will consider the Commission's draft negotiating mandate for a second stage EC-GCC agreement and Ministers will be asked to agree on the Commission's submission to GATT on long term agricultural reform. The FAC is expected to discuss proposals from the Commission on European Community policy on Japanese car imports, including the issue of import restraints. Ministers will also need to discuss the implications of the finding of the GATT panel on the dispute between EC and United States over the EC oilseeds regime. They may also reach agreement on POSEIDOM (special programme for French overseas departments).

The Internal Market Council on 21 and 22 December will discuss a number of measures relevant to the completion of the single market.

Partial Test Ban Treaty

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) how many preparatory committee meetings are planned by the depository states for the partial test ban treaty amendment conference; and what decisions have been taken by the first committee of the United Nations on the amendment conference;

(2) if he will make a statement on current progress in arrangements for the planned amendment conference for the 1963 partial test ban treaty; how the amendment conference will be funded; what states have been invited, and by whom, to the conference; and what administrative facilities will be provided by the United Nations in support of the amendment conference.

Mr. Waldegrave: On 2 November the depositary Governments of the partial test ban treaty announced that they had arranged to convene the amendment conference on 8 January 1991 for a period of up to two weeks. They subsequently issued invitations to all states parties to the treaty. Although not a United Nations conference, the amendment conference is expected to be held on United Nations premises, and using United Nations facilities. No decisions have yet been reached by the participating states parties on funding the conference. On 17 November the first committee of the United Nations General Assembly adopted by majority vote a resolution recommending a preparatory commitee in May 1990 followed by a session of the amendment conference, with a second substantive session in January 1991.

Missile Technology Control Regime

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has had any discussions with representatives of the United States Government regarding tightening of the missile technology control regime; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) on 6 November. The United Kingdom will act as host for a meeting of the partners in the missile technology control regime in London on 5-6 December.

Gibraltar

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has received any representations from the Gibraltar Government regarding the colony's direct participation in elections for the European Parliament.

Mr. Maude: None.

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 28 November, whether the Gibraltar Government assumed responsibility for the maintenance of the Governor's residence gardens by agreement with the United Kingdom Government.

Mr. Maude: Yes.

St. Helena

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of the last elections to be held on St. Helena and list the number of contested seats, the number of votes cast and the percentage turn-out in each case.

Mr. Maude: The most recent general election in St. Helena was held on 10 May 1989. Twelve councillors were elected from eight constituencies. The number of votes cast in each constituency was as follows:

	Number
Jamestown	823
St. Paul's	669
Longwood	447
Half Tree Hollow	431
Blue Hill	123
Levelwood	76
Alarm Forest	157
Sandy Bay[1]	—

[1] Candidate elected unopposed.

The overall percentage turn-out was 72 per cent.

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the gross national product per capita for St. Helena for the last 10 years for which figures are available.

Mr. Maude: It is not possible to enumerate these statistics because no system of national accounting as yet exists in St. Helena. However, such a system is now being developed.

Airport Agreement

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will seek to re-negotiate the 1987 airport agreement for Gibraltar with Spain in order to take account of the views of the Gibraltar Government.

Mr. Maude: We believe that the agreement set out in the 2 December 1987 joint declaration represents a good deal for Gibraltar. We do not see that any useful purpose would be served by attempting to re-open negotiations on the text of that joint declaration.

Islamabad High Commission

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will instruct the migration and visa correspondence unit to supply to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland the Islamabad High Commission reference number requested by the hon. Member by telephone on Monday 27 November.

Mr. Maude: The information requested was supplied to the hon. Member's office by telephone on 30 November 1989.

El Salvador

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how may officers of the armed forces of El Salvador have been trained at United Kingdom military academies and training establishments in each of the past five years.

Mr. Maude: One cadet attended RMA Sandhurst from May 1986 to August 1987.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much military aid Britain provides to the Government of El Salvador.

Mr. Maude: None.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will discuss with his European Community counterparts a ban on all military aid and advice to the Government of President Cristiani, in El Salvador until death squad activity has ceased.

Mr. Maude: No.

Cambodia

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement concerning the plea of Prince Norodom Sihanouk, head of the Khmer Coalition Government of Kampuchea, that the country be placed under United Nations trusteeship.

Mr. Waldegrave: We welcome all constructive proposals for restoring peace and stability to Cambodia, including the Australian proposal, now supported by Prince Sihanouk, for an interim authority under United Nations control.

ENERGY

Wind Energy

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will be presenting a paper to the European Community wind energy conference in Madrid before the deadline in January 1990.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My Department, in association with its energy technology support unit, will be submitting a paper and subsequently presenting it to the Madrid wind energy conference.

Electricity Industry

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has on the contract between NORWEB and Lakeland Power.

Mr. Wakeham: The terms of the electricity purchase contract between NORWEB and Lakeland Power are a commercial matter for the parties concerned.

Energy Conservation

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has on the current level of sales of energy conservation equipment and the comparable figures for 1988; and what is his policy on the stimulation of the market for energy efficiency goods and services.

Mr. Peter Morrison: *[holding answer 30 November 1989]:* An important task of the energy efficiency office is to bring together in a variety of ways the energy efficiency industry and its potential customers.

Our regional energy efficiency officers sponsor seminars and meetings, and co-operate with trade association such as the Energy Systems Trade Association and the Association for the Conservation of Energy to promote the use of energy efficient equipment. Our technology support units similarly promote particular energy efficient techniques and equipment, under the best practice programme. I myself regularly speak at conferences, as indeed I did at national energy managers exhibition at Birmingham on November 21, to stimulate and challenge the market for energy efficiency.

On Wednesday 29 November, I similarly spoke in Cambridge at a conference entitled "The Greenhouse Effect and Energy Conservation". On 1 November I spoke on the occasion of Northern Electric's PEP and BETA awards, on 11 October at MANWEB's PEP and BETA awards and on 26 September at South Eastern Electricity's BETA awards; on each occasion taking particular pains to challenge managers to purchase and use more energy efficient equipment.

On sales figures, I understand that sales of building energy management systems have increased by about 10 per cent. on 1988 figures to an estimated £89 million in 1989. Information on other types of energy efficiency equipment such as Combined Heat and Power (CHP) plant is not readily available, although the CHP industry has claimed "greatly increased interest and sales" in 1989. The Building Energy Efficiency Confederation inform me that in line with the general market for domestic goods, sales of different types of domestic insulation and heating control equipment are down by 6 per cent. and 20 per cent. in 1989 compared with 1988.

THE ARTS

Museums

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received about the London museums education unit's new initiative for education in the capital; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: My Office has received details of the London Museums Education Unit's initiative for education in the capital. Officials have met members of the unit to discuss the proposals and are currently considering further information which has been received.

PRIME MINISTER

French President

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Prime Minister when she next expects to meet the French President.

The Prime Minister: My next meeting with President Mitterrand will be at the NATO Heads of Government meeting in Brussels on 4 December.

Salary

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister what is *(a)* her official salary entitlement as Prime Minister and *(b)* the official salary she draws as Prime Minister; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: My salary entitlement, as Prime Minister, payable under the Ministerial and other Salaries Order 1988, is £46,109. However, I choose to accept the same salary as a Cabinet Minister in the House of Commons, namely £34,479.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Bills

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Lord President of the Council what considerations underlie a decision on which House of Parliament a Government Bill is to be introduced into; and how these considerations were applied in the case of the Food Bill.

Sir Geoffrey Howe *[holding answer 28 November 1989]*: Various considerations may underlie the decision, including the need to balance the weight of business before the two Houses. I do not propose to go into the detailed factors in a particular case.

ENVIRONMENT

Public Sector Pay

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what pay awards in the public sector he has approved in the current year.

Mr. Chris Patten: The pay of chairmen and board members of non-departmental public bodies and nationalised industries sponsored by my Department and of the staff of such controlled non-departmental public bodies requires my approval.

I have approved pay increases for the chairmen and board members of non-departmental public bodies in line with the Government's decisions on the 28th report of the Top Salaries Review Body. I have also approved pay increases for the chairman and board members of the British Waterways Board and for the chairmen and the board members sponsored by my Department of the former English regional water authorities.

In practice the pay of most of the staff of sponsored NDPBs is linked to public sector pay negotiated nationally. The application of national settlements to staff of the bodies in the following lists has been approved as they arose during the year. In addition I have approved pay increases for the junior staff of new town development corporations (negotiated in the Whitley Council for new town staff in line with the local authority 'white collar' settlement), for the wardens and deerstalker of the Nature Conservancy Council and a new package of pay and terms and conditions of service for the industrial staff of the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission, constrained by the overall increase in the pay bill for similar staff in the Civil Service.

Civil Service Pay Links

British Board of Agrement
Countryside Commission
Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England (English Heritage)—(non-industrial staff)
Housing Corporation (Senior Staff)
National Heritage Memorial Fund
Nature Conservancy Council (except as noted above)
New Town Development Corporations (Senior Staff)
Rent Officers
Royal Armouries
Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England)
Royal Fine Art Commission
Rural Development Commission

Sports Council (non-industrial staff)
Local Government Pay Links
Merseyside Development Corporation
Sports Council (industrial staff)
New Town Development Corporations (manual and craft workers)
Valuation & Community Charge Tribunals
New Town Pay Links
Housing Corporation (junior staff)

As regards the urban development corporations, other than the Merseyside Development Corporation, and the National Rivers Authority, I have approved the pay levels of senior staff and the overall increases in the pay bill for the rest of the staff by reference to the levels of public sector settlements generally.

Rating Reform

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what provision he has made to protect tenants from landlords who do not remove the rate element from their rent following the introduction of the community charge; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what guidelines his Department issued to landlords on adjusting rents following the introduction of the community charge.

Mr. Chope: Where a fair rent is registered a landlord will not, after 1 April 1990, be able to recover an amount for rates in addition to that fair rent. Where no fair rent is registered landlords will not be able to demand from tenants any sum specifically included in rents as payable towards the domestic rates of the landlord. Since this is already the legal position further special provision is not necessary, nor would it be workable. The Department will shortly be issuing a leaflet for both landlords and tenants explaining the position.

Housing Capital Investment

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list at 1988-89 prices local authorities housing capital investment on *(a)* new building, *(b)* renovation of local authority dwellings, *(c)* renovation grants, *(d)* lending to housing associations and *(e)* other housing capital programmes, in (1) inner London, (2) outer London, (3) metropolitan areas, (4) the south-east outside London, (5) other non-metropolitan areas and (6) England as a whole for (i) 1980-81, (ii) 1982-83, (iii) 1984-85, (iv) 1986-87 and (v) 1988-89.

Mr. Chope: I have today placed tables giving the relevant information in the Library. 1988-89 data have not yet been fully analysed.

Energy Savings (Palace of Westminster)

Mr. Rost: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what potential energy savings at the Palace of Westminster were indicated in the feasibility study commissioned by his Department; what was the recommended required investment; what was the indicated payback period; when he proposes to undertake the investment; and if he will release the study to the Library.

Mr. Chope: An energy audit of the Palace of Westminster was commissioned by the Parliamentary Works Office in 1988 as part of the normal process of ensuring that its planned programme for the care and maintenance of the Palace takes proper account of needs and priorities.

The report contain 130 recommendations. It identified the scope for savings of £217,000 pa. In the nine months since the report was received work has been completed which will achieve savings of over £70,000 pa. Further work is dependent on other developments, particularly the upgrading of the power supply. £0·6 million has been spent on this work in the current year and further major work will be carried out next year.

In other cases major design work and or capital expenditure would be required to implement the recommendations. The saving from these, in aggregate, would be less than £50,000 pa for an investment of over £300,000 with pay-back periods mainly greater than four years. The timing of these schemes will be considered with the appropriate House Committees against other demands for the capital works programme.

Tenants Rights

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider amending the current legislation to provide statutory protection of the tenant's right to renewal of a lease after application has been made to the court in order to avoid the present need to register an application on a land charge.

Mr. Chope: No. Legislation already exists covering this area. No changes are necessary.

Community Charge (Prisoners)

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether guidance will be issued to local authorities on the amount of community charge to be levied on prisoners who lived alone before entering prison.

Mr. Chope: Charging authorities have discretion to specify classes of property for the purposes of the standard charge. In doing so they may have regard to a number of factors, including the circumstances of the person subject to the charge. If they wish, they may therefore specify a class of property to include property unoccupied because the owner is in prison. Guidance explaining this has been sent to charging authorities, but it is for individual authorities to decide whether to specify such a class, and, if they do, what rate of standard charge to levy.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much in cash terms has been paid to *(a)* Langbaurgh, *(b)* Stockton and *(c)* Middlesbrough councils by way of central Government grants to support rates income in each of the past five years.

Mr. Chope: The information is as follows:

Central Government grants[1]

£ million

	Langbaurgh	*Stockton*	*Middlesbrough*
1984-85	6·4	6·9	14·0
1985-86	6·9	6·0	14·7
1986-87	7·9	6·7	16·3
1987-88	6·1	6·9	16·3
1988-89	5·8	6·5	19·0

[1] Rate Support Grant and specific grants paid to authorities' Rate Fund Revenue Accounts.

Cleveland County Council

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to regulate the spending of Cleveland county council.

Mr. Chope: Decisions about spending are for each local authority but if any authority insists on excessive spending plans we shall consider using our powers to cap.

Common Land

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to introduce legislation for the protection of common land; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 27 November 1989 to my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) at column *89*.

World Student Games

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what support the Government are giving to the next World Student Games to be held in Sheffield.

Mr. Moynihan: £9·5 million has been provided for games-related projects in the form of urban programme funding, derelict land grant and city grant. In addition the Sports Council has set aside £3 million in its spending programme over the next three years to go towards the revenue costs of the games.

Greenham Common

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether those people encamped outside the air base of Greenham common will be liable for the community charge.

Mr. Chope: All adults unless exempt are liable to pay the personal community charge to the local council in whose area they are mainly resident. Persons may be exempt if they have no fixed abode. It is for the community charges registration officer of Newbury district council to determine whether some residents near Greenham common are permanently there, have another main residence elsewhere, or are genuinely of no fixed abode.

House Prices

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the increase in house prices in France, West Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom since 1979 to the latest available date.

Mr. Chope: Based on the building societies quarterly mix-adjusted index house prices in the United Kingdom increased by 247 per cent. between the third quarter of 1979 and the third quarter of 1989.

My Department does not have comparable information for the other countries listed.

Homelessness

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how the sum of £250 million, recently allocated by his Department to tackle homelessness, will be distributed to provide accommodation for the households accepted as homeless by local authorities.

Mr. Chope: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment announced on 15 November, over the next two years we are making an extra £177 million available to local authorities, and an extra £73 million to the Housing Corporation (for distribution to housing associations), for homelessness projects in the "pressure areas" of London and the south-east. The aim is to secure extra lettings for homeless families currently in bed and breakfast accommodation. We have invited bids from local authorities in London and the south-east. Similarly, the Housing Corporation has invited bids from housing associations.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a further statement on his plans to reduce homelessness.

Mr. Howard: On 15 November my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced a substantial package of measures to relieve and reduce homelessness, following our thorough review of the legislation. Since then, I have invited bids from local authorities in the pressure areas of London and the south-east for projects under the £250 million of extra resources available (and the Housing Corporation has invited bids from housing associations). I have announced that councils will be able to continue existing leasing schemes for a further period of three years, without affecting their capital allocations, to ensure that homeless families are not returned to bed and breakfast accommodations; and I have visited various voluntary organisations to discuss the enhanced role we would like them to play, with increased Government funding.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will take steps to make housing benefit a landlord function for private tenants in the same manner as responsibility of local authorities for their tenants.

Mr. Chope: No.

Environmental Policy

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to delay any decision to merge the Nature Conservancy Council with the Countryside Commission until he has presented the Government's white paper on environmental policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The Government have no plans to delay the reorganisation of the conservation agencies announced in July. Postponement would increase uncertainty among the staff of the existing agencies, and would not be in the interests of conservation.

Nature Conservancy Council

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many Nature Conservancy Council staff will be available per site of special scientific interest, to monitor, control and protect these sites in England, Scotland and Wales and how many personnel are employed in the field per hectare of existing site of special scientific interest.

Mr. Trippier: The NCC has estimated that the equivalent of the following numbers of staff (both permanent and non-permanent) are currently available per SSSI to monitor, control and protect such sites:

	Equivalent persons
England	0·045
Scotland	0·069
Wales	0·043

The equivalent of 0·0003 persons (including permanent and non-permanent staff) per hectare of existing SSSI are currently employed in the field by NCC's three country directorates.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he has any information on further plans affecting Selby common site of special scientific interest;

(2) if he has received representations about the damage caused by agricultural operations to Sherburn Willows site of special scientific interest, near Selby; and what action he proposes to take to assist the restoration of this site;

(3) what action he will take to preserve remaining habitat of importance to rare aquatic flora at Hatfield Chase, near Doncaster;

(4) what action he is taking to safeguard Hollywell wood, near Castleford;

(5) if he will take steps to prevent felling of ancient woodland at Bog wood, Thorp Underwood, north Yorkshire and of the resulting loss of a heronry in this location; and what action he will take to prevent such habitat loss in the future;

(6) what action he is taking to preserve habitat at Cawood meadows:

(7) what action he is taking to protect the Wressel-Breighton hedgerow within the Derwent Ings site of special scientific interest, SPA and Ramsar site;

(8) what action he will take to protect North Ferriby Ings, Humberside, from further destruction; and if he will ensure that surviving species and habitat are properly managed and protected;

(9) what action he will take to safeguard Snaith and Cowick moors, near Goole in Humberside from peat digging;

(10) what representations he has received regarding the effect of the infilling at Great Heck quarry, near Selby, on an albino form of the rosebay willowherb;

(11) what representations he received following operations at Shepherds wood, Allerton Mauleverer, north Yorkshire, concerning loss of habitat to the herb Paris;

(12) what steps he will take to monitor pollution threats and the laying of electricity cables at Maltby Low Common site of special scientific interest;

(13) what urgent action he will take to preserve the Hatfield Moors site, near Doncaster.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I will write to the hon. Member as soon as the Nature Conservancy Council has assembled the information requested.

Wildlife Sites

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will undertake an immediate national audit of remaining prime sites for wildlife.

Mr. Trippier: My Department is considering the scope and methodology of a national survey aimed at improving our knowledge of the natural heritage. The Government's scientific advisors, the NCC, is planning a complementary exercise on a census of wildlife. The Government hope that these works will contribute to the White Paper on the Environment which we intend to publish in 1990.

Habitat Census

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what action has been taken to implement phase 2 of the Nature Conservancy Council, field by field habitat census/survey;

(2) what is the annual budget allocated to *(a)* phase 1 and *(b)* phase 2 of the Nature Conservancy Council field by field habitat census/survey, from 1979 to the last year in which figures are available;

(3) what is the percentage area of each individual county within England, Scotland, and Wales which has been covered by phase 2 of the Nature Conservancy Council field by field habitat census/survey;

(4) what is the percentage area of each individual county within England, Scotland and Wales which has been covered by phase 1 of the Nature Conservancy Council field by field habitat census/survey;

(5) what is the proportion of *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales and *(c)* Scotland covered by phase 1 of the Nature Conservancy Council field by field habitat census/survey;

(6) what is the proportion of *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales and *(c)* Scotland, covered by phase 2 of the Nature Conservancy Council field by field habitat census/survey;

(7) what progress has been made with the Nature Conservancy Council phase 1, field by field survey.

Mr. Trippier: I will write to the hon. Member.

Environmental Consultation

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultation took place with voluntary environmental agencies, prior to the decision to merge the Nature Conservancy Council and the Countryside Commission in Scotland and Wales.

Mr. Trippier: Proposals to reorganise the Nature Conservancy Council and the Countryside Commission were announced in July following a thorough internal review by the Government. These have since been the subject of detailed discussions both with the existing conservation agencies and with voluntary bodies and individuals. The Government will be taking account of these discussions in framing legislation, which will then be debated and decided in Parliament.

Footpaths

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much the Government have spent in footpath renovation and upkeep during the past five years; and what future action he intends to take to tackle this problem.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The maintenance of highways, including footpaths and bridleways, is the responsibility of the highway authority. The allocation of resources between their various statutory responsibilities is a matter for the authorities themselves to determine. However, the Countryside Commission has been seeking, with some success, to raise the profile of rights of way work, and to encourage the better management of these recreational assets. The Government have strongly supported its initiative.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has met representatives of the Countryside Commission to discuss the quality of footpaths.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State met Sir Derek Barber, Chairman of the Countryside Commission on 26 September when a number of issues were discussed. My hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside visited the Commission's offices on 4 October for a presentation on various aspects of its work.

National Parks

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he plans to introduce legislation to offer extra protection to the landscapes of national parks.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We see no need for further legislation about this subject at present.

Capital Receipts

Mr. Madel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in detail what the new rules governing councils' expenditure from capital receipts will be from 1 April 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Section 59 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 provides that any capital receipt realised by a local authority on or after 1 April 1990, other than a receipt received by them as trustee of a charitable fund, must be divided into a reserved part, which must be set aside as provision for credit liabilities, and a usable balance which the authority may apply to expenditure for capital purposes or as voluntary provision for credit liabilities. The usable balance of capital receipts may be applied in the financial year in which they are received or later, at the authority's discretion. Expenditure for capital purposes is defined in section 40 of the 1989 Act. The reserved part is calculated by reference to the amount of the receipt reduced by the amounts (if any) which out of the receipt are paid to the Exchequer by way of clawback of Exchequer grant or assistance or (in the case of certain receipts from housing disposals) are applied to meet the administrative costs of disposal. Except insofar as is otherwise provided by regulations made by the Secretary of State or, in cases where receipts arise from disposals which required his consent, by directions given by him, the amount of the reserved part is a percentage of the amount of the receipt thus reduced. The percentage specified in the Act is 75 per cent. in the case of disposals of dwelling-houses held for the purposes of Part II of the Housing Act 1985 and 50 per cent. in other cases. It has already been announced that it is the intention to make regulations which would provide for a percentage of 75 per cent. for receipts from the disposal of share and loan capital (other than certain holdings in public transport and airport companies) and from disposals of property held in connection with the police, probation, magistrates courts, and civil defence services. My Department is currently consulting the local authority associations on proposals for regulations which would *(a)* specify percentages other than 50 per cent. for certain other categories of receipts, *(b)* provide that in certain cases the reserved part would be calculated by references to the authority's net receipt rather than the gross amount realised, and *(c)* specify a percentage of 0 per cent. for most receipts realised by authorities who had paid off all their captial borrowings and had made full provision for their other credit liabilities.

A credit received by a local authority as trustee of a charitable trust fund must be applied in accordance with any directions given by the Charity Commissioners or, in the absence of such directions, for the purposes of the charity concerned.

Tin Compounds

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment at what date tributyltin and organotin compounds were added to his Department's red list; and from what external sources advice or evidence was received on this decision.

Mr. Trippier: Tributyltin and tryphenyltin compounds were included on the initial red list of priority substances liable to pose a threat to the aquatic environment, which was announced on 10 April 1989 following the issue of a consultation paper. There were, in total, 80 responses to the consultation exercise, of which seven specially commented on the inclusion of these substances on the list. Copies of these responses were placed in the Library of the House on 10 April, with the exception of one respondent who asked for their comments to be treated in confidence.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research has been completed or is in process on the toxicity of tributyltin and organotin compounds.

Mr. Trippier: Much of the research which led to the existing controls on triorganotins is referred to in DOE pollution paper 25 (Organotin in anti-fouling paints: environmental considerations). This was published in 1986 and a copy has already been placed in the Library of the House. Twenty seven scientific papers and reports produced subsequently under DOE funding are listed in the DOE report on research and development 1986-1988.

Current research funded by the Department of the Environment at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food Burnham laboratory and at the Plymouth marine laboratory is mainly concerned with monitoring recovery since the ban imposed in 1987 and assessing the implications of tributyltin use on vessels over 25 metres.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he proposes to commission an environment impact statement on the use of tributyltin or organotin compounds in anti-fouling paints and on alternative anti-fouling systems.

Mr. Trippier: No. All antifouling preparations have to be notified under the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986. Approvals are granted or withheld following an assessment of possible impact on human health and the environment. Tributyltin compounds have not been approved for use on small boats or in fish farming; other uses are being kept under review by the Advisory Committee on Pesticides.

Tenants Incentive Scheme

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the introduction of the tenants incentive scheme for the tenants of charitable housing associations.

Mr. Chope: The tenants incentive scheme will be introduced by the Housing Corporation in 1990-91. It will enable registered housing associations, including charitable housing associations, to give cash grants to help their tenants buy homes of their own.

In addition to the major increase in resources being made available for the Housing Corporation's main programme, the Government are making available through the corporation an extra £73 million over the next two years to help housing associations provide more homes for homeless people by various means including securing vacancies by giving additional grants under the tenants incentive scheme. These extra resources will be targeted on London and the south-east where homelessness pressures are greatest.

Endangered Species

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will increase resources to allow the designation of special sites to be undertaken more speedily and effectively;

(2) if he will make resources available to identify species decline in the British Isles; and if he will strengthen legislation protecting endangered species habitat.

Mr. Trippier: The Government's grant-in-aid to the Nature Conservancy Council in the financial year 1990-91 will be £44·069 million, an increase over this year of almost £4 million. The council has indicated that this amount will allow it to carry forward its statutory work and to deliver additional benefits for nature conservation. Within the framework of the corporate plan, it is for the council to decide the priorities of the calls on its resources, and site safeguard is regarded as being of the highest priority. The Government have no plans to amend the legislative provisions for protecting the habitats of endangered species.

Countryside Work Force

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he will take to create a countryside work force, to monitor, identify, protect and manage environmentally important sites; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: A large number of organisations are active in various aspects of the environmental protection and enhancement work to which the hon. Member refers, including particularly the Government's statutory agencies, the Nature Conservancy Council and the Countryside Commission, the Groundwork Trusts and numerous voluntary conservation bodies, many of which receive financial assistance from public funds.

Overspent Targets (Shires)

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those shire counties in England which overspent the targets or other assessments set by Government in each of the last two years for which figures are available, with the amount of overspending and the proportion this formed of the total spending in each case.

Mr. Chope: The information requested is as follows:

Shire counties' spending compared to grant related expenditure assessments

	1987-88 Overspend £ million	*1987-88 Percentage overspend*	*1988-89 Overspend £ million*	*1988-89 Percentage overspend*
Avon	27·7	7·6	34·4	8·7
Bedfordshire	17·6	8·2	15·7	6·7
Buckinghamshire	11·8	4·6	11·3	4·0
Cambridgeshire	−14·9	−5·9	5·4	2·0
Cheshire	31·0	7·7	31·6	7·2
Cleveland	25·5	9·3	27·1	9·2
Cumbria	21·3	10·5	21·8	10·0
Derbyshire	33·3	8·7	36·1	8·7
Durham	6·5	2·6	7·8	2·9
Essex	−1·5	−0·3	20·3	3·1
Gloucestershire	0·1	0·1	3·5	1·5
Hertfordshire	−19·3	−5·0	91·8	22·3
Humberside	21·7	5·6	25·3	6·1
Isle of Wight	2·7	5·6	2·6	4·8
Lancashire	0·3	0·1	17·8	2·7
Leicestershire	5·2	1·4	10·9	2·6

	1987-88 Overspend £ million	*1987-88 Percentage overspend*	*1988-89 Overspend £ million*	*1988-89 Percentage overspend*
Northamptonshire	0·5	0·2	4·9	1·9
Northumberland	6·3	5·2	10·3	7·9
Nottinghamshire	25·0	5·9	47·9	10·5
Oxfordshire	3·5	1·8	11·8	5·5
Somerset	1·4	0·8	4·3	2·2
Warwickshire	−2·5	−1·3	7·6	3·6
West Sussex	17·7	6·9	—15·9	—5·7
Wiltshire	−2·6	−1·2	7·1	3·0

Habitats Directive

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will support a European Community habitats directive, providing protection for special features of value to wildlife.

Mr. Trippier: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South (Mr. Bright) on 30 November at column *370.*

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement following the Council of Environmental Ministers on 28 and 29 November concerning discussions held on the proposed European Community habitats directive; and if he will indicate what funding will be made available to enable the effective implementation of the directive in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Chris Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South (Mr. Bright) on 30 November at column *370.*

Registered Funding Co-operatives

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give urgent consideration to exempting registered funding co-operatives from the requirements set out in his Department's circular 31/88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Housing Corporation circular HC31/88 sets out the financial viability tests the corporation applies where registered housing associations seek consent for private loans. The criteria in the circular are of a general nature and the corporation is prepared to relax them in appropriate circumstances.

Water Shares

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to ensure that service personnel who own, but are unable to be resident at a United Kingdom home, are in no way disadvantaged in obtaining access to special terms offered by water authorities for the purchase of shares by their customers.

Mr. Howard: It was open to absent servicemen qualifying as customers under the terms of the water share offers to make arrangements to be registered with the Water Share Information Office by the last date for registration of 15 November, and to make arrangements for their personalised customer application forms to be completed and returned by representatives in the United Kingdom before the closing date and time which is 10 am on 6 December. No applications may, however, be made which are in breach of the local securities laws of the country in which they are serving.

Litter

200. **Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what legislative proposals he intends to introduce to reduce litter.

Mr. Trippier: The proposals we intend to introduce in the forthcoming environment Bill, to improve the appearance and standards of cleanliness of public places were published in a consultation paper 'Action on Litter', a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

These proposals include a new duty on local authorities, statutory undertakers and owners of some other land to keep their land clear of litter. In carrying out this duty, these bodies will have to have regard to a code of practice issued by my right hon. Friend. If they fail to carry out the duty, an aggrieved person will be able to apply to the magistrates court for a litter abatement order compelling them to do so. We will also bring in tougher penalties for litterers: we intend to raise the maximum fine for littering from £400 to £1,000; and give local authorities powers to introduce a fixed penalty scheme for litter offences, similar to that already operating in Westminster.

Dust Emission Limits

201. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to place individual SO_2 and dust emission limits on large industrial plants.

Mr. Trippier: Large industrial plants which have the potential for significant emissions of SO_2 and dust are subject to control by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution. Operators of these plants are required to fit such equipment and to operate in such a way as to minimise air pollution and its effects. The specification of the requirements may include emission limits. Under proposed changes to air pollution legislation to be introduced this Session, control requirements, including any relevant emission limits, will be set in legally binding authorisations which will be open to public inspection. I have written to my hon. Friend about the control of dust and SO_2 emissions from the Fiddlers Ferry power station, which is among the plants covered by proposals in the Department's recent consultation paper on implementation of the EC large combustion plants directive.

Poll Tax Publicity

295. **Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish details of his planned poll tax publicity campaign showing *(a)* the cost of television advertising, *(b)* the cost of newspaper advertising, *(c)* the cost of radio advertising and *(d)* the planned start and end dates of the campaign; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: We are not planning a poll tax publicity campaign. We are, however, preparing an information campaign to ensure that those eligible are aware of entitlement to community charge benefit and transitional relief.

Local Government Finance

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the 10 highest annual rate increases reported among English local authorities since 1983, giving the year of increase, the amount and the appropriate local authority.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 29 November 1989]:* The information requested is as follows:

General rates—Highest annual increases since 1983-84

	Year of increase	*Percentage of increase*	*Poundages in pence from*	*to*
1. Ealing	1987-88	57·4	160·5	252·5
2. Waltham Forest	1987-88	56·6	205·0	321·0
3. Haringey	1989-90	55·7	245·3	381·9
4. Hammersmith and Fulham	1987-88	44·1	165·5	238·4
5. Calderdale	1986-87	37·3	208·2	286·0
6. Eden	1986-87	35·0	194·3	262·2
7. Leicester	1986-87	34·7	174·7	235·3
8. Allerdale	1986-87	34·1	198·5	266·1
9. Barrow-in-Furness	1986-87	33·7	202·0	270·0
10. South Lakeland	1986-87	33·2	192·9	256·8

Docklands

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total projected cost of transport, environmental and infrastructure improvements financed by the Exchequer and designed to serve London Docklands between 1985 and 1995; and if he will itemise all such improvements.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 30 November 1989]:* Past expenditure, current commitments and proposals by the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) and the Department of Transport (DTp) on transport, environmental and infrastructure improvements to serve docklands exceed £2 billion. A full list of all such schemes is not available, but transport projects by DTp and LDDC are summarised in DTp's publication "Transport in Docklands" (June 1989), copies of which are in the Library.

Water Companies

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his answer of 27 November to the hon. Member for Copeland, *Official Report*, column *86*, he will list the individuals serving on each water holding company trust scheme.

Mr. Chris Patten *[holding answer Thursday 30 November 1989]:* The Companies Act 1985 requires the filing of names and addresses of directors at Companies House and for these to be made available to the public on request.

Child Care Facilities

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will be introducing any new measures to assist or encourage local authorities to provide additional child care facilities in order to enable more women with pre-school age children to seek employment.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I have been asked to reply.

It is for local authorities to decide what priority they give to provision of services for pre-school children. We would expect local authority provision to be targeted on children from families with particular health or social difficulties rather than specifically designed to enable mothers to seek employment. Under the Children Act local authorities will be expected to review the availability of services and to publish information not only about what they provide themselves but also the provision of others and in particular voluntary organisations who make a valuable contribution in this area. The Department of Education and Science wrote in October to encourage local education authorities to allow the use of school premises for child care provision out of school hours.

WALES

A487 (Tourist Signposting)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when his Department received a letter from Inigo Jones and Co. Ltd., Groeslon, Caernarfon, dated 17 August, concerning information signposting for tourists on the A487 trunk road; on what date a reply was sent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The letter from Inigo Jones and Co. Ltd., dated 17 August and addressed to the county surveyor of Gwynedd was received in the Welsh Office on 18 September. A full reply was sent to the company on 30 November. This set out the criteria used in considering the signing of tourist attractions from trunk roads in Wales.

Rates

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each charging authority area, attributing business rate income received by precepting authorities under the current system to each area in proportion to the aggregate of rateable values in that area *(a)* the estimated revenue from non-domestic rates in 1989-90, *(b)* the estimated amount which would have been raised in revenue by the national non-domestic rate in 1989-90 after the end of transitional arrangements and assuming rateable values at current levels, *(c)* the amount which would have been paid from the national non-domestic rating pool to each area in 1989-90, *(d)* the difference between *(a)* and *(b)*, *(e)* the difference between *(b)* and *(c)*, and *(f)* the difference between *(a)* and *(c)*, showing aggregates for each figure for each class of charging authority.

Mr. Peter Walker: The estimates requested are shown in the following table:

Charging authority	*(a)* *Revenue from non-domestic rates* £ *million*	*(b)* *Amount to each district/area from national non-domestic rate* £ *million*	*(c)* *Amount from national non-domestic rating pool*[1] £ *million*	*(d)* *Difference (a)−(b)* £ *million*	*(e)* *Difference (b)−(c)* £ *million*	*(f)* *Difference (a)−(c)* £ *million*
Alyn and Deeside	12·787	12·198	10·420	0·589	1·778	2·366
Colwyn	5·828	5·611	8·215	0·218	−2·604	−2·386
Delyn	6·847	6·546	9·413	0·301	−2·866	−2·565
Glyndwr	4·480	4·255	6·123	0·226	−1·868	−1·643
Rhuddlan	7·977	7·899	8·424	0·078	−0·525	−0·446
Wrexham Maelor	18·120	16·613	16·829	1·507	−0·215	1·292
Carmarthen	5·744	5·717	8·291	0·026	−2·574	−2·547
Ceredigion	6·454	6·576	9·926	−0·122	−3·350	−3·472
Dinefwr	2·847	2·873	5·781	−0·026	−2·908	−2·933
Llanelli	8·761	8·275	11·048	0·486	−2·773	−2·287
Preseli Pembrokeshire	9·988	10·601	10·268	−0·613	0·332	[illegible]
South Pembrokeshire	14·325	14·344	6·104	−0·019	8·240	[illegible]
Blaenau Gwent	7·575	7·881	11·314	−0·306	−3·433	−3·740
Islwyn	5·278	5·377	9·679	−0·099	−4·302	−4·401
Monmouth	10·175	10·097	11·923	0·079	−1·826	−1·747
Newport	30·605	31·261	18·483	−0·656	12·778	12·122
Torfaen	12·903	12·787	13·349	0·116	−0·562	−0·445
Aberconwy	6·888	6·950	8·158	−0·062	−1·207	−1·269
Arfon	11·604	11·821	7·967	−0·217	3·854	3·637
Dwyfor	3·284	3·315	4·069	−0·031	−0·754	−0·785
Meirionnydd	6·341	6·523	4·754	−0·182	1·769	1·587
Ynys Môn	10·938	11·076	10·154	−0·138	0·922	0·784
Cynon Valley	6·432	6·317	9·375	0·114	−3·057	−2·943
Merthyr Tydfil	7·447	7·056	8·424	0·392	−1·368	−0·976
Ogwr	14·872	14·026	19·985	0·846	−5·959	−5·113
Rhondda	5·202	4·924	11·143	0·278	−6·219	−5·942
Rhymney Valley	10·147	9·477	14·775	0·669	−5·298	−4·628
Taff Ely	15·287	14·099	13·596	1·188	0·503	1·691
Brecknock	4·440	4·788	6·104	−0·348	−1·316	−1·664
Montgomeryshire	5·659	6·290	7·568	−0·631	−1·278	−1·909
Radnorshire	3·078	3·496	3·366	−0·418	0·130	−0·288
Cardiff	51·673	59·038	41·054	−7·365	17·984	10·619
Vale of Glamorgan	17·756	20·535	17·285	−2·780	3·250	0·471
Port Talbot	17·119	16·751	7·226	0·368	9·525	9·893
Lliw Valley	6·392	5·842	9·108	0·550	−3·266	−2·716
Neath	9·631	9·050	9·546	0·581	−0·496	0·085
Swansea	31·762	26·361	27·401	5·401	−1·040	4·361
All Welsh charging authorities	416·647	416·647	416·647	0	0	0

[1] Distributed using the Registrar General's mid year estimates (1988) of population aged 18 and over.

Craft Industry

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will publish the full cost of the review of the Welsh craft industry that took place in February 1988;

(2) if he will publish the full costs of the design and development fees for the "Wales—Land of Quality" promotion and logo;

(3) what information he has on the current position of the finances and on the number of jobs created by the craft incentive of the Welsh Arts Council which began on 1 April 1988;

(4) what information he has on the figures on the current expenditure on and value of sales achieved by the Welsh Craft Council's *(a)* Buyers' Guide 1988-89, *(b)* Wales fair, October 1988 and *(c)* direct sales events;

(5) what information he has on the full expenditure on, and income received from, the Welsh Development Agency's *(a)* publication of the Buyers' Guide 1989 and the South Wales Business Adviser, *(b)* research and promotion of retail sales, *(c)* craft shops in museums and *(d)* grant to Wales Craft Council.

Mr. Peter Walker: I will write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the numbers of hospital beds available in Ceredigion for geriatric cases; how many patients there are on the waiting list; and what steps he is taking to increase the number of beds in the area.

Mr. Grist: 106 NHS hospital beds are currently designated for geriatric medicine in Ceredigion. At 31 March 1989 there was one person on the in-patient waiting list for admission to those beds.

The planning of bed numbers for particular specialties is an operational matter for the relevant district health authority in the first instance.

Trunk Roads (Traffic Flow)

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total traffic flow on the Cardigan to Machynlleth trunk road and the A44 Aberystwyth to Ponterwyd road; and what proportion of this traffic is heavy goods vehicles.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: In 1988, the annual average daily traffic flows on the A487 between Cardigan and Machynlleth ranged from about 3,000 vehicles per day on stretches between Cardigan and the outskirts of Aberystwyth to up to 11,000 vehicles per day through Aberystwyth itself. The heavy goods vehicle content ranged between about 2 per cent. and 8 per cent.

Annual average daily traffic flows on the A44 between Aberystwyth and Ponterwyd, in 1988 ranged from 2,500 vehicles per day between Ponterwyd and the A4159 junction to almost 8,000 vehicles per day at Llanbadarn with a heavy goods vehicle content of between 7 per cent. and 10 per cent.

Welsh Language Teaching

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average number of hours spent teaching Welsh in schools in Wales in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary sectors; and if he will give a county by county breakdown.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The latest information about the time spent on teaching Welsh is derived from the primary school staffing survey 1987. The information is shown in the following table:

Percentage of class time spent learning Welsh

	Percentage
Clwyd	9
Dyfed	14
Gwent	[1]
Gwynedd	19
Mid Glamorgan	n/a
Powys	9
South Glamorgan	3
West Glamorgan	5
Wales	[2]8

[1] Less than 1.

[2] Includes an estimate for Mid Glamorgan.

No comparable information is currently available for secondary schools. The results of the recent secondary schools staffing survey will be published during 1990.

East Glamorgan Hospital

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether funds have been allocated to the Mid Glamorgan health authority sufficient to ensure an immediate start to the repair programme to the fabric of East Glamorgan general hospital.

Mr. Grist: Mid Glamorgan health authority has received revenue allocation of £149 million and a capital allocation of over £7 million in the current financial year. These allocations represent cash increases by comparison with 1988-89 provision of 7 per cent. and 27 per cent. respectively. It is for the authority to determine how these resources should be deployed.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether funds have been allocated to the Mid Glamorgan health authority sufficient to ensure a speedy start to the construction of a replacement district general hospital for the existing East Glamorgan general hospital.

Mr. Grist: It is for Mid Glamorgan health authority to decide how best to deploy the capital and revenue resources allocated to it. We are, however, currently considering a number of bids under the programme for the valleys for health schemes starting in 1990-91, including a bid from Mid Glamorgan health authority in respect of preliminary works associated with the proposed new district general hospital. We shall announce decisions on the programme early in the new year.

Water Pollution

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many reservoirs and lakes in Wales have been affected by poisonous algal blooms during 1989; how much dredging has taken place to get rid of such blooms; and what action he will take to ensure that algal blooms are effectively eliminated in future.

Mr. Grist: Monitoring carried out during 1989 revealed no significant algal blooms in Welsh reservoirs and therefore no dredging has been carried out. It is for the National Rivers Authority, in conjunction with Dwr Cymru, to consider what future action may be necessary in areas potentially affected by algal blooms.

Deprivation Survey

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he intends publishing his Department's survey of 100 towns facing deprivation in Wales; and if he will include information on how the survey was conducted and the action he is taking in reaction to the survey's findings.

Mr. Peter Walker: I assume the hon. Gentleman is referring to some work undertaken by my Department to devise a mechanism for the distribution of one of the new allowances payable to general medical practitioners under the new GP contract to take effect on 1 April 1990. The work was undertaken for this specific purpose and is not considered to have any wider application. Discussions continue with representatives of GPs.

Wrexham Maelor Hospital

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has yet received a new submission from the Clwyd health authority for the funding of renal services at Wrexham Maelor hospital.

Mr. Grist: We understand that the health authority is presently preparing its submission in respect of a regional subsidiary renal unit in the context of its response to consultation on the report of the evaluation of renal services in Wales.

Cancer

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what investigations he will institute to consider the rates for cancer in North Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what measures he will take to investigate *(a)* the rate of stomach cancer in North Wales, *(b)* breast cancer rates in Merioneth, Aberconway, Rhondda and Colwyn, *(c)* rates of cancer of the cervix in Clwyd and Anglesey and *(d)* incidences of leukaemia in women in Colwyn, Merioneth and Wales generally; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: It has been known for some time that there was a slight elevation of cancer incidence rates for north Wales in comparison with the average for Wales as a whole. In order to establish if any particular factor could be held responsible it was announced in 1987 that Professor Hubert Campbell, Emeritus Professor of Medical Statistics of the University of Wales, College of Medicine had been appointed to consider the available data relating to the incidence of cancers in north Wales since 1974.

Professor Campbell's report was published in July 1988. In introducing his findings Professor Campbell emphasised there was nothing new in the elevation of cancer incidence rates in north Wales; records demonstrate this situation has existed for at least 70 years and it would not be possible to identify any aetiological agent as being responsible. It was however suggested that some further investigation might be undertaken into the question of whether some genetic factor might play a contributory role in the excess of leukemia registration identified in the report and also into the possible reasons for an excess in thyroid cancer registration in women over the age of 25 between 1974 amd 1978.

The feasibility and potential value of such further investigation is being considered in conjunction with the small areas health statistics unit.

The Wales Cancer Registry records incidence rates for all types of cancer and detailed summaries are published periodically. The third report "Cancer Registration Wales 1974-84" was published in May 1988.

It must be appreciated in considering such reports that at district level or below the number of annual registrations for certain types of malignancy can be very small. As such, considerable care must be exercised in the interpretation of the derived incidence rates.

Domestic Rates Bills

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many households in the area of the Merthyr borough council are paying an annual rates bill of less than £350;

(2) how many households in the communities of Rhymney, Brithdir, Tydfil and New Tredegar are at present paying an annual rates bill of less than £350.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information requested is not available centrally.

Sheltered Accommodation

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of sheltered schemes for the elderly, units in those sheltered schemes and other purpose-built dwellings for the elderly operated by *(a)* local authorities and *(b)* housing associations.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 30 November 1989]:* In April 1989 there were 16,219 Local Authority sheltered dwellings and 23,111 other local authority dwellings designed for the elderly. Housing association data held centrally do not distinguish between sheltered and other purpose-built dwellings, and are not yet available for April 1989. However, in April 1988 there were 4,313 Housing Association dwellings designed for the elderly.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Trespass

93. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Attorney-General what plans the Government have to review the application of the law of trespass.

The Attorney-General: The Government have no plans to review the application of the law of trespass.

Birmingham Pub Bombings

97. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Attorney-General when he last discussed the Birmingham pub bombings case with the Director of Public Prosecutions.

The Attorney-General: It was mentioned briefly last Thursday when considering today's questions with him.

Bradford Law Centre

98. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will visit Bradford law centre.

The Attorney-General: I do not have any plans to visit Bradford law centre.

Nazi War Criminals

99. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Attorney-General how many representations he has received in the last year urging him to introduce legislation to try Nazi war criminals from eastern Europe in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Any representations addressed to me on this topic would have been transferred immediately to my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, and I have no records of their number.

Confessions

100. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will arrange for statistics to be placed in the Library showing the number of convictions in England and Wales founded upon uncorroborated confessions obtained by the police for each of the years 1980 to date.

The Attorney-General: No. The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Such evidence is considered by the Crown prosecution service in the course of its review of each such case in accordance with the code for Crown prosecutors.

Trials

101. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Attorney-General how many cases are awaiting trial in the east midlands; and what is the average length of waiting time in each category for which figures are available.

The Attorney-General: As at end October, there were 1,031 committals for trial awaiting disposal in the group of Crown court centres comprising Derby, Grimsby, Leicester, Lincoln and Nottingham.

The average waiting times for the group for the period April to October 1989 are 8·4 weeks for those defendants in custody and 9·7 weeks for those on bail.

Crown Prosecution Service

102. **Mr. Archer:** To ask the Attorney-General whether he is satisfied with the working of the Crown prosecution service; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Yes. A record of the substantial achievements and progress of the Crown prosecution service for the year ending in July, upon which the service deserves congratulations is contained in the Director of Public Prosecutions' annual report, a copy of which is in the Library. I commend it to hon. Members. I welcome this opportunity to record my full confidence in the Crown prosecution service and my support for its continuing progress.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Attorney-General when he last met the Director of Public Prosecutions to discuss the operation of the Crown prosecution service.

The Attorney-General: On 30 November 1989.

Planning Covenants

103. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Attorney-General whether he will ask the Law Reform Committee to consider the effectiveness of planning covenants; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: There are no plans to refer any aspect of planning law to the Law Reform Committee.

Legal Profession

104. **Mr. Stanbrook:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will propose the ending of the monopoly whereby only members of the legal profession are allowed to represent defendants before courts.

The Attorney-General: The Government's proposals for widening choice in the provision of advocacy services were set out in the White Paper published on 19 July 1989.

Serious Fraud Office

105. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Attorney-General when he last met the director of the serious fraud office.

The Attorney-General: I frequently meet the director of the serious fraud office to discuss matters of departmental interest.

Haemophiliacs

106. **Mr. Aitken:** To ask the Attorney-General what representations he has received on the current litigation brought by haemophilia patients against health authorities and other Government agencies.

The Attorney-General: Apart from those made by the hon. Member, no representations have been made to me on the current litigation.

Duty Solicitors

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Attorney-General how many duty solicitors' schemes have been established in England and Wales for each year over the last 10 years; how many have ceased to exist; how many are still in operation; and if he will list the areas concerned.

The Attorney-General: The information is not available in the form requested.

Legal aid legislation has provided for duty solicitors at magistrates' courts since 1983 and at police stations since 1986. Cover has been established at 488 magistrates' courts and 1,780 police stations. Where cover ceases the Legal Aid Board seeks to restore it as soon as possible. Duty solicitor cover has ceased, but has not yet been restored, at four police stations: Hatfield, St. Albans, Welwyn Garden City and Sevenoaks.

Consolidation Measure

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Attorney-General whether he will give consideration to introducing a consolidation measure to incorporate the Landlord and Tenant Act 1927, the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954, part 2, and the Law of Property Act 1969.

Mr. Chope: I have been asked to reply.

No, given that these Acts are generally working well as they stand.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Gaelic Football (Loughry College)

Rev. William McCrea: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether students at Loughry college, who may be part-time members of the security forces, will be permitted to play Gaelic games under the auspices of the Gaelic Club at Loughry; and whether the Irish Republic's tricolour will be permitted to be flown at Gaelic games being played at Loughry.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Loughry college strongly encourages all students to organise and participate in those sports or recreational activities in which they are interested. Gaelic football is a popular choice among students.

The college expects each club or society to be student-led and to manage its own affairs. This may include affiliation with the governing body for a particular sport such as the Gaelic Athletic Association or the Irish Rugby Football Association (Ulster Branch).

I congratulate the college club on its success in the all-Ireland agricultural colleges competitions.

We are unaware of any student being refused permission to play Gaelic games because he or she is a part-time member of the security forces.

The flag which may be flown at Loughry college is the Union flag. It is flown from the official flag pole on appointed days.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Medical Board Hearings

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the reasons for the delay in the hearing by the medical board of the claim by Mrs. D. Lowe; and when he now expects the hearing to take place.

Mr. Scott: The medical board, which took place on 19 October, was arranged as soon as it was practicable following receipt of all the evidence which the board required.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by how much housing benefit spending has been reduced in the past year; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Housing benefit expenditure has not been reduced over the past year; in fact, estimated spending in 1989-90 (including community charge rebates) is 17 per cent. higher than in 1988-89.

Food Vouchers

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the number and value of food vouchers issued by the Newcastle (Saxon house) and Newcastle (Bentinck road) offices of his Department during the period April to October.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The number of food vouchers issued by the Newcastle (Saxon house) office between 1 April and 31 October 1989 is four at a value of £100·30. The Newcastle (Bentinck road) office issued no vouchers in that period.

Young Offenders

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment his Department has made of the special needs of young offenders on probation and at risk of custody, particularly with reference to any delay in processing a claim.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Government continue to monitor the effects of the recent changes in social security provision. As part of this monitoring the Department of Social Security maintains close liaison with the Home Office's probation services. We are also looking carefully at the findings of the recent research carried out for the Association of Chief Officers of Probation by the University of Lancaster, which indicates that offenders and their families have problems in getting the social security benefits to which they are entitled.

Income support claims are dealt with on average within five days, with urgent claims being processed well within that period. Moreover, as a result of our monitoring I announced on 27 November a number of procedural improvements designed to ensure that claims from young people, including those from young offenders, are dealt with as effectively and sympathetically as possible. These changes demonstrate the Government's willingness to act when areas of genuine difficulty are identified.

Disability

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has for consultation with disabled people and their families following the publication of the changes in social security benefits for disabled people.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) ahd the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) on 23 October at columns *341-42*.

DEFENCE

Married Quarters

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total amount of money gained from the sale of surplus married quarters since 1981.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The amount of money gained from the sale of surplus married quarters before 1 April 1987 is not identifiable without disproportionate effort. Receipts since then are as follows:

Financial year	*Receipts* *£ million*
[1]1989-90	15·721
1988-89	55·627
1987-88	27·010

[1] To 30 September 1989.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the maintenance backlog at 1 April for each year since 1979 for *(a)* unavoidable and essential repairs, and *(b)* urgent repairs for married quarters.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The backlog of unavoidable repairs at 1 April 1989 was estimated at £323 million, although it cannot be guaranteed that this is precisely accurate in every respect, given that assessments of this kind are a matter of professional judgment. Figures for previous years were either not collated at all or, where they were, not in such a way as to permit comparison between one year and another, as the definition and interpretation of what constitutes backlog has been progressively revised from year to year. At no time has the backlog of maintenance of married quarters been separately identified. Consequently the information requested could not be obtained at all or without incurring disproportionate cost.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any surplus married quarters have been sold or leased to housing associations since 1981.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Yes. There have been several occasions since 1981 when surplus married quarters have been sold to housing associations. However, records are not kept in a way which makes specific purchasers readily identifiable, and to give details of all such transactions would entail disproportionate effort. Properties which were temporarily surplus to MOD requirements have been leased to a housing association in recent years but there are no such leases at present.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any surplus married quarters have been sold or leased to local authorities since 1981.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Yes. There have been several occasions since 1981 when surplus married quarters have been sold to local authorities. However, records are not kept in a way which makes specific purchasers readily identifiable and to give details of all such transactions would entail disproportionate effort. Properties which are temporarily surplus to MOD requirements may be offered for leasing to local authorities when circumstances permit. There are currently over 500 such properties leased to local authorities throughout the United Kingdom.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what arms and equipment supplied to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation are manufactured in Yugoslavia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: I am not able to supply this information on behalf of our NATO partners. The amount of such equipment procured by the United Kingdom is extremely small.

Harrier Public House

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence at what heights Harrier aircraft overflew the Harrier public house at Bowerhill, Wiltshire and surrounding area on 9 November.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Harrier aircraft flew at a height of between 250 and 500 ft above ground level.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many hours' flight time was used by the Royal Air Force Harrier aircraft to travel between their base and the Harrier public house on 9 November.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Harrier aircraft flew a routine training mission of 50 minutes' duration. The overflight of the public house required no additional flying time.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what was the total cost of the overflight of the Harrier public house at Bowerhill, Melksham, Wiltshire on Thursday 9 November;

(2) whether any of the costs to the Royal Air Force of the overflight of the Harrier public house by Royal Air Force Harrier aircraft on 9 November were reimbursed by the brewery or the licensee.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The overflight of the Harrier public house was undertaken as part of a routine training sortie. It is not our practice to give information on the costs of individual sorties. However, no additional costs were incurred as a result of the overflight, and there was therefore no requirement for reimbursement.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether those Royal Air Force personnel present at the Harrier public house, Bowerhill, Wiltshire on 9 November were on official duty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Royal Air Force personnel attended the Harrier public house on 9 November in a private capacity and were off duty at the time.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence who instigated the overflight of the Harrier public house by Royal Air Force Harrier aircraft on 9 November; and whether ministerial approval was given before the flypast.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The overflight took place in response to a request from the publican of the Harrier public house at Bowerhill, Melksham. It was approved by a senior RAF commander as part of a routine training sortie, at no extra cost to public funds.

Sea Harriers

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence at what heights Sea Harrier aircraft overflew the Thames and surrounding area on 11 November.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The flypast over the Thames was at approximately 1,000ft.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many hours' flight time were used by the Sea Harrier aircraft to travel between their base and the Thames on 11 November.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The aircraft took off from Yeovilton at 13.24 and landed there again at 14.21.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total cost of the overflight of the Thames by Royal Navy Sea Harrier aircraft on 11 November.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not our practice to give information on the costs of individual flights.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any of the costs to the Royal Navy of the overflight of the Thames by Sea Harrier aircraft on 11 November were reimbursed by the organisers of the Lord Mayor's show.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No. The flight was regarded as having training value.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence who instigated the overflight of the Thames by Royal Navy Sea Harrier aircraft on 11 November; and whether ministerial approval was given before the flypast.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The flypast was at the request of the pageantmaster of the Lord Mayor's show, and was approved at the appropriate level within the Ministry of Defence.

Private Security Firms

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many (i) Ministry of Defence sites not used by United States forces and (ii) Ministry of Defence sites used by United States forces are currently being guarded by private security firms.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Private security firms are currently used at 45 Ministry of Defence establishments, including one which is made available to United States forces.

Aldermaston

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many new posts will be required for the Ministry of Defence police under the proposed scheme to upgrade the perimeter fence at the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment Aldermaston; and what is the cost, as estimated by his Department, of the provision of these posts;

(2) if he has recently reviewed security at the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment Aldermaston;

(3) if he will make a statement regarding the proposed upgrading of the perimeter fence at the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment Aldermaston, including the expected total cost of the scheme;

(4) what is the cost, as estimated by his Department, of building a new 7·5 km weld mesh fence around the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment Aldermaston;

(5) what is the cost, as estimated by his Department, of laying a patrol track between the present outer and proposed inner fences under the proposed scheme to upgrade the perimeter fence at the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment Aldermaston; and what is the proposed surface material for this track;

(6) what is the cost, as estimated by his Department, of realigning the existing perimeter fence at the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment Aldermaston to accommodate proposed improvements;

(7) what is the cost, as estimated by his Department, of the proposed new perimeter lighting system at the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment Aldermaston;

(8) what is the cost, as estimated by his Department, of the proposed remote controlled closed circuit television system and its associated control room to be installed at the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment Aldermaston;

(9) what is the cost, as estimated by his Department, of the proposed intruder detection system to be mounted on the inner fence at the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment Aldermaston;

Mr. Neubert: Security at AWE is subject to regular review and it is not our policy to give details of operational security measures.

We have decided to upgrade the perimeter fence system at Aldermaston and are seeking proposals from industry for the following elements:

1. Realignment of the existing chain link fence where necessary.
2. A new inner fence around the 7·5km perimeter of weldmesh construction.
3. An intruder detection system mounted on the inner fence.
4. A new perimeter lighting system.
5. A CCTV surveillance system with remote control and monitoring room.
6. All associated services.
7. Steam main alterations and diversions.
8. Roadwork extensions and alterations.
9. A patrol track between the inner and outer fences.
10. Entrance gate modifications.
11. Modification of existing and provision of new MDP posts.
12. Undergrounding of SEB overhead 33KV line and diversion of 11KV underground cable.

It is not appropriate to disclose our cost estimates while tenders are being sought and any subsequently agreed price will, of course, be commercially confidential.

Public Houses

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many openings of public houses, or similar establishments, Royal Air Force aircraft or aircrew have attended in an official capacity in the last 10 years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We have no records of official RAF participation in, or attendance at, such events.

Perimeter Fences

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many other bases or facilities owned, operated or under the contol of his Department have had new perimeter fences of weld mesh construction provided for them in the last 10 years; and what was the total cost of construction for each of these weld mesh fences.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

S10 Respirators

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many S10 respirator facepieces have been purchased by his Department in the three years to the end of the financial year 1989-90; how many are to be purchased over the next three financial years; and what is his Department's total requirement of these items.

Mr. Alan Clark: I regret that, in the interests of national security, the Department's total requirement for this item cannot be revealed. I can confirm that the current requirement is under contract and the bulk of it should be delivered by the end of the financial year 1989-90. Future requirements remain subject to review.

Air Electronics Operators

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the proposed wage reductions for Royal Air Force air electronics operators; whether he will reconsider this decision; and if he will ensure that no serving operator has any reduction in his pay.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: From 1 October 1989 air electronics operators in the ranks of master aircrew and flight sergeant have been placed in a lower pay band in accordance with the job evaluation results for their trade. This decision was taken after three full evaluations, and is currently the subject of internal appeal procedures. Existing regulations ensure that none of the personnel affected will suffer any reduction in pay.

Project Brinton

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement regarding Project Brinton.

Mr. Alan Clark: Project Brinton provides secure fixed communications in Northern Ireland. For security reasons I am unable to give details.

Low Flying

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement regarding the awarding of compensation to Mr. Paul Adorian of Kirklinton for the death of a llama caused by low-flying fast jet aircraft.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Mr. Adorian submitted a claim for compensation to the Ministry of Defence for the death of one of his llamas as a result of military low-flying aircraft activity. Following a thorough investigation of the circumstances, this claim was accepted and an appropriate award of compensation for the loss was made.

Triaminotrinitrobenzene

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement regarding the procurement of triaminotrinitrobenzene by the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment Aldermaston; and for what purpose this material is procured.

Mr. Alan Clark: A notice has been placed in the MOD contracts bulletin of a tender for the procurement of quantities of triaminotrinitrobenzene. For security reasons I am not prepared to identify the applications for which this material is procured.

War Widows

Mr. Snape: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will review the present level of pension paid to war widows of service men who died before 31 March 1973 with a view to bringing them into line with pensions paid to war widows of service men who died on or after 31 March 1973.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Under the rules of the armed forces pension scheme the level of pensions paid to the widows of service men depends upon the terms and conditions in force at the date on which their husbands completed their service, or died in service. Changes in the rules, which became operative on 31 March 1973, applied only to personnel giving service on or after that date. In accordance with normal principles and practice for occupational pension schemes, the revised rules did not apply retrospectively, and there are no plans to change that position.

EH 101 Helicopter

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will describe any current problems involved in developing the utility EH 101 helicopter project; what is the latest estimate of any cost over-runs; and if he will make a statement on the progress of this programme item.

Mr. Alan Clark: The RAF utility EH 101 helicopter programme is currently in the project definition phase, the first stage of which will be completed by April 1990. This involves a detailed examination of the RAF's foreseen requirement against a range of options, and establishing the costs and risks associated with each. The results of this work will provide the basis for decisions on the next stage of the programme.

NATO

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has had any discussions with other members of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation regarding possible British troop reductions in the Federal Republic of Germany, following an agreement on the reduction of conventional forces in Europe.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has frequent discussions with his NATO counterparts on a wide range of arms control issues. The NATO proposals on manpower at the negotiations on conventional forces in Europe are limited to forces stationed by the United States and the Soviet Union in Europe.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he has had any discussions with representatives of the Netherlands Government regarding the creation of a multinational North Atlantic Treaty Organisation maritime patrol airforce in the north Atlantic; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is his policy towards the creation of a multinational North Atlantic Treaty Organisation maritime patrol airforce in the north Atlantic: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No. I am not aware of any proposals to create such a force.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards co-operation with other North Atlantic Treaty Organisation countries regarding the use of flight simulators; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is our policy to co-operate with other NATO countries in making most cost-effective use of available flight simulators. For example, the RAF is currently hiring time on equipment owned by the United States and Spanish air forces, which simulates the Harrier GR5, while German forces are trained on simulators belonging to the Royal Navy.

Submarines

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what instructions are given to submarine commanders regarding their conduct when their submarines become entangled in fishing nets.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The guidance given to a submarine commander in the event of his vessel becoming entangled with the nets of a trawler is designed to ensure that the safety of human life is given paramount consideration.

The instructions require:

(a) the submarine to come to periscope depth to check visually for any vessels in distress and establish communications where circumstances permit:

(b) the naval authorities to be immediately informed of the incident and, if appropriate, the coastguard contacted;

(c) that, if fishing nets are still attached to the submarine, every effort is to be made to recover them—if this is not possible a note of the position in which the gear was lost is to be taken; and

(d) the submarine not to leave the area until it has been established beyond all reasonable doubt that no danger to human life exists as a result of the incident.

Sram-T Missiles

46. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards the possible deployment of Sram-T missiles on United States F1-11E aircraft based in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As part of NATO's force restructuring and modernisation measures, designed to sustain its strategy of flexible response in the post-INF era, a number of options are under consideration. However, no decisions have yet been taken.

Butt of Lewis Incident

47. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he plans to publish the resuls of the inquiry into the incident involving a Royal Navy submarine and the fishing vessel Scotia on 14 November off the Butt of Lewis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A preliminary on-board investigation has already been conducted into the incident, which took place on the 13 November. The conclusions of this will not be fully known until the submarine returns to port. A decision will then be made whether there are sufficient grounds for convening a full board of inquiry. For operational reasons it is not our practice to release details of the findings of inquiries of this nature.

Fijian Training

97. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Fijian military personnel are being given training by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: At present, three Fijian military officers are attending military training courses in the United Kingdom. In addition, a Royal Navy officer is serving on loan to the Fiji hydrographic unit.

Battle of Britain Stamps

158. **Mr. Churchill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will meet the chairman of the Post Office to discuss the issue of commemorative stamps to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Battle of Britain.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We are discussing this matter with the Post Office.

Death Compensation

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what considerations underlie the decision on the amount of compensation payable *(a)* in respect of the death of a llama, attributable to a low flying incident, and *(b)* to the family of a single soldier murdered by the IRA; and if he will take immediate steps to introduce a scheme to provide minimum compensation equivalent to at least one year's salary in the case of services personnel killed in the course of their duty;

(2) what has been the average compensation paid by Her Majesty's Government to the families of single service personnel murdered in the course of their duty by the Irish Republican Army in each of the past five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The amount of compensation paid by my Department recently in respect of the death of a llama was based on substantial evidence provided by the claimant and verified by professional advisers in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. I cannot answer for claims arising from the death of single soldiers killed by the IRA in the United Kingdom, since these are considered under the criminal injury compensation schemes for Great Britain and Northern Ireland. My Department operates a corresponding scheme for service men overseas, although we have not received any claims arising from the death of single service personnel as a result of IRA attacks under this scheme. The amount of criminal injuries compensation payable to the family of a single soldier murdered by the IRA is assessed in the same way as claims for damages under common law and reflect the degree of financial dependency. I see no requirement for any additional scheme along the lines proposed.

HEALTH

Flexible Working

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice and encouragement he has given to the National Health Service as an employer to provide more flexible working arrangements and child care facilities for National Health Service staff with children; and if any new advice is to be issued with regard to the reduced number of young people available for midwifery and nursing in the 1990s.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We fully recognise that staff with domestic responsibilities have a major contribution to make to the staffing of the National Health Service, especially in view of forecast reductions in the numbers of suitably qualified school leavers available for employment in the 1990s. This year we have commended to health authorities the NHS training authority's resource package on implementing an equal opportunities strategy and the report of the national steering group on equal opportunities for women in the NHS which include advice on the organisation of work-break schemes, flexible working arrangements and child care facilities. The NHS training authority is now looking at the training implications of "return and retain" schemes for staff wishing to take career breaks.

In March this year, the Department wrote to all health authorities commending to them a joint collaborative scheme agreed with the Midland bank for the sharing of workplace nursing facilities between NHS and bank staff. The first nursery under the joint scheme is due to open early in the new year at the royal Berkshire hospital. I understand that similar plans at the royal Infirmary in Derby are well advanced, while a number of others in different parts of the country are under discussion. Some health authorities are entering into sharing arrangements with other local employers.

While decisions about the implementation of work-break schemes, including flexible working and the provision of child care facilities must remain a matter for the individual employing authorities, we will continue to emphasise that there must be improvements in working practices and recruitment and retention policies so that authorities may be in a sound position to attract and retain the services of all staff who wish to combine employment in the NHS with domestic responsibilities.

North Western Regional Health Authority

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* successful and *(b)* unsuccessful claims for compensation have been made against the North Western regional health authority during each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I understand from North Western regional health authority that the number of claims for alleged medical negligence made against health authorities in that region were as follows:

Year ended	*Claims*
March 1987	822
March 1988	774
March 1989	758

Information on successful or unsuccessful claims is not readily available, and could only be produced at disproportionate cost.

Infertility

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many men and women have received medical help for infertility in the last year for which figures are available;

(2) what is the average time between requesting help with fertility problems and receiving treatment in the National Health Service;

(3) which district health authorities provide *(a)* ovarian scanning, *(b)* radio-immune assay service, *(c)* artificial insemination by donor or husband, *(d)* in vitro fertilisation and *(e)* counselling for infertile people; and whether any charge for the services.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not held centrally. The provision of infertility services is a matter for individual health authorities to decide in the light of local needs and priorities.

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research the Government are currently funding into the causes of human infertility; and when the results of this research are expected to be available.

Mr. Jackson: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) on 30 October at columns *11-13*.

Results arising from this extensive and continuing programme of research are published as they become available, in appropriate medical and scientific journals.

IUD

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on what proportion of pelvic inflammatory disease has been associated with the intra-uterine contraceptive device in the last five years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not held centrally.

Haemophiliacs (AIDS)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects the recent award to haemophiliacs to be paid to individuals.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give an assurance that the ex-gratia payments of £20,000 to people with haemophilia who have been infected with the AIDS virus in the course of National Health Service treatment will be made to them before Christmas.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We are urgently considering with the Macfarlane Trust the best method of implementing these payments and we intend that they should be made as soon as possible.

Haemophiliacs (HIV)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many representations he has received subsequent to the recent statement on additional aid to haemophiliac sufferers who have contacted the HIV virus arising from blood transfusions; of these how many have pressed for a more substantial settlement for such sufferers; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 30 November 1989]:* We have received three representations to date seeking additional financial help. As my right hon. and Learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health announced on 23 November, our objectives are to give £20,000 lump sum payments to those affected, on an ex-gratia basis, and to enable the Macfarlane Trust to continue on a more generous scale their help to families in particular need. However, compensation is a matter for the courts.

Health Service Reform

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many meetings he has had with representatives of the medical profession to discuss his plans for reforming the NHS.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Since the White Paper "Working for Patients" was published in January this year my colleagues, senior officials and I have met representative bodies, other groups and leaders of the medical profession on some 100 separate occasions. These have included for instance, meetings with the presidents of the Royal Colleges, the Joint Consultants Committee, the British Medical Association, the General Medical Council, the General Medical Services Committee and the Hospital Consultants and Specialists Association.

We have been able to listen carefully to the views of the profession and have taken their points into account in developing the Government's proposals. I and my colleagues are always willing to enter into further constructive dialogue with the profession about how best to implement our plans.

Schools Health Service

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what his policy is on preventive health education measures in terms of the schools health visitor service.

Mr. Freeman: Health education will be a cross-curricula theme in the national curriculum and the responsibility for its teaching in any school lies ultimately with the head teacher and governors. School nurses however can make a very useful contribution to the development of teaching programmes and also, in the course of their regular duties, they use their contacts with individual pupils to promote health education and encourage healthy life styles.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the future of the schools health service once local management of schools is in place as *(a)* medical support to staff and pupils and *(b)* health education support to staff.

Mr. Freeman: Legislation has been amended so that district health authorities will have a responsibility to continue to provide a school health service for pupils at both schools maintained by local education authorities and at grant maintained schools. The range and organisation of services will still be determined by individual health authorities in consultation with local education authorities.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the role of the schools health visitor service in all age schools.

Mr. Freeman: School health services make a very useful contribution to preventive medicine through child health surveillance and health promotion among school children. We have recently carried out a brief fact finding survey of a sample of school health services and will be considering if further guidance on the management of the service is appropriate.

Homeless People

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is his estimate of the numbers and proportion of homeless people currently not registered with any general practitioner;

(2) what steps he is taking to ensure that homeless people are accepted on to general practitioners' lists under the terms of the new general practitioner's contract.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is not possible to make reliable estimates of the numbers involved. Everyone entitled to NHS treatment has the right to be registered with a doctor in their locality. In cases where people, such as the homeless, are unable to find a doctor to accept them, the local family practitioner committee has power to assign them to a particular doctor's list. In addition two pilot projects have been undertaken in London to improve access by homeless people to primary health care services. We are establishing permanent arrangements in these areas and considering ways to extend them to other inner city FPCs.

Hospital Services (Tendering)

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will give details of all contracts awarded in the first and second round of National Health Service competitive tendering by each district health authority, by hospital, for *(a)* cleaning, *(b)* catering, *(c)* laundry, *(d)* portering, *(e)* other ancillary services and *(f)* other National Health Service services;

(2) if he will give the latest figures as a percentage of services put out to tender by each district health authority for *(a)* cleaning, *(b)* catering, *(c)* laundry, *(d)* portering, *(e)* other ancillary services and *(f)* other National Health Service services; and if he will give estimated annual savings.

Mr. Freeman: Information collected centrally in the form requested relates to the national initiative on domestic, catering and laundry services and for the first round only. A table giving information on tender exercises in this round in the period October 1988 to 30 September 1989 has been placed in the Library to update earlier published information. We do not propose to collect similar information centrally for these services in the next round of tendering, or for other services, ancillary or otherwise on the basis that the choice of new services to be tendered is a matter for local determination based on value for money and local circumstances. Many health authorities, as a matter of routine, and of their own accord, are looking to combine ancillary services in various packages before tendering and also extending the process to other services. We encourage such developments and to maximise flexibility will only collect aggregate information on progress as part of the cost improvement programme.

Savings to date achieved by health authorities in England for the three services covered by the national initiative are £110 million. For 1989-90 authorities plan new additional cost improvement savings through competitive tendering for services, of almost £10 million.

Physiotherapy

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received on the impact that the Health Service Bill is likely to have on the provision of physiotherapy services in hospitals and in the community; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have received a number of written representations about the impact of physiotherapy services of the proposals in "Working for Patients" now included in the National Health Service and Community Care Bill. The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy also made representations at a meeting to my predecessor on 25 September. The proposals in the Bill are intended to improve the provision of physiotherapy services in hospitals and in the community.

Embryo Research

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representation he has had from Sir George Porter PRS on behalf of the scientific community about *(a)* the effect on the pursuit of knowledge of any ban on pre-14 day embryo research, *(b)* the effect on British industry of any ban on pre-14 day embryo research and *(c)* the effect on those suffering from degenerative disease and infertility of any restriction on pre-14 day embryo research.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department has received representations from Sir George Porter PRS on the possible impact of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill on the scientific community. He pointed out the benefits which the Royal Society anticipates from research on embryos up to 14 days old for those suffering from genetic disorders and infertility, and the pursuit of knowledge generally. I understand he is also concerned about the effect which any ban on embryo research might have on British industry through a possible emigration of United Kingdom researchers.

Project 2000

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what mechanism he proposes to employ for determining the future levels of bursaries to students pursuing Project 2000 courses of nursing education.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In determining bursary levels for Project 2000 students, the Government's objective was to reflect the need to recruit sufficient candidates to nurse training, having regard to the current earning power of existing nurse students. Bursary levels will be kept under review in the light of that objective.

Leicestershire Health Authority

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many in-patients were treated in Leicestershire health authority area in *(a)* 1978 and *(b)* 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In the calendar year 1978, there were 73,521 in-patient cases in Leicestershire health authority. In the financial year 1988-89 the figure was 102,964.

Christie Hospital, Manchester

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to ensure access for patients from Denton and Reddish to Christie hospital, Manchester, if it goes ahead with plans to opt out.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: NHS trusts will not opt out, but will remain firmly part of the NHS. It will be for district health authorities to determine, in the light of local circumstances, what services are required to meet the health care needs of their resident population and to secure provision of those services through contracts. As part of this process, health authorities will identify those services which must be provided locally. Where a unit which applies for NHS trust status is the only sensible option for providing such services, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will approve arrangements for their continued provision on establishment of the NHS trust. Any later changes will be subject to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State's further approval if they cannot be agreed locally.

Disability

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the National Health Service and Community Care Bill and services for disabled patients.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The purpose of the National Health Service and Community Care Bill is to make the changes in the law needed to implement the proposals set out in our White Papers "Working for Patients' (Cmnd 555) and "Caring for People" (Cmnd 849). Under the proposals for NHS services, district health authorities will be responsible for seeing that the needs of all their resident population, including people with disabilities, are met and that patients have access to a comprehensive range of high quality value for money services. The new arrangements for community care will improve opportunities for independent living for people with disabilities by improving coordination between agencies providing care, providing for multi-disciplinary assessment of need, whether for residential care or support at home, involving the individual more closely in decisions affecting him, and taking more account of the needs of carers.

Pulse Oximeters

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will call for a report on the supply to medical staff at Killingbeck hospital, Leeds, of pulse oximeters;

(2) if he will take immediate steps to ensure that medical staff at Killingbeck hospital, Leeds, are equipped with pulse oximeters.

Mr. Freeman: The supply of medical equipment is a local matter for the management of the health authority concerned. The hon. Member may therefore wish to contact the chairman of Leeds Eastern health authority, Mrs. Solk.

Eye Examinations

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the figures for the number of eye examinations before and after the introduction of charges.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The number of sight tests under the general ophthalmic services over the past five years is given in the table. Information is currently not available as to number of general ophthalmic services sight tests carried out since April 1989.

Sight tests for England and Wales

Financial year	*Total sight tests*
1984-85	10,453,014
1985-86	10,846,497
1986-87	11,241,789
1987-88	12,392,076
1988-89	13,226,297

Natural Medicines

Mr. Rost: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many experts in natural medicine he proposes to appoint to the Medicines Commission and the section 4 committees in his current review of nominations; and if any such appointment will come from the nominations proposed to him by the medicines advisory research committee of the Natural Medicines Society.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 24 November 1989]:* Appointments and re-appointments to the Medicines Commission have been made by United Kingdom health and agriculture Ministers and by United Kingdom health Ministers to the Committees on Safety of Medicines, on Review of Medicines and on Dental and Surgical Materials. Details have been placed in the Library.

A member of the Medicines Commission has a special interest in holistic medicine. His term of office continues until December 1991. We understand the Natural Medicines Society to be interested in herbal and homoeopathic medicine. No practitioners in these fields have been added to the advisory bodies either on the instance of the society or of any other organisation consulted.

We are aware of public expectations of access to such remedies with, of course, adequate assurances as to their safety and quality and as to the basis of any curative claims. Their safety and quality can be determined in the normal way. Criteria for assessing the efficacy of herbal preparations are set out in the published 1985 information sheet which was accepted by the herbal industry. There is therefore no general need for herbalists on the advisory bodies. Homoeopathic products are not currently subject to European Community pharmaceutical directives. A directive is, however, expected to be submitted to the Council of Ministers early in the new year. It would have been inappropriate to have anticipated this directive in decisions about United Kingdom statutory bodies.

However, officials are in touch with the Natural Medicines Group and similar organisations to prepare for the directive.

EMPLOYMENT

European Social Fund

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action he is taking to improve the flow of information from his Department to those local authorities preparing operational programmes for European social fund-supported projects.

Mr. Eggar: My Department has published two guides on the new regulations and procedures for the European social fund. These were distributed to all interested applicants on 11 April 1989 and 21 June 1989 respectively in good time for the submission of operational programmes to the European Commission by its deadline of 31 August. My Department will continue to update applicants through European social fund working group meetings, arranged in accordance with the partnership requirements of the fund regulations, and through bulletins.

Unemployment (Forecasts)

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will now make it his policy to issue forecasts of unemployment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: No. Macro-economic forecasts are the responsibility of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. However, it has not been the practice of this or previous Governments to publish forecasts of unemployment.

Footwear and Textiles

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the numbers of jobs in the *(a)* footwear industry and *(b)* textile industry for each year since 1979; and how many have been lost in each industry so far in 1989.

Mr. Nicholls: The number and change in employees in employment in the footwear and textile industries is shown in the following table:

Employees in the Footwear and Textile Industries
(SIC 80)
Great Britain

(Thousands)

	Footwear SIC Group 451	*Textiles SIC Class 43*
June 1979	68·8	371·4
June 1980	65·3	324·8
June 1981	58·8	273·0
June 1982	53·5	256·2
June 1983	51·4	238·8
June 1984	52·8	233·5
June 1985	51·1	234·5
June 1986	51·9	238·2
June 1987	50·8	229·0
June 1988	49·5	231·0
September 1988	49·3	229·4
December 1988	48·9	225·9
March 1989	47·7	218·6
June 1989	46·6	217·8
September 1989	45·3	218·1
Changes:		
September 1988—September 1989	−4·0 (−8·1%)	−11·3 (−4·9%)
December 1988—September 1989	−3·6 (−7·4%)	−7·7 (−3·4%)

Professional And Executive Register

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the names of the companies which bid for the purchase of the professional and executive register before it was privatised; and if he will give the dates on which the applications to acquire this service were first received, the criteria upon which the decision was made and the date upon which the choice of purchaser was reached.

Mr. Eggar: On the recommendation of our financial advisers, Lloyds Merchant bank, Professional and Executive Recruitment was sold by private tender. This form of sale meant that companies were invited to bid on the understanding that their interest would remain confidential. I am accordingly unable to give the names of the companies which bid for PER.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced the sale of PER for £6,000,000 to Pergamon Professional and Financial Services PLC on 8 September 1988 after considering the bids and presentations of interested parties on 5 September 1988. Legal completion took place on 6 September 1988.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how training and enterprise councils will be monitored for performance and quality.

Mr. Eggar: Training and enterprise councils (TECs) will operate under a contract with my Department. The contract will cover a TEC's business plan which will set out a strategy for ensuring and improving quality. Performance will be monitored against specific targets agreed annually as part of a TEC's business plan.

Wages Council

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the future of the Wages Council.

Mr. Nicholls: The future of the councils remains under consideration.

Excessive Wage Claims

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what criteria are used to determine what is an excessive wage claim.

Mr. Nicholls: Businesses themselves must judge what is or is not "excessive" in the light of all the relevant circumstances. Excessive wage claims are irresponsible and, if conceded, would erode competitiveness and destroy jobs.

VDUs (Radiation)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will launch a survey into the possible emission of low levels of radiation from visual display units and whether pregnant women are affected by working on visual display units.

Mr. Nicholls: Radiation from visual display units (VDUs) is very low and is not considered to be in any way hazardous. Surveys in other countries have not shown any risks to pregnancy attributable to VDUs. The Health and Safety Executive has commissioned an epidemiological study of possible reproductive effects from VDUs in order to obtain additional reliable data based on British VDU operators.

Disability

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what priority is given within the employment service to work with disabled people.

Mr. Eggar: People with disabilities are one of the main priority groups for assistance from the Employment Department. A comprehensive network of services is available to help people with disabilities find and retain jobs through advice, assessment, rehabilitation and training; and in the case of people with severe disabilities, support in the form of sheltered employment.

My Department is currently reviewing the full range of services for people with disabilities, and a consultative document covering the conclusions of the review will be published as soon as possible.

Employment Training

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action his Department takes, if, for whatever reason, an unemployed claimant finishes employment training and continues to be unemployed but fails to inform the unemployment benefit office or sign on and continues to receive their full training allowance.

Mr. Nicholls: Entitlement to training allowance ceases when an individual leaves ET and training managers are expected to inform the UBO accordingly. At the same time they should tell the individual concerned that allowances will cease to be paid and advise them, should they be unemployed, to return to the UBO to claim benefits.

Where, for whatever reason, the situation described in the question does arise, the question would be referred to the training agency and trainees could be asked to make a repayment.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Young Offenders

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consultation his Department has had to ensure that young offenders on probation and at risk of custody have their individual needs assessed without any delay.

Mr. John Patten: In the Green Paper "Punishment, Custody and the Community" and in "Tackling Offending: An Action Plan" the Home Office emphasised the need for individual assessment of offenders at risk of custody. The action plan suggests that social inquiry reports should include comprehensive individualised programmes for young adult offenders. The action plan also asks the probation service to improve co-ordination and co-operation with other agencies, to help provide coherent and effective programmes of supervision under probation orders. Every probation area was asked to draw up a local action plan for putting these ideas into effect. The Home Office is currently consulting the probation service on further guidelines for promoting inter-agency work under the action plan.

Immigration (Carriers' Liability)

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list *(a)* the number of passengers who were the subject of a notice of liability under the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987 and *(b)* the countries at which they had embarked.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: From the introduction of the Act until 31 October 1989, 16,091 notices of liability had been served on carriers. Information on the countries from which the passengers embarked is not readily available.

Tobacco and Alcohol (Sales to Children)

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions have taken place in respect of illegal sales to children of *(a)* tobacco and *(b)* alcohol in each of the past five years for which figures are available; and what steps he proposes to improve enforcement of the law.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The figures are as follows:

	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Prosecutions for sale of tobacco to persons under 16	45	28	17	18	29
Prosecutions for sale of alcohol to persons under 18	314	274	296	333	673

The enforcement of the law is a matter for chief officers of police, who decide what action to take against particular types of crime in the light of other priorities. However, last year several measures were agreed with the police to make the law on the sale of alcohol more effective; this is reflected in the increased number of prosecutions for 1988. The Government are currently considering what additional steps might be taken to improve the enforcement of the law regarding the illegal sale of tobacco to children.

Guildford Pub Bombings

Mr. Dicks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the Surrey police have reopened their inquiries into the Guildford pub bombings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The reopening of the investigation is an operational decision for the chief constable of the Surrey police. I understand that he proposes to review the facts of the case and to give careful consideration to whether any further inquiries can usefully be made. Such action will, however, have to await the conclusion of the criminal investigation being conducted by the Avon and Somerset police and the return of the papers on the original investigation, currently held by that force.

Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many countries he has instituted proceedings against under the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987; and what is the value of these claims.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Any such action under the Act would be civil proceedings against the carrier concerned, but none has yet been instituted.

Prisoners (Visits)

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what entitlement a prisoner has to receive a discretionary visit from persons not on their approved list of visitors.

Mr. Mellor: The approved visitors scheme applies only to category A prisoners. Discretionary visits may be authorised by the governor to enable close relatives to visit such prisoners during the period before the vetting process is completed. Such visits may also be granted for relatives and close friends who live abroad and whose stay in the United Kingdom is short.

Separate arrangements apply to legal advisers visiting in a professional capacity, Members of Parliament and peers, bishops of the diocese, justices of the peace, public officials visiting in the course of their duties, children of the prisoner (or of a visitor) and other persons with specific Home Office approval.

SCOTLAND

Birds

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what investigations he has conducted into the illegal poisoning of birds on Islay; and if he will take steps to draw the attention of estate owners where poisoning has occured to the requirements of the law.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Scottish Office officials have engaged in scientific analysis and field investigations of poisoning incidents and co-operate with the police in their inquiries with a view to possible prosecution if sufficient evidence can be obtained.

It is the policy of the Scottish Office that estate owners and others with an interest in the land should in every case be made aware of incidents which have occurred on their property and of the requirements of the law.

Sporting Rights

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the Government intend to receive the rating of sporting rights in Scotland; whether he intends to reform the rating of shooting rights in Scotland; what representations he has received regarding this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We have received representations from the Scottish Landowners Federation and from individuals about the differences which exist in the rating of sporting rights in Scotland and in England and Wales. It will not be possible to remove all these differences for the 1990 revaluation, which takes effect from April next year, but it is the Government's intention to move towards a common approach to the rating of sporting rights throughout Great Britain thereafter.

Greater Glasgow Health Board

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many members appointed to the Greater Glasgow health board reside in the area of the city covered by the Eastern district local health council; and if he will make it his policy to appoint east end residents to the board.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: None. No one is appointed to a health board as a representative of a particular area or interest and that will continue to be our policy.

Roads

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received concerning the future of the A1 road in response to his Department's consultation paper on routes south of Edinburgh.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am very pleased with the level of interest that has been shown in this study which has resulted in around 200 responses to date. It is, of course, too early to have a detailed analysis of these but I estimate that between half and two thirds of the respondents have commented on our proposals for the A1. Almost all of these support our proposed upgrading of the route although many have suggested that the proposals be extended. I intend to make a statement on the findings of the whole consultation in due course.

Nature Conservancy Council

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many posts will be transferred from the Nature Conservancy Council headquarters in Peterborough to Scotland as a result of merger.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Decisions will be taken after discussions involving the Scottish Development Department, Department of the Environment,, Welsh Office and the NCC. Any relocation of posts will be determined when the NCC is reorganised. This reorganisation will take place in advance of the proposed merger of the new NCC for Scotland with the existing Countryside Commission for Scotland.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if any staff currently employed by either the Nature Conservancy Council in Scotland or the CCS will lose their jobs as a result of merger.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: All staff in both bodies have been given assurances about job security. They will be offered employment on terms and conditions not less favourable than they have at present.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of the Nature Conservancy Council's budget is spent in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: For the current financial year, £6·5 million has been allocated by the council for direct spend in Scotland. The proportion of the council's total budget spent in Scotland is not readily available and I will write to the hon. Member.

Water Supplies

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make available sufficient funds to enable drinking water quality throughout Strathclyde to meet European standards by 1996 at the latest.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The quality of drinking water supply is the responsibility of regional and islands councils. The needs of Strathclyde, and other authorities, will be taken into account in setting capital expenditure allocations for 1990-91 and subsequent years.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will name the water supplies in Scotland which have derogations for aluminium under article 20 of the drinking water directive which will expire in each of the years: 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994 and 1995-96.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The water supplies concerned, which were the subject of delay applications under article 20 of the drinking water directive, are as follows and the delays expire in the years indicated:

1990
- Dumfries and Galloway
  - Killylour
  - New Abbey
  - Winterhope
- Grampian
  - Herricks
  - Rochomie
- Strathclyde
  - Port Charlotte

1991
- Borders
  - Alemoor
  - Wanton Walls
- Dumfries and Galloway
  - Areeming
- Strathclyde
  - Carradale
  - Tighnabruaich

1992
- Central
  - Longhill
  - Sauchie
  - Woodburn
- Highland
  - Wick
- Strathclyde
  - Afton
  - Dhu Loch
  - Inveraray
  - Muasdale
  - Muirdykes
  - Pundeavon
  - Tarbert

1993
- Strathclyde
  - Bradan
  - Clachan
  - Crosbie
  - Furnace
  - Spallander
  - Tobermory
  - Torra
  - Whinhill

1994
- Strathclyde
  - Penwhapple
  - Staneley

1995-96
- Strathclyde
  - Amlaird
  - Ardrishaig
  - Dougliehill
  - Garshake
  - Greenhead
  - Kelly
  - Larkfield
  - Maukinhill
  - Overton
  - Prospecthill
  - Skelmorlie
  - South Moorhouse

Old People's Homes

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by *(a)* region and *(b)* district the number of old people in homes in Scotland (i) in the private sector, (ii) in the voluntary sector and (iii) run by local authorities.

Mr. Lang: Information for 1988, the latest year available, is set out in the following table:

Residents in homes for the elderly by district/region at 31 March 1988

	Local authority homes	*Voluntary homes*	*Private homes*
Berwickshire	51	—	18
Ettrick and Lauderdale	103	29	20
Roxburgh	105	36	42
Tweeddale	74	—	34
Borders region	333	65	114
Clackmannan	40	37	—
Falkirk	200	17	23
Stirling	189	121	52
Central region	429	175	75
Annandale and Eskdale	43	56	80
Nithsdale	99	30	20
Stewartry	92	—	20
Wigtown	87	27	5
Dumfries and Galloway	321	113	125

	Local authority homes	*Voluntary homes*	*Private homes*
Dunfermline	235	—	102
Kirkcaldy	300	60	91
North East Fife	92	129	28
Fife region	627	189	221
Aberdeen city	400	400	49
Banff and Buchan	170	—	77
Gordon	97	71	—
Kincardine and Deeside	80	77	67
Moray	180	69	54
Grampian region	927	617	247
Badenoch and Strathspey	24	—	13
Caithness	85	25	—
Inverness	83	26	47
Lochaber	58	—	24
Nairn	33	33	18
Ross and Cromarty	117	34	72
Skye and Lochalsh	—	36	4
Sutherland	33	19	—
Highland region	433	173	178
East Lothian	202	97	42
Edinburgh	630	589	214
Midlothian	156	80	30
West Lothian	202	—	—
Lothian region	1,190	766	286
Argyll and Bute	175	106	194
Dumbarton	169	55	105
Glasgow	1,486	494	134
Clydebank	103	—	—
Bearsden and Milngavie	—	40	—
Strathkelvin	78	27	—
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	59	—	—
Monklands	182	—	40
Motherwell	192	—	44
Hamilton	243	39	—
East Kilbride	68	5	—
Eastwood	42	100	—
Clydesdale	58	—	—
Renfrew	348	83	8
Inverclyde	79	148	53
Cunninghame	128	91	139
Kilmarnock and Louden	155	91	42
Kyle and Carrick	164	55	74
Cumnock and Doon Valley	26	—	—
Strathclyde region	3,755	1,334	833
Angus	247	44	213
Dundee city	510	234	154
Perth and Kinross	229	316	258
Tayside region	986	594	625
Orkney Islands	69	—	17
Shetland Islands	68	16	—
Western Isles	186	—	10
Islands councils	323	16	27
SCOTLAND	9,324	2,731	4,042

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by *(a)* region and *(b)* district the number of old people's homes in private ownership in Scotland in (i) 1980, (ii) 1985, (iii) 1987 and (iv) 1989.

Mr. Lang: Information in the form requested is not held for 1980 and no information after 1988 is available yet. Figures for that year and for 1985 and 1987 are given in the following table:

Number of Private Homes for the Elderly by District/Region

	1985	*1987*	*1988*
Berwickshire	—	—	1
Ettrick and Lauderdale	1	1	2
Roxburgh	—	1	3
Tweeddale	1	1	1
Borders Region	2	3	7
Clackmannan	—	—	—
Falkirk	2	2	2
Stirling	3	3	4
Central Region	5	5	6
Annandale and Eskdale	1	4	6
Nithsdale	1	—	2
Stewartry	1	1	2
Wigtown	—	1	1
Dumfries and Galloway	3	6	11
Dunfermline	3	4	6
Kirkcaldy	2	6	6
North East Fife	3	4	4
Fife Region	8	14	16
Aberdeen City	1	1	2
Banff and Buchan	—	2	4
Gordon	—	—	—
Kincardine and Deeside	2	4	5
Moray	2	3	4
Grampian Region	5	10	15
Badenoch and/Strathspey	1	1	1
Caithness	—	—	—
Inverness	1	2	3
Lochaber	—	1	2
Nairn	—	—	2
Ross and Cromarty	—	2	5
Skye and Lochalsh	—	—	1
Sutherland	—	—	—
Highland Region	2	6	14
East Lothian	1	3	4
Edinburgh	8	13	14
Midlothian	—	2	2
West Lothian	—	—	—
Lothian Region	9	18	20
Argyll and Bute	3	7	14
Dumbarton	2	6	7
Glasgow	2	6	8
Clydebank	—	—	—
Bearsden and Milngavie	—	—	—
Strathkelvin	—	—	—
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	—	—	—
Monklands	—	—	4
Motherwell	—	3	3
Hamilton	1	3	—
East Kilbride	—	—	—
Eastwood	—	—	—
Clydesdale	—	—	—
Renfrew	—	—	2
Inverclyde	—	1	3
Cunninghame	5	7	10
Kilmarnock and Louden	—	1	3
Kyle and Carrick	1	3	5
Cumnock and Doon Valley	—	—	—
Strathclyde	14	37	59
Angus	4	13	16
Dundee City	—	5	7
Perth and Kinross	8	14	17
Tayside Region	12	32	40
Orkney Islands	—	2	3
Shetland Islands	—	—	—
Western Isles	—	1	1
Islands Councils	—	3	4
Scotland	60	134	192

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the charities currently subsidising old people in private sector homes in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: No information is collected on this, which is a wholly private matter for the residents themselves.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the latest estimate of the investment made by international companies in old people's homes in Scotland; and what were the comparable figures in *(a)* 1985 and *(b)* 1988.

Mr. Lang: No information on this subject is held centrally. Financial arrangements for private developments of this kind are a matter of the proprietors themselves.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the weekly average cost for (i) a single room and (ii) shared accommodation in old people's homes in the private sector in Scotland in *(a)* 1980, *(b)* 1985, *(c)* 1986, *(d)* 1987, *(e)* 1988 and *(f)* 1989.

Mr. Lang: Information in the form requested is not held centrally. The weekly average charge for residents in private homes was £149 in 1987 and £158 in 1988.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received regarding old people's homes in private ownership in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: I have received 12 representations in the last three years. They covered specific issues, such as standards and charges, as well as more general issues. Responsibility for the registration and inspection of residential homes rests with regional and islands councils.

Airports

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether his Department has submitted evidence to the review of Scottish lowland airports policy.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No. However, before any decision is taken on the future shape of Government policy for Scottish lowland airports my right hon. and learned Friend will be fully involved in considering all the written comments submitted in response to the Department of Transport consultation document.

Wildlife and Countryside Act

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to repeal or amend the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 insofar as it relates to Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No substantive amendments are planned for the Wildlife and Countryside Act

1981 so far as it affects Scotland, though some technical and consequential amendments will be needed for the creation of a separate Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland.

Scottish Arts

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much of the fundings of Scottish Arts in 1990-91 is for *(a)* provisions for maintenance, repair and refurbishment of galleries and museums and *(b)* an increase in real terms of provision for activities of art groups and institutions.

Mr. Lang: I will write to the hon. Gentleman.

Natural Heritage Agency

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he estimates that a single natural heritage agency will be established in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Environmental Protection Bill which will shortly come before Parliament provides inter alia for the establishment of a Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland. It is our intention to establish the proposed natural heritage agency by subsequent legislation.

Health Service (Information Requirements)

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to support information and information technology requirements arising out of the proposals in "Working for Patients" and "Promoting Better Health".

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Advice to health boards on priorities will be issued as appropriate. In addition to their normal financial allocations health boards will be able to bid for centrally held resources.

Adoption

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many babies were adopted in Scotland, for any convenient periods in the period of 1980 to 1989.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 27 November 1989]:* The numbers of children under 12 months old adopted in Scotland in the years 1980 to 1988 are as follows:

Year	*Number*
1980	379
1981	321
1982	326
1983	291
1984	229
1985	199
1986	160
1987	156
1988	132

Corresponding figures for 1989 (to date) are not yet available.

School Boards

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many parents have to take part in by-elections for school boards in *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 30 November 1989]:* All parents in schools where by-elections take place are entitled to take part. There is no compulsion to do so.

TRANSPORT

Toll Roads

12. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what his policy is with regard to the use of tolls on the road infrastructure network; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Tolls have been levied to finance certain costly estuarial crossings which provide exceptional benefits for users. In addition, tolls will be a means of paying for privately-financed roads.

Channel Tunnel (Freight Terminal)

13. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from British Rail concerning a freight terminal for Channel tunnel trade in the north-west of England.

Mr. Parkinson: British Rail is required by law to publish a plan setting out its proposals for passenger and freight services from the Channel tunnel to each region of the country. I have no doubt that this plan will have something concrete to say about a freight terminal in the north-west.

Wheel Clamping

14. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if there has been any reduction in illegal parking on double yellow lines following the introduction of wheel clamping as a method of parking enforcement.

Mr. Atkins: The level of illegal parking on double yellow lines is not separately recorded. Studies since 1983 in central London have shown that illegal parking on yellow lines generally has halved since the introduction of wheel clamping.

Speed Limit

15. **Mr. Marlow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the 70 mph speed limit.

Mr. Atkins: The representations I get are divided between setting lower speed limits and setting higher ones. I see no reason to change the present 70 mph on motorways and high speed roads.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to alter the maximum speed limit on motorways and other non-residential roads.

Mr. Atkins: I have no such plans. The representations I get are divided between setting lower speed limits and setting higher ones. I see no reason to change the present limits on motorways and other non-residential roads.

Second Channel Tunnel

16. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to encourage the building of a second Channel tunnel.

Mr. Parkinson: Eurotunnel is required by the concession agreement to put forward by the year 2000 plans for a drive-through link to be constructed when technical and economic conditions permit.

Border Routes

17. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy on the further provision of dual carriageway cross-border routes in the north-east as they connect with the Scottish road networks south of Edinburgh.

18. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any plans to make the A1 a dual carriageway up to the Scottish border.

Mr. Atkins: An improvement scheme for dualling a section of the A1 at Cawledge, south of Alnwick, was recently completed and opened to traffic.

Other dual carriageway proposals in the road programme for the A1 north of Morpeth are the Brownieside improvement and Marshall Meadows to the Scottish border improvement. On current planning the start of works on these schemes is scheduled for the spring of 1991.

One-man Bridge Operation

19. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made with the Department's one-man bridge operation at night project; and if he will make a statement about the origin of the funding for this scheme.

Mr. McLoughlin: The first phase of the project has been completed and a second phase is being considered. It has been funded from the Department's marine directorate research budget.

Lockerbie Air Disaster

20. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to announce a public inquiry into the Lockerbie air disaster and related events; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: My right hon., noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate has stated that there can be no question of an inquiry in public while the police investigation continues, as a public inquiry would interfere with that investigation and perhaps prejudice its outcome. I explained this to the representatives of the victims' families when I met them in September, and I believe they understood the position.

"Road Users and the Law"

21. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made with the Government's White Paper, "Road Users and the Law"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: As I told the hon. Member for Kingswood (Mr. Hayward) on 23 November, preparation of the legislative changes is well advanced. We have issued consultation papers on driver re-testing, vehicle prohibition and the use of technology for enforcement. This legislation will be brought forward as soon as time is available.

We have already taken powers to extend the high risk offenders scheme and are consulting the police and other interested organisations on improvements to the operation of the road traffic legal system which do not require changes to the law.

Road Speed Law

23. **Mr. Bidwell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will launch a national campaign for the strict observation of road speed law.

Mr. Atkins: Speed limits are set for the protection of all road users. Every driver should observe them responsibly without special campaigns: sensible drivers go at lower speeds when it is foggy, dark or raining and adopt a safe driving distance from other vehicles. In residential areas, we welcome and encourage the engineering measures that local authorities are taking to slow vehicles to safe speeds.

Traffic-calming Measures

24. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he intends to take on the introduction of traffic-calming measures.

Mr. Atkins: We have done much to develop approaches to traffic calming in recent years. We encourage local highway authorities to consider the opportunities for traffic calming measures in their general planning of highways investment. We are looking into the possibility of earmarking funds for the implementation of local road safety schemes, some of which can include traffic calming.

Channel Tunnel

22. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he is discussing to provide rail links from the Channel tunnel to ports in the south and west of Great Britain.

Mr. Parkinson: There are already rail links between the site of the Channel tunnel entrance and most ports in the south and west. British rail will be setting out its current proposals for passenger and freight services in the plan which it will shortly be publishing, in compliance with section 40 of the Channel Tunnel Act 1987.

25. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a further statement on the high-speed railway line to the Channel tunnel.

48. **Ms. Harman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a further statement on the high-speed railway line to the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Parkinson: It is now for British Rail and its chosen partner, Eurorail, to take this project forward.

26. **Mr. Trotter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent discussions he has had with the chairman of British Rail over the provision of through passenger and freight services from the north of the country to Europe through the Channel tunnel.

38. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with British Rail about plans to link the Channel tunnel with routes north of London.

79. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what rail facilities will be provided in Liverpool in preparation for the opening of the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Parkinson: It is British Rail's responsibility to set out its proposals in the plan which it will shortly be publishing, in compliance with section 40 of the Channel Tunnel Act 1987. I await with interest the publication of the board's proposals.

62. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the Government will now give financial support to British Rail to assist with the environmental costs of the strategic Channel tunnel rail link.

Mr. Portillo: It is for the joint venturers to provide in the project for the high standard on environmental protection which they think will satisfy Parliament.

72. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received seeking regional passenger and freight rail links to the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Portillo: We receive a number of representations from time to time from hon. Members and others.

84. **Mr. Moate:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy on the construction of the Channel tunnel high-speed rail link.

90. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on British Rail, Eurorail and developments in the Channel tunnel high speed link.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend made an announcement on Friday 3 November.

54. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to improve the road and rail links between the Channel tunnel and Yorkshire.

Mr. Portillo: There are a number of major schemes in the road programme which will improve access between Yorkshire and the Channel tunnel. British Rail is about to publish its plan setting out its proposals for international services to regions outside the south east.

73. **Mr. Aitken:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the co-chairmen of Eurotunnel plc; if the financial viability of the project was discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend last met the United Kingdom co-chairman of Eurotunnel at the ceremony to mark the breakthrough of the landward service tunnel on 9 November. Eurotunnel has announced that increasing costs will require additional funding. I understand that it is discussing the figures with its contractors and bankers.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will make it his policy to consider alternative routes for the Channel tunnel rail link to London in addition to proposals put forward by British Rail;

(2) if he will make it his policy to study the viability of developing Stratford as the main London transit point of the Channel tunnel rail link in comparison with the existing British Rail proposals.

Mr. Portillo: British Rail is statutorily responsible for providing rail services in Great Britain and planning new ones. It also holds the rights to through train paths in the Channel tunnel on which it has contractual agreements with Eurotunnel and French Railways. A Channel tunnel rail link will require the participation of British Rail. Anyone is free to suggest alternatives to British Rail's proposals. However, I accept that now that BR and Eurorail have announced their preferred route through Kent and terminal in London it will not be practicable for them to devote great efforts to examining other proposals. It will be for Parliament to decide whether the route can be accepted.

Bus Industry

27. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many new jobs have been created in the private sector bus industry since de-regulation.

Mr. Parkinson: Between 1985-86 and the end of 1988-89, there was a net increase of 3,900 in the total staff employed by private bus operators, including former subsidiaries of the National Bus Company.

Network SouthEast

28. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what requests he has received from British Rail to approve additional expenditure for *(a)* Network SouthEast and *(b)* the line from Liverpool street to Southend (Victoria).

Mr. Parkinson: This year I have approved five major investment schemes for Network SouthEast worth nearly £450 million. This included approval for the construction of 124 class 321 vehicles at cost of £45 million to meet the forecast growth in demand for services north of the Thames, including the Liverpool street-Southend (Victoria) line.

British Rail (Safety)

30. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much Government money is allocated to improving safety on British Rail.

Mr. Parkinson: British Rail's corporate plan includes some £125 million for additional safety expenditure over the next three years, which has been reflected in public expenditure provision. This expenditure will be supported by PSO grant where it falls to the subsidised sectors, Network SouthEast and provincial. British Rail is assessing the need for further expenditure following Sir Anthony Hidden's report on the Clapham junction accident.

British Rail

29. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss his successor and the future of the railways under privatisation.

49. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next plans to meet the chairman of British Rail; and what matters will be discussed.

57. **Mr. Raffan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next expects to meet the chairman of British Rail; and what matters he expects to discuss.

87. **Mr. Henderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next plans to meet the chairman of British Rail; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Parkinson: I have already discussed with Sir Robert Reid the objectives we propose to set for British Rail over the next three years. We expect to publish them shortly.

31. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the progress of plans for the denationalisation of British Rail.

Mr. Portillo: Work is continuing.

35. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will direct British Rail to review its policy on unstaffed railway stations.

Mr. Portillo: The staffing of railway stations is a matter for British Rail or where appropriate the local passenger transport executive.

36. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent discussions he has had with the chairman of British Rail concerning the electrification of the rail network; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: It is for British Rail to bring forward any worthwhile proposals for electrification. Since 1979 British Rail have spent £691 million in today's prices on electrification, an average of £63 million a year.

67. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received concerning the staffing of British Rail stations.

Mr. Portillo: We have received a number but staffing policy is a management matter for British Rail.

91. **Mr. Prescott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce the appointment of the chairman of British Rail.

Mr. Parkinson: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given earlier today to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker).

Road Safety Statistics

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the road safety figures for the last year for which figures are available for the United Kingdom and the other EC countries.

Mr. Parkinson: The United Kingdom has an excellent record for road safety compared with our foreign neighbours. The rate of road deaths at 9·4 per 100,000 head of population was the lowest of all the European Community countries in 1987. In 1988, the United Kingdom has achieved a further 1 per cent. reduction in fatalities, and a 1·5 per cent. reduction in serious injuries, although international comparisons for that year are not yet available. The detailed information is contained in the following table:

International comparisons of road deaths: number, and rates for different road users: by selected countries: 1987

	Number of road deaths[1]	*Motor vehicles per 1,000 population*	*Road deaths per 100,000 population*	*Road deaths per 10,000 motor vehicles*	*Car user deaths per 100 million car kilometres*	*Pedestrian deaths per 100,000 population*
England	4,349	411	9·2	2·2	..	3·0
Wales	220	386	7·8	2·0	..	2·4
Scotland	556	311	10·9	3·5	..	3·8
Great Britain	5,125	400	9·3	2·3	0·9	3·1
Northern Ireland	214	308	13·6	4·4	..	4·6
United Kingdom	5,339	398	9·4	2·4	..	3·1
Belgium	1,922	443	19·5	4·4	2·8	3·3
Denmark	698	400	13·6	3·4	[5]1·2	2·7
Federal Republic of Germany	7,967	531	13·0	2·5	1·2	2·8
France	10,742	542	19·4	3·6	[5]2·2	2·9
Greece	1,682	230	16·9	7·3	..	4·1
Irish Republic	461	253	13·0	5·2	..	4·0
Italy	7,108	[3]525	12·4	[3]2·5	[3,5]1·7	[3]2·2
Luxembourg	68	511	18·4	3·6	..	1·9
Netherlands	1,485	429	10·1	2·4	1·1	1·2
Portugal	3,100	271	31·5	11·2	[5]3·0	8·5
Spain	7,615	383	19·6	5·1	6·4	3·6
Austria	1,469	522	19·4	3·6	[6]2·8	3·3
Czechoslovakia	1,393	[4]219	8·9	[4]4·1	..	3·1
Finland	581	427	11·8	2·8	[7]1·0	2·8
German Democratic Republic	1,531	313	9·2	2·9	..	2·9
Hungary	1,571	214	14·8	6·9	..	5·2
Norway	398	499	9·5	1·9	[5]1·0	1·9
Poland	4,625	176	12·2	7·0	[3,8]5·5	5·5
Sweden	787	461	9·4	2·0	1·0	1·7
Switzerland	904	581	13·8	2·5	1·2	3·1
Yugoslavia	4,526	169	19·3	11·4	7·5	5·9
Australia	2,771	577	17·1	3·0	..	3·2
Canada	4,280	590	16·6	2·8	..	2·5

	Number of road deaths[1]	*Motor vehicles per 1,000 population*	*Road deaths per 100,000 population*	*Road deaths per 10,000 motor vehicles*	*Car user deaths per 100 million car kilometres*	*Pedestrian deaths per 100,000 population*
Japan	12,151	563	9·9	1·8	1·4	3·0
New Zealand	[3]767	[3]632	[3]23·1	[3]3·7	. .	[3]3·4
United States of America	46,386	784	19·5	2·5	[9]1·0	3·4

[1] In accordance with the commonly agreed international definition, most countries define a fatality as being due to a road accident if death occurs within 30 days of the accident. The official road accident statistics of some countries however, limit the fatalities to those occurring within shorter periods after the accident. Numbers of deaths and death rates in the above table have been adjusted according to the factors used by the Economic Commission for Europe and the European Conference of Ministers of Transport, to represent standardised 30-day deaths: France (6 days) +9 per cent.; Italy (7 days) +7 per cent.; Greece, Austria (3 days) +12 per cent.; Spain, Japan (24 hours) +30 per cent.; Canada, Switzerland (1 year) −5 per cent.; Portugal (at the scene) +35 per cent.

[2] 1985.

[3] 1986.

[4] Excluding lorries.

[5] Nationals' vehicles only.

[6] Traffic on state roads only.

[7] Including traffic on private roads.

[8] Including nationals' cars abroad.

[9] Intercity transport.

Underground Railways

32. **Mr. Cartwright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement concerning future plans for new underground railways serving south-east London.

Mr. Portillo: The Jubilee line extension to docklands will improve accessibility to Southwark and Bermondsey. London Regional Transport are also considering further the case for extensions of the East London line and the docklands light railway to parts of south-east London.

Commuter Services, London

33. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport by how much investment in London commuter services will increase over the next three years.

Mr. Portillo: London Regional Transport and BR's Network SouthEast plan to invest about £3·4 billion over the next three years (including £0·5 billion for the Jubilee line extension). That is £1·6 billion more than in the three years to April 1990, an increase of nearly 70 per cent. in real terms. Most of that investment will benefit services used by commuters.

Bus Substitution

34. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will direct British Rail to cease providing services by bus substitution.

Mr. Portillo: No. If these services stopped the passengers who used them would be inconvenienced.

Women Travellers

37. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he is taking to improve the safety of women travelling on their own.

Mr. Portillo: Public transport operators are implementing a number of measures which will improve the security of all passengers.

British Rail: The British transport police are maintaining a higher visibility throughout the British Rail network and particularly in the Network SouthEast area. Other measures at NSE stations include better lighting and closed circuit television (CCTV). The remaining closed compartment carriages still in use on NSE services will be replaced as soon as new rolling stock comes on stream.

London Underground: The Government have provided £15 million for a programme of passenger security measures including passenger alarms, CCTV, mirrors and improved lighting in passageways. The number of police on the Underground has increased and their effectiveness has been improved by a new radio system and new area police stations.

Buses: The installation of radios and video cameras will help to deter crime. Women may particularly welcome the growing use of midi-buses where passengers travel close to the driver.

My Department has issued advice to motorists on what to do should they break down on the motorway or in remote places.

Concessionary Fares

39. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the future operation of the concessionary fares scheme in London.

Mr. Portillo: Many such representations have been received following speculation that the present concessionary travel scheme in London might be withdrawn or curtailed. I wrote to London Members on 4 September explaining that the details of the scheme are agreed each year by the London boroughs and the City of London. If they fail to reach agreement, the reserve free travel scheme will be implemented.

Thames Collision

40. **Miss Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement regarding the inquiry into the collision involving the Marchioness and Bow Belle dredger on the river Thames.

Mr. McLoughlin: The inquiry into the collision involving the Marchioness and the Bow Belle is not yet completed. It is our intention to publish the report of the chief inspector of marine accidents at the earliest practicable date.

Air Traffic Control Centre

41. **Mr. Ground:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport by how much the Civil Aviation Authority's new en route air traffic control centre will increase airspace capacity.

Mr. McLoughlin: The new en route centre is expected to increase capacity in the en route sectors over England and Wales by at least 40 per cent. when operational in 1996.

Stockton-on-Tees

42. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make an official visit by car to Stockton-on-Tees; and if he will notify his route in advance.

Mr. Atkins: I have no plans to visit Stockton-on-Tees in the near future.

Orange Badge Scheme

43. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made with the proposals to modify the qualifying conditions for an orange badge and to tighten the monitoring of abuse; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: We are currently drawing up detailed proposals for redefining the eligibility criteria for the orange badge scheme in the light of the plans we published earlier this year. We are also examining ways of extending the benefits of the scheme to people with severe upper limb disabilities. We shall consult widely on our proposals as soon as possible.

Revised eligibility criteria are needed so that badges are issued only to those who genuinely need them. Our proposals for a new design of badge with space for a photograph of the holder will aid enforcement. The operation of the revised scheme will be kept under close review and discussions held with chief police officers as necessary.

Underground Railway, London

44. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what methods he intends to adopt to assess the relative merits of proposals for new underground railway routes in central London.

Mr. Portillo: The costs and benefits of the various options will be assessed with the assistance of the London transportation survey model. Account will also need to be taken of any wider benefits not included in the model.

M1, Bedfordshire

45. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the current repairs to the M1 in Bedfordshire.

Mr. Atkins: The major maintenance works between junctions 12 and 13 were substantially completed on 19 November, four weeks earlier than expected. Some further minor remedial works involving closure of the northbound hardshoulder and overnight works on the outside lane are expected to be completed soon.

Motorways, North-East

46. **Mr. Bell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the expected road life of existing motorways in the north-east of England; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Since the Department's standards for highway design were revised in 1985, motorways have been built to last, with appropriate maintenance, for 40 years before having to be reconstructed. Before that time bituminous roads were generally built to last on average 20 years and concrete roads 40 years. The actual life of particular motorways or sections of motorways depends upon a number of factors, notably the volume and weight of traffic using them, and may vary significantly. The condition of motorways is routinely monitored to identify deterioration and the need for major maintenance. An announcement about the 1990-91 programme of major maintenance will be made as usual around the end of March.

Roads (Spending)

47. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport by how much spending on national roads will be increased over the next three years.

Mr. Atkins: Spending on national roads over the next three years will total £5·7 billion, compared with £3·3 billion in the three years ending March 1990. This is an increase of 70 per cent. in cash terms.

Of the £5·7 billion, £4 billion will be made available for new construction and improvement. This represents an increase of 50 per cent. in real terms, on original expenditure plans for the years 1987-88 and 1989-90, and reflects the Government's commitment to the proposals set out in the White Paper "Roads for Prosperity" for reducing congestion.

In addition £1·7 billion will be spent on road, bridge and current maintenance. This will mean an increae of over 40 per cent., in real terms, in spending on capital maintenance compared with the three years to March 1990.

Dalston Kingsland Station

50. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any plans to visit Dalston Kingsland BR station.

Mr. Portillo: No, but I visited stations on the north London line on 7 October this year.

Leeds-Bradford Airport

51. **Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received for the further extension of operating hours at the Leeds-Bradford airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Transport announced on 14 August 1989 their decision on planning application by Leeds-Bradford airport for extended opening hours.

Since the announcement, my right hon. Friend has received 12 representations favouring longer opening hours than the 1½ hour extension granted.

A30, Cornwall

52. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what improvements are planned for the A30 in Cornwall.

Mr. Atkins: The following schemes are in the trunk road programme:

Launceston-Plusha
Plusha-Bolventor
Shallowater Hill Improvement
Temple-Higher Carblake Improvement
Bodmin-Indian Queens Improvement
Indian Queens Bypass
Penhale-Carland Cross
Zelah Bypass
Zelah-Chiverton Improvement
St. Erth-Newtown Improvement

I shall be opening the Launceston-Plusha scheme on 7 December. Work is expected to start on Plusha-Bolventor and Penhale-Carland Cross in spring 1990 and on Zelah bypass in summer 1990. The remaining schemes are at an earlier stage of preparation.

A38

53. **Mr. Robert Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he hopes to announce his Department's preferred route for the A38 trunk road improvement Liskeard-Bodmin section and consulting engineers to undertake investigations for the proposed A38 Saltash-Trerulefoot section.

Mr. Atkins: I hope to announce a preferred route for the Liskeard-Bodmin section early in 1991 and the appointment of consulting engineers for the Saltash-Trerulefoot section very shortly.

Civil Aviation Authority (Computers)

55. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the Civil Aviation Authority's new computers will be installed.

Mr. McLoughlin: I understand that the replacement mainframe computers for the London air traffic control centre have now been installed. After further testing they will become operational early next summer.

Roads and Street Lighting

56. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from the City of Newcastle upon Tyne about the maintenance of roads, and the provision of streetlighting in residential areas.

Mr. Atkins: I have received the city council's document entitled "Residential Roads: The Problem—The Cure". All matters and priorities relating to local roads are, of course, the responsibility of the local highways authority.

London Underground

58. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much Government money is allocated to improving safety standards on the London Underground.

Mr. Portillo: London Underground estimates that by the year 2000 it will have spent more than £1 billion on improving safety. Although Government grant is not attributed to specific projects or activities, I am satisfied that the increases recently announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will be more than sufficient to allow London Underground to secure its planned improvements in safety standards.

89. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to reduce overcrowding on the London Underground.

Mr. Portillo: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my right hon. Friend to the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock), earlier today.

Rural Transport

59. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on rural transport provision.

Mr. Portillo: The provisions of rural transport is chiefly a matter for local transport operators and for local authorities. Under the Transport Act 1985 the operators can provide services wherever they see a commercial opportunity to do so. Local authorities may make provision for additional socially necessary services, under subsidy, after going out to competitive tender. In addition, the rural transport development fund, administered by the Rural Development Commission, receives £1 million a year from the Department of Transport to assist the provision of innovative rural transport services in England. In Wales and Scotland, the Welsh and Scottish Offices administer similar rural transport innovation grant schemes.

London Road Assessment Studies

60. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are his Department's plans for public consultation on the London road assessment studies once these proposals have been published.

63. **Mr. Hanley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made in his consideration of the west London assessment study; and if he will make a statement.

76. **Mr. Fraser:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will make a decision on the options raised by the London road assessment studies.

Mr. Atkins: Arrangements have been made for the consultants' reports to be printed and I expect them to be published later this month. An announcement will be made at that time about the arrangements for consultation and decision.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, when his statement is made in early December on the London road assessment studies, he will ensure that at the same time a free copy of a summary of these studies will be made available to the general public; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Summary leaflets of the consultants' reports on each of the four London assessment studies will be available free of charge from the consultants and at libraries and other venues throughout the relevant study areas.

Manchester Airport

61. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on negotiations concerning trans-Atlantic flights to Manchester airport.

Mr. McLoughlin: Negotiations on air services between the United Kingdom and the United States were held between 29 November and 1 December. The United Kingdom's objectives include agreeing a balanced expansion of opportunities for the airlines on both sides which will allow for additional transatlantic services to be introduced to serve Manchester airport.

Bus Deregulation

64. **Mr. Ralph Howell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate the vehicle mileage increase on private sector bus routes since deregulation.

Mr. Portillo: Between 1985-86 and 1988-89, there was an increase from 168 million to 1,241 million in the vehicle kilometres run by private operators on local services outside London.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress his Department has made towards the deregulation of buses in London.

Mr. Portillo: We have already moved some way towards deregulation by splitting London Buses Ltd. into smaller operating subsidiaries, by promoting the extension of competitive tendering on London Regional Transport bus routes and by enhancing the opportunities for private operators to introduce their own routes under the London local service licensing system. The timetable for full deregulation has yet to be set.

Regional Airports

65. **Mr. Jessel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he is taking to support regional airports.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Government encourage the maximum use of regional airports, both to meet local demand and to relieve pressure on the London airports. Over the past decade more than £300 million of capital expenditure has been facilitated through special borrowing approvals for local authority airports. I hope to announce shortly the special borrowing approvals for 1990-91. We also very much welcome the contribution to the development of local authority airports which the private sector makes through the direct investment and joint venture schemes.

We are continuing to pursue liberalisation policies, both in the European Community and in bilateral negotiations, which increase further the scope for services from our regional airports.

London Regional Transport

66. **Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next plans to meet the chairman of London Regional Transport; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend and I frequently meet the chairman of London Regional Transport to discuss a wide range of issues.

European Aviation Package

68. **Mr. Gerald Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the second stage of the European aviation liberalisation package will be agreed.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Council is committed to agreement on a second stage of aviation liberalisation by June 1990. The Government have welcomed the proposals which the Commission has recently put forward, and are fighting hard to prevent them being watered down.

A41 Bypass

69. **Mr. Page:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the decision on the A41 bypass inquiry will be announced.

85. **Mr. Robert B. Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce his decision on the A41 Hemel Hempstead and Bourne End bypass.

Mr. Atkins: I expect the announcement to be made by the end of the year.

Trunk Roads, Selby

70. **Mr. Alison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has for expediting the flow of traffic along the A19 and A63 trunk roads through the town of Selby.

Mr. Atkins: Detailed proposals, in the form of draft orders under the Highways Act 1980, have just been published for a bypass of Selby by my Department. The scheme is designed to aid the flow of traffic on the A19 and A63, and bring considerable relief to the town centre.

Light Rail Projects

71. **Mr. Hayward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many light rail projects are planned around the country.

Mr. Portillo: We are in touch with the promoters of light rail projects in Greater Manchester, south Yorkshire, Avon, the west midlands, Cleveland and Nottingham. We are also aware of about 30 other schemes, many at an early stage of consideration.

A3

74. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when present improvements to the A3 London to Portsmouth road in the Godalming and Guildford area will be complete.

Mr. Atkins: The Compton-Shackleford improvement is programmed for completion by the end of January 1990 but we may be able to complete the major part of it in December. The improvement at Deerbarn bridge should be completed early in December.

Disabled People

75. **Mr. David Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he is taking to improve the mobility of the disabled.

Mr. Atkins: Our active and constantly evolving programme of initiatives to promote mobility for people with disabilities is set out in our document "Transport and Disability—a statement of Aims and Priorities".

One major priority is to improve the accessibility of public transport including the development of wheelchair-accessible coaches and buses. We shall be working with vehicle designers and manufacturers to influence car design and control modifications, to increase opportunities for personal mobility for even the most severely disabled people.

We are also developing guidelines on design for pedestrian areas to help elderly and disabled people.

M3

77. **Mr. Viggers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the plans to complete the M3.

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement of progress on the southern extension of the M3.

Mr. Atkins: Work to widen and upgrade the A33 between Compton, south of Winchester, and the M27, to form the southernmost section of the M3 started in August. It is scheduled for completion in late summer 1991.

Revised proposals for the remaining section between Bar End and Compton, around Winchester, were the subject of a public inquiry in 1985 which was re-opened in 1987-88 to consider further evidence. My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Transport are considering the reports of the independent inspectors who conducted the inquiries. They will announce their decisions as soon as they are able. Construction dates will depend on the nature of those decisions.

"New Roads by New Means"

78. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to involve the private sector in road building and road repair programmes in light of the responses received to his consultation paper, entitled "New Roads by New Means."

Mr. Atkins: The private sector is already closely involved in the planning, design, supervision and construction of new trunk roads and in the maintenance of existing trunk roads. The response to the consultation paper "New Roads by New Means" was encouraging, and several new schemes are being taken forward actively, in England and in Scotland.

Road Safety

80. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he is taking to improve road safety.

Mr. Atkins: Improving road safety is one of our top priorities. That is why we have developed a comprehensive strategy to attain our target of cutting casualties by one third by the year 2000. I welcome the commitment and enthusiasm of local authorities who are now drawing up plans and targets for their own areas.

We are working with them, the police and all others concerned to tackle the key problems: safer vehicle design, low cost local road engineering measures, concentration on making roads safer for the most vulnerable groups and above all, encouraging a sensible and responsible attitude among all road users.

East Coast Railway Line

81. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent discussions he has had on the electrification of the east coast railway line between Aberdeen and Edinburgh.

Mr. Portillo: It would be for British Rail to bring forward any proposals if it believes they would be worthwhile. Since 1979 BR has spent £691 million in today's prices on electrification, an average of £63 million a year.

World Student Games

82. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to make available a special grant to Sheffield to expand railway facilities and station alterations for the world student games in Sheffield.

Mr. Portillo: I understand that British Rail is intending to undertake extensive improvement works to Sheffield station in time for the world student games. My Department has taken full account of the funding requirements of the Sheffield transport interchange in allocating resources to the South Yorkshire passenger transport authority. In addition, I am discussing with the authority whether any resources might be made available for part of the proposed Supertram route serving the games sites.

Submarines

83. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action his Department is taking to test systems which alert submarines to the presence of fishing vessels above them; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Two proposals for acoustic devices have been received which have been sent to the Admiralty research establishment to assess their suitability as a warning to submarines of the presence of fishing vessels and their nets.

Inner Cities (Access)

86. **Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he is taking to improve access to inner-city areas.

Mr. Atkins: Assisting local authority road schemes through transport supplementary grant; constructing trunk roads where appropriate; providing grant under section 56 of the Transport Act 1968 for public transport investment which shows good benefits; and consolidating the regeneration of London docklands with the approval of the Jubilee line extension from Green Park via Waterloo and the Isle of Dogs to Stratford.

Freight

88. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what studies his Department has undertaken to find out the environmental cost of transporting freight by road as compared to transport by rail.

Mr. Portillo: The environmental cost of transporting goods by road and rail will vary from case to case, and so no general conclusions from studies of the type suggested can be drawn.

In those cases where the transfer of goods from road to rail is shown to provide clear and worthwhile environmental benefits, section 8 of the 1974 Railways Act provides for grants to be paid.

Traffic Lights, SE1

92. **Mr. Higgins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether his Department is responsible for, or was consulted about, the new traffic lights at the junction of Gaden way and St. Georges road, London SE1; what was the cost of the installation; what representations he has received about its effect on traffic flows from both directions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The traffic lighting scheme in question, costing £18,600, is the responsibility of the London borough of Southwark, as the local highway authority, and was devised in association with the traffic control systems unit.

The Department was consulted about the proposal as St. George's road is a designated road. The Department has not received any representations about the scheme.

Drink Driving

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he intends to alter the permitted level of alcohol that a driver can consume before an offence is committed.

Mr. Atkins: The present limit is the level at which for most drivers the chances of being involved in an accident start to rise sharply. With some half of drink drive offenders convicted at around twice the limit, our priority is to achieve greater compliance with the law as it stands.

Public Transport

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the ratio of women to men who use public transport.

Mr. Portillo: According to the 1985-86 national travel survey, women aged 16 and over made on average 38 per cent. more public transport journeys than men in that age group. They accounted for about 60 per cent. more bus journeys but 25 per cent. fewer rail journeys. In terms of passenger mileage, women generated 10 per cent. less public transport mileage per head than men, but were responsible for relatively more bus usage and less rail usage.

Relative use of public transport by women and men
Journeys and mileage per person per week

	Journeys			*Mileage*		
	Women	*Men*	*Ratio*	*Women*	*Men*	*Ratio*
Bus	2·00	1·24	1·61	7·0	5·0	1·40
Rail	0·34	0·45	0·76	6·1	9·4	0·65
Bus and rail	2·34	1·69	1·38	13·1	14·4	0·91

Source: National Travel Survey 1985-86.

Pilotage

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which competent harbour authorities are charging vessels under the command of a master with a pilotage exemption certificate; and if he will list the highest and lowest charges.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department does not have this information. The Pilotage Act 1987 however provides for objections to be made to the Secretary of State by, amongst others, port users against the levels of charges levied by competent harbour authorities for the issue or use of pilotage exemption certificates.

Vehicles (Fire Hazards)

Mr. Hawkins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce measures to improve the design or location of petrol tanks in motor vehicles to prevent fires in collisions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: In high speed collisions it is virtually impossible to protect tanks totally. Regulations already require them to be in a position where they are reasonably secure from damage. For the future we are pressing the European Commission to adopt more stringent requirements for fuel tanks. We shall be seeking support of other Community members.

Mr. Hawkins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research his Department has commissioned or undertaken into the causes of fires in vehicles involved in collisions and into methods of reducing them.

Mr. Atkins: Though relatively few people die from this cause, such cases inevitably arouse particular horror. Over the years our research and action programmes to improve vehicle safety have included work on the features most likely to cause fires. Fuel cut offs are important and we have discussed this with manufacturers. We have also just sent them an analysis of electrical causes of fire and plan further work to protect against fuel leakage following rear impacts. We have made clear to vehicle manufacturers that we expect them to pay close attention to designs that reduce fire hazards.

Correspondence

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when his Department expects to reach a decision on the case of Mr. P. Robinson, of 7 Southland road, SE18, about whom his predecessor wrote to the hon. Member for Woolwich on 28 June.

Mr. Atkins: Shortly. We shall write to the hon. Member when a decision has been made.

Thames Riverbus

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the future of the Thames Riverbus service.

Mr. Portillo: The consortium responsible for the management of Riverbus is currently reviewing the experience of the first eight months of operations.

A46 (Accidents)

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the number of accidents which have taken place on the A46 trunk road at the Thrussington-Seagrave crossing north of Syston, Leicestershire, over the last two years; what action he intends to take to improve safety there; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: There have been six personal injury accidents at this junction in the last two years. Sadly, four of these involved fatalities.

The Department instructed its agents, Leicestershire county council, in October this year to place improved warning signs on all approaches to the crossroads. These should be in place by Christmas. A scheme to light the crossroads will be implemented as soon as practicable. Urgent consideration is being given to the need for further modifications.

A303/A30 (Improvements)

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what improvements have been made to the A303/A30 route west of Amesbury since 10 March 1987.

Mr. Atkins: Between Amesbury and Exeter bypasses of Ilminster and Sparkford have been completed in the past two years.

Cars (Child Restraints)

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what evidence is available to him on the level of public support for the legislation requiring that children seated in the rear of cars are restrained where appropriate restraints exist.

Mr. Atkins: This valuable legislation, introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle (Mr. Day) has been widely supported at all stages. It is generally recognised as making an important contribution to the reduction of unnecessary death and injury among children.

The new law came into force on 1 September. Next spring we shall review whether further publicity about its requirements and its benefits is needed in the light of a survey of seat belt wearing being carried out by the transport and road research laboratory.

Irish Lights

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his reply of 29 November, how many commissioners there are in Irish Lights; who appoints the members of Irish Lights from Northern Ireland; and for what period of time they serve as commissioners.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Commissioners of Irish Lights consist of 17 members (including those from Northern Ireland) who are appointed by the Irish Lights board for unlimited terms; and four ex-officio members, who are the Lord Mayor of Dublin and three nominees of Dublin city council and who hold office for the period of their nomination.

Central London (Traffic Management)

Mr. Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will review traffic management schemes in central London to determine their effect on traffic flows and his power to change such schemes in the public interest.

Mr. Atkins: We are considering a number of proposals and will make an announcement as soon as possible.

Sprinter Trains

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what requests he has received for investment in replacements for 155 series Sprinter trains intended for operation out of Cardiff.

Mr. Portillo: None.

East London Assessment Study

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what date in December he plans to publish the results of the East London Assessment Study.

Mr. Atkins: The consultants will publish their report as soon as possible.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

North Sea

143. **Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) by what date he intends to phase out the dumping of industrial wastes into the North sea; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he intends to allow the practice of dumping liquid industrial waste at sea after 31 December; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The United Kingdom is fully meeting international agreements reached unanimously by the North sea countries.

Indeed the United Kingdom is amongst the European leaders in demanding higher standards for the North sea. We are very conscious of the need to prevent pollution of our offshore waters. Eighty per cent. of riverborne pollution entering the North sea comes from rivers of Germany, Holland and Belgium.

Ministers at the second North sea conference agreed that disposal at sea of industrial wastes should not be prohibited if there were no practical alternative means of disposal on land and if it could be shown to the Oslo Commission that the materials caused no harm in the marine environment. The Oslo Commission in 1989 agreed the procedure by which a country would show that a waste met these criteria. The Government have initiated this procedure in respect of three wastes which have been licensed for sea disposal for some years.

The nature of these wastes and the problems faced in identifying environmentally acceptable alternative disposal options have been discussed at length in the Oslo Commission. At no stage has evidence been produced that any of these wastes cause harm in the marine environment. Detailed scientific work in the United Kingdom has shown that no harm is caused by sea disposal. Indeed, the presence of the wastes in the sea cannot be detected by the most sensitive means of analysis a few minutes after disposal.

No deadline has been set internationally for termination of sea disposal. However, the Government are seeking to end sea disposal of these wastes at the earliest possible time. Of the 20 licences issued in 1987 for disposal of liquid industrial waste at sea, more than half will not be renewed next year. The remainder will be terminated as soon as alternative means of disposal have been identified and implemented. The companies concerned are urgently working to develop land-based methods. The Oslo Commission agreed earlier this year that even when an alternative disposal option is identified a transitional period will be needed before sea disposal can end, to give time for introduction of the alternative arrangements. At this stage the final termination date for liquid industrial waste licences cannot be precisely identified, though it is expected that most will be terminated within about two years.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) when he received an application to dump 3,000 tonnes of a curing agent in epoxy powder in the North sea; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when he received an application from Sterling Organics to dump 42,000 tonnes of paracetamol waste in the North sea; and if he will make a statement;

(3) when he received an application from Fisons Ltd. to dump in the North sea 4,000 tonnes of waste from the making of asthma medicines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: All three companies have for some years had sea disposal licences for these wastes which arise from production of medicines—which help asthma sufferers and relieve pain—and soap. These have been subject to annual renewal. Pending the completion of development and implementation of alternative means of disposal the companies have sought continued licensing as some of their products provide relief—sometimes life-saving relief—to asthma sufferers and pain relief to others. The procedures agreed for such cases by the Oslo Commission were therefore initiated for the Sterling Organics and Fisons wastes on 19 September and for the third waste on 5 October.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many applications he has made to the Oslo Commission for licences to dump industrial waste in the North sea in 1990; if he will list in each case the substances, quantities and companies involved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The Oslo Commission procedure, which is required in advance of the issue of national licences under the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985, has been initiated for three wastes, as follows:

Material	*Tonnage*
Fisons	
Wash waters from synthesis of Intal—a treatment for asthma and allergies	6,000
Sterling Organics	
Aqueous residues from preparation of paracetamol	42,000
Orsynetics	
Salt solution from manufacture of O-tolyl-biguanide, exported for use in paint and soap manufacture	3,000

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the licence applications he has received for dumping industrial waste in the North sea in 1989 *(a)* from January to June and *(b)* from June onwards; if he will list the substances, quantities and companies involved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The information is as follows:

	Material	*Tonnage*
January to June		
Fisons PLC	Wash waters from the synthesis of Intal, a treatment for asthma and allergies	6,000
Imperial Chemicals Industries PLC	Waste from pharmaceutical manufacture	6,000
Tate & Lyle	Filtration sludge from sugar refining	33,000
Sterling Organics Ltd.	Aqueous residues from preparation of paracetamol	42,000
Orsynetics Ltd.	Salt solution from the manufacture of O-tolyl biguanide, exported for use in paint and soap manufacture	3,000
Fisons PLC[1]	Distillation waste from pharmaceutical manufacture	1,000
Formica Ltd.	Phenol washings from laminate manufacture	800
Fine Organics Ltd.	Effluent from pharmaceutical production	8,000
A. H. Marks Ltd.[1]	Neutralised acetone/water mixture from formulation of organic chemicals	999
BP Petroleum Development[1]	Used saline drilling mud	1,000
British Coal	Minestone	150,000
British Coal	Minestone	150,000
CEGB	Pulverised fuel ash	36,000 (part year)
CEGB	Pulverised fuel ash	290,000 (part year)
[1]—	Solid waste from boric acid production	200,000

	Material	*Tonnage*
July to November		
Chorley Bleaching Co. Ltd.[1]	Waste from bleaching cotton	100
ICI Chemicals & Polymers Ltd.	Acid ammonium sulphate effluent from acrylics production	165,000
Allied Colloids Ltd.	Acid ammonium sulphate effluent from acrylics production	15,000
Woolcombers Ltd.	Waste from washing wool	999
Chlor Chem Ltd.	Acidic effluent from production of water treatment chemicals	1,000
Robinson Bros[1]	Caustic liquor from manufacture of pharmaceutical intermediates	70
British Coal	Minestone	1,250,000
British Coal	Minestone	525,000
British Coal	Minestone	525,000
CEGB	Pulverised fuel ash	50,000
CEGB	Pulverised fuel ash	500,000
Jackson's Fuel Co. Ltd.	Washed sand	7,500

[1] Licences to expire by end of 1989.

[2] Application not approved. Information on the applicant was received in confidence.

Lindane and Pentachlorophenol

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if any new scientific or medical evidence is under consideration by the Advisory Committee on Pesticides on the link between the development of aplastic anaemia and Lindane and Pentachlorophenol.

Mr. Maclean: The Health and Safety Executive is evaluating available data on aplastic anaemia and Lindane. The matter is expected to come before the Advisory Committee on Pesticides in 1990-91.

Hens

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what regulations control the disposal of laying hens slaughtered under the salmonella control regulations.

Mr. Maclean: The Animal Health Act 1981 as applied by the Zoonoses Order 1989 provides that where an animal, including a bird, has been slaughtered under the Act at the Ministers discretion, the carcase of the animal shall belong to him and shall be buried, or sold, or otherwise disposed of by him, or as he directs, as the conditions of the animal or carcase and the other circumstances may require or admit.

Food Safety Directorate

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will estimate the cost to industry and the consumer of the work of the food safety directorate.

Mr. Maclean: The food safety directorate will strengthen my Department's organisation for dealing with food safety issues. This reorganisation of work does not involve costs to industry or the consumer.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the interested parties he consulted before establishing the food safety directorate.

Mr. Maclean: I did not consult any interested parties before setting up the food safety directorate, but I did take into account the views put to me by a number of individuals and organisations that the large amount of food safety and similar regulatory work undertaken by my Department should be more clearly identified and brought together.

High-density Baling

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what studies he has made of the use of refuse in high-density baling for coastal defence work and land reclamation.

Mr. Curry: My Department has not carried out any studies on the use of high-density baled refuse for these purposes. We support adoption of new techniques that offer improved protection, lower costs or both. However, at first sight there seems to be some question as to the suitability of such material for coastal defence work. For example, there is a possibility of microbiological activity within the bale which could lead to voids being created and a reduction in the density of the bale, which in turn would put in question the structural integrity of the defence. Further, possible leaching of harmful substances from such bales could cause pollution in a marine environment.

Bread Prices

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on *(a)* the increases in bread prices in each of the last three years and *(b)* the price of wheat, in real, actual and percentage terms for each of the last three years.

Mr. Curry: The information requested is set out in the following table. The 1989 figures are based on information for the first 10 months and are not strictly comparable with those of earlier years.

	Actual price of standard white wrapped and sliced loaf (800 g)				*Weighted average price of United Kingdom wheat at point of sale*[1]			
	Actual prices		*Constant 1988 price*[2]		*Actual prices*		*Constant 1988 price*[2]	
	Pence per loaf	*Percentage change*	*Pence per loaf*	*Percentage change*	*£ per tonne*	*Percentage change*	*£ per tonne*	*Percentage change*
1986	43·0	+7·0	48·1	+3·4	118·18	−1·0	124·30	−4·3
1987	43·7	+1·6	46·6	−3·1	111·00	−0·2	118·33	−4·8
1988	46·3	+5·9	46·3	−0·6	105·14	−5·3	105·14	−11·1
[3]1989	48·8	+5·6	45·8	−1·3	104·08	−1·0	97·59	−7·2

Source: Bread prices: Employment Gazette.
Wheat prices: Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

[1] The wheat prices quoted are net of co-responsibility levies.

[2] Using the GDP deflator (at market prices).

[3] Simple averages, January to October. Percentage change is compared to same period of 1988. Constant 1988 prices are based on forecasts of the GDP deflator for the first three-quarters of 1989.

Artificial Bovine Somatotropin

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what information he has concerning the incidence of mastitis in dairy cows subject to artificial bovine somatotropin treatment;

(2) what information he has concerning the effect of bovine somatotropin treatment on the fecundity of trial animals.

Mr. Maclean: In addition to the published material on these subjects my Department receives data provided by companies in support of their product licence applications.

Fishing Industry

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is yet in a position to make a statement on a decommissioning scheme for the fishing industry.

Mr. Curry: Not yet. I shall make an announcement as soon as possible.

Pesticide Ban

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will issue a ban on Alar, Tecnazene, Maneb, Mancozeb and Zineb.

Mr. Maclean: No. These substances are under review by the advisory committee on pesticide whose recommendations to Ministers are based on scientific evidence. The evidence to date does not indicate that approval for these substances should be withdrawn.

Food Standards

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will launch a survey on the standard of potatoes, lettuces, blackcurrants, tomatoes, apples and pears.

Mr. Curry: I have at present no plans to do so.

Parents for Safe Food

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture Fisheries and Food when he last met representatives from Parents for Safe Food.

Mr. Maclean: I have not met representatives from Parents for Safe Food but officials from my Department specialising in pesticides met a representative from PSF on 18 October 1989.

Habitat Sites

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress is being made with incentives to farmers and woodland managers to maintain and enhance important habitat sites of wildlife value.

Mr. Curry: My Department has introduced a number of grant schemes that provide incentives for the protection of existing, or creation of new, wildlife habitats.

The introduction of the environmentally sensitive area schemes in 1987 was designed to conserve and enhance landscape and wildlife interests in areas vulnerable to changes in farming practices. The farm woodland scheme, introduced last year, has as one of its objectives the enhancement of the landscape and the creation of new wildlife habitats. The farm and conservation grant scheme (introduced in February this year) places particular emphasis on conservation and the needs of the environment. As far as woodlands are concerned, it is a requirement of the Forestry Commission's woodland grant scheme that proper account should be taken of the needs of nature conservation. In this connection, the commission will shortly be publishing comprehensive guidelines on the nature conservation aspects of woodland management.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps were taken when the drainage system at Shirley Pool/Rushy Moor site of special scientific interest near Doncaster was installed to avoid damage to the site and habitat; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Proposals were submitted to my Department by the Dun drainage commissioners in 1981 to improve the land drainage within the catchments of the Thistle Goit and Haywood pumping stations. These included works to deepen the drains running through the Shirley Pool/Rushy Moor SSSI. In order to retain the marshland and wet woodland habitats within the site, the proposals were revised by agreement with the Nature Conservancy Council and my Department, to divert the main flow to deepened channels outside the SSSI. Drainage work within the Shirley Pool SSSI was thereby avoided.

Lead Contamination

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many farms in England and Wales placed under restriction following the recent contamination by lead of foodstuffs were subsequently shown not to have contaminated milk or meat products; if he will estimate the financial loss involved to producers; whether he intends introducing a compensation scheme; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is his estimate of the total financial loss so far incurred by milk producers subject to restrictions, following suspected use of lead-contaminated imported feedstuffs.

Mr. Maclean: A total of 2,069 farms in England and Wales have at some time been subject to restrictions. Of these, 367 were able to be released in the light of further information from feed suppliers. As at 29.11.89, 1,052 dairy farms have been released from milk restrictions as a result of the milk testing programme and arrangements are now in hand to allow the orderly release of animals from slaughter and movement restrictions subject to a number of further checks, including blood testing of some animals. Reliable information on the costs to the industry are not available and there is no provision under the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 for the payment of compensation.

Food Advisory Committees

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the legislation and relevant sections under which he has power to set up advisory committees on food.

Mr. Maclean: There is none. Successive Governments have maintained advisory committees on food matters without the need for legislation.

East Anglia

Mr. Paice: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from East Anglian farmers since 1 August on the state of agriculture in East Anglia.

Mr. Gummer: I frequently meet East Anglian farmers, both in my constituency and elsewhere, and receive numerous representations from them on agricultural matters. I have also discussed in detail these problems with hon. Members concerned—particularly with my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice).

Global Warming

Mr. Paice: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps are being taken to assess the impact of global warming on British agriculture; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: My Department is aiming to fund research to identify the sensitivity of key sectors of British agriculture to variations in climate so that when regional climate change forecasts become available, an assessment of the impact can be made. In addition my Department is involved in research to monitor sea level trends and last year about half of the budget for river and coastal engineering research was spent on projects designed to provide a better understanding of the coastal environment and add to the knowledge needed for improving coastal defences.

Isle of Man

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what fishing limits around the Isle of Man have been agreed for the period commencing 1 January 1990.

Mr. Curry: The present three-mile limit around the Isle of Man will apply on 1 January 1990. Consideration, including in relation to fishing, on how the provisions for a 12 mile territorial sea around the Isle of Man contained in the Territorial Sea Act 1987 might be implemented is in hand.

Animal Exports

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will introduce a system of licensing for carriers of live animals intended for export; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I do not intend to introduce licensing since this would add little to existing controls related to unnecessary suffering. Such a system would almost certainly contravene the Treaty of Rome.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food under what provision he launched his recent investigation into the death of beagles being exported for research purposes in the pharmaceutical industry; if he has yet concluded his investigation; what action he proposes to take; and what powers he has to regulate such trade.

Mr. Maclean: The investigation has now concluded. Charges are being considered under the Transit of Animals (General) Order 1973, as amended in 1988, and the Protection of Animals Act 1911. Under section 39 of the Animal Health Act 1981 Ministers may by order provide for regulating the export of animals from Great Britain in the interests of animal welfare.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has concerning the numbers and species of live animals being exported from the United Kingdom for use in research projects; and, in respect of both species and numbers, what is the importing country.

Mr. Maclean: The numbers of animals exported for research purposes are not collected centrally.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his estimate of the number of slaughter animals exported live by species, to each of the member states of the European Economic Community during 1988 and the current year to date.

Mr. Maclean: Animals inspected and certified as fit for transportation prior to export from Great Britain were as follows:

1. During 1988

	For immediate slaughter		*For further fattening*			
Destination	*Cattle*	*Sheep*	*Cattle*	*Calves*	*Sheep*	*Pigs*
Belgium/Luxembourg	99	7,193	—	—	—	—
Holland	—	—	—	108,880	—	—
Italy	—	12,441	—	4,460	—	—
France	14	238,798	24	120,848	184,120	—
West Germany	23	4,215	299	463	—	—
TOTAL EEC	136	262,647	323	234,651	184,120	—

2. During the period 1 January to 30 September 1989

	For immediate slaughter		*For further fattening*			
Destination	*Cattle*	*Sheep*	*Cattle*	*Calves*	*Sheep*	*Pigs*
Belgium/Luxembourg	48	13,460	—	50	—	—
Holland	—	145	10	77,156	—	—
Italy	35	8,713	199	—	—	—
France	173	93,237	956	114,563	132,474	24
West Germany	18	10,188	280	28	—	—
TOTAL EEC	274	125,743	1,445	191,797	132,474	24

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his estimate of the number of slaughter animals, exported live, by species, to each non European Economic Community country during 1988 and the current year to date.

Mr. Maclean: Farm livestock for slaughter are not licensed for export to countries outside the EEC.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his estimate of the total number of animals of each species exported from the United Kingdom in 1988 and 1989 to date for the purposes of *(a)* slaughter, *(b)* fattening, and *(c)* breeding.

Mr. Maclean: Statistics for the United Kingdom do not distinguish between animals for fattening and those for immediate slaughter. The information is as follows:

	Breeding	*Other*	*Total*
1. *During 1988*			
Cattle	7,690	259,101	266,791
Sheep	11,310	497,603	508,913
Pigs	11,311	47,692	59,003
2. *January-September 1989*			
Cattle	4,906	198,824	203,730
Sheep	8,752	318,820	327,572
Pigs	11,946	66,775	78,721

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what powers he has to regulate the export of live puppies; and what information he has concerning the numbers and destination of such exports by country of import during 1988 and 1989 to date.

Mr. Maclean: Powers exist in the Animal Health Act 1981 to regulate by order the export of animals from Great Britain in the interests of animal welfare. I have no information on the numbers of exported puppies.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 5 December 1989

ENERGY

Offshore Workers (Safety)

112. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what provision his Department is making for safety and survival courses for offshore workers.

Mr. Peter Morrison: It is for an employer to ensure that his employees are adequately qualified and trained for the duties they are required to undertake. The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 places a duty on an employer to provide the necessary instruction, training and supervision to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of his employees.

Renewable Energy

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of Statement for Energy (1) what encouragement he is giving to commercial organisations wishing to set up wind electricity generators on Welsh farms;

(2) what assistance has been given by the Government to commercial organisations in Wales to install wind energy generating capacity which can be sold to the grid.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My Department has not given any assistance to commercial organisations in Wales to install wind energy generators for the purpose of subsequent sale of electricity to the grid. Such installations will however be eligible for consideration under the non-fossil fuel obligation.

We have collaborated with a number of organisations in the design and construction of experimental wind turbine generators at the CEGB's test site at Carmarthen bay, and we are also collaborating with the CEGB in a project to construct an experimental wind farm at Capel Cynon.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how much money has been spent in Wales on sources of renewable energy over the past three years.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The table includes expenditure by the Department of Energy over the past three years on projects based in Wales such as the 160 kW vertical axis wind turbine at Carmarthen bay, and work undertaken by Welsh contractors, for example, university of Cardiff.

Year	*£*
1986-87	656,935
1987-88	854,459
1988-89	833,020

Information is not available to say precisely how much of this expenditure was in Wales.

Mining Statistics

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will state the numbers of men employed underground in privately owned mines on 3 April 1989 as recorded in the registers which are required to be maintained under the terms of section 2(1) of the 1908 Act.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Daily tallies for the number of men working underground in licensed mines are not collected centrally. British Coal does, however, give a total figure for the end of each financial year in its annual report and accounts, copies of which are in the Library of the House.

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the average number of hours worked below ground by mineworkers and deputies in 1978 and in 1988.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for British Coal. I have asked the chairman of British Coal to write to the hon. Member.

ENVIRONMENT

Council Housing

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those local authorities which have sold fewer than 10 per cent. of their council house stock.

Mr. Chope: Of those authorities which have provided a complete record of their sales from April 1979 to March 1989, only two authorities, Oldham and Blackburn, report sales of less than 10 per cent. of their stock. Six authorities —Arun, Bracknell Forest, Bromley, Crawley, Fenland and Havant—report sales of more than 35 per cent. of their stock.

There are 12 authorities where an incomplete total of sales between April 1979 and March 1989 shows that less than 10 per cent. of their stock has been sold, but who may have exceeded the 10 per cent. threshold if unreported sales were to be included.

I have today laid a table in the Library giving available information up to March 1989. It shows year by year information for each authority since 1984-85, together with cumulative figures since April 1979.

Over 1 million local authority dwellings (about a fifth of the England 1979 stock) had been sold by the end of March 1989, the majority to sitting tenants, and sales are continuing at a high level. Information on total year by year sales of local authority houses and flats in England is listed in the following table. The number of flats sold in 1988-89 was greater than in any previous financial year and the number of houses sold was the largest since 1982-83.

Sales of local authority dwellings England[1]

Year	*Houses*	*Flats*
1979-80	52,386	1,162
1980-81	66,946	1,282
1981-82	125,200	2,967
1982-83	175,334	5,902
1983-84	113,613	8,430
1984-85	85,487	5,885
1985-86	76,088	6,230
1986-87	77,677	8,454
[2]1987-88	90,852	16,728
1988-89	116,933	26,895

Year	Houses	Flats
	980,516	83,935

[1] Includes some small transfers to housing associations.

[2] Excludes the sale of 5,480 dwellings by the London Residuary Body to Thamesmead Town Ltd.

Methane

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he is taking to reduce methane being released into the atmosphere.

Mr. Trippier: The sources of methane emissions to the atmosphere are diverse. Some are natural, some man-made. Our understanding of the contribution from different sources and the way methane behaves in the atmosphere require further research, which is now under way. The Department of Energy has a programme to promote the use of landfill methane as an energy source.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the relative impact of *(a)* methane and *(b)* chlorofluorocarbon gases on global warming.

Mr. Trippier: The relative importance of all the major greenhouse gases for global warming in the past, at present and in the future is discussed in detail in the booklet "Global Climate Change", published by the Department in association with the Meteorological Office in October. Copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the factors in the 1989-90 scheme to determine community charge support which are different from or additional to factors used in earlier years to calculate local government support.

Mr. Chope: There are two main differences. First, the rate support grant system aims to equalise resources between authorities measured in terms of rateable values, whereas the new revenue support grant system equalises resources measured in terms of numbers of community charge payers in an area. Secondly, there has been a major review of the method of distributing grant between authorities and as a result the following additional factors will now be taken into account: the numbers of residents aged 11 or over, aged 65 to 74, aged 75 to 84 and aged 85 or over; the proportion of children aged under 16 years living in private households in rented accommodation; the number of residents aged 65 or over in independent registered residential homes whose primary function is reported as the care of elderly people, elderly people who are mentally infirm and elderly and other people who are handicapped; the number of fire false alarm calls; current expenditure on coast protection.

The full extent of the differences can be identified from a comparison of the GRE indicators given in appendix 2 to annex J of the Rate Support Grant Report (England) 1989-90 with those given in annex A to the draft Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England) issued on 6 November by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Mr. Wall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what help will be available under the poll tax transitional relief scheme to students presently living in a hall of residence.

Mr. Chope: Full-time students will be liable to pay only one fifth of the community charge of the area where they live during term time. Students will be entitled to receive transitional relief, whatever type of accommodation they occupy, provided a comparison between rates and either one or two assumed community charges (depending on the number of community chargepayers in the property) shows an increase of more than £156 a year. Any student entitled to relief will receive it at the rate of one fifth of the normal rate to match the reduced community charge liability.

Football Membership Scheme

Mr. John Carlisle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress there has been on the preparation of the national membership scheme for football specators.

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. Friend and I had a helpful meeting with the president of the Football League and the chairman of the Football Association on 14 November. They made it clear that it was still their wish that the football authorities should have first refusal to form the company that will be appointed as the Football Membership Authority. We confirmed that it was our hope and expectation that they would do so on the basis which had been agreed—that the Secretary of State would approve the composition of the authority; that the body appointed was willing and able to produce a scheme which he could approve and which satisfied the requirements of the legislation and that he was satisfied about the implementation timetable.

We propose to hold further discussions shortly with the football authorities about the membership of the FMA. The FMA will be appointed following parliamentary approval of the commencement order bringing section 3 of the Football Spectators Act 1989 into operation. We intend that the commencement order should be laid and debated in the new year, after the publication of Lord Justice Taylor's final report on the Hillsborough inquiry.

I welcome the progress which the working party set up by the football authorities has made in its preparations for the national membership scheme. I understand that it has now issued an invitation to tender to the seven companies and consortia which are bidding for the contract to operate the scheme.

I share the hope of the football authorities that it will be possible, from a wide range of financial options, to meet the requirements of the national membership scheme, on a self-financing basis, at no direct cost to football clubs. If the clubs adopt a positive approach to promoting the scheme among their supporters, there is every prospect that this approach will be pursued successfully. The Government have provided a share of the costs incurred on the preparation of the scheme in advance of Royal Assent to the Football Spectators Act. The full funding of its implementation will be football's responsibility.

It will be for the Football Membership Authority, in conjunction with the chosen supplier, to come forward with an acceptable timetable for the implementation of the scheme. The Government want the scheme to be in place as soon as practicable. We will approve its introduction when we are satisfied that it will be effective, workable and safe. Before that can happen, both the Football Membership Authority and the Football Licensing Authority will need to be confident, among other considerations: that the technology has been tested properly; that the flow of spectators through the turnstiles will proceed smoothly; that the implications for the stewarding and policing of designated football matches have been fully assessed including the methodology for handling invalid cards, and that any structural alterations which may be needed at individual grounds have been made. The Football Licensing Authority will not license a ground to hold a designated match unless the requirements of the national membership scheme have been complied with and they are fully satisfied on safety requirements.

I look forward to continuing co-operation between the Government and the football authorities in preparing for the implementation of the scheme and to the major contribution which the scheme will make to break the link between football and hooliganism.

Planning Appeals

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many planning appeals have been made in each of the last three years; if he will express these figures in terms of percentage increase; how many planning appeal inspectors have been in post in each of the last three years; and what percentage of appeals within the last 12 months have been heard within the time limit prescribed by the relevant legislation.

Mr. Moynihan: The information requested is as follows:

Planning Appeals

Year	*Planning appeals received*	*Percentage increase over previous year Per cent.*
1986-87	19,856	11·3
1987-88	22,482	13·2
1988-89	28,659	27·4

Salaried inspectors in post as at 31 December

	Number
1987	166
1988	173
[1]1989	190

[1] As at 30 November 1989.

A total of 1,424 planning appeals have so far been processed under the Town and Country Planning (Inquiries Procedure) Rules 1988 and the Town and Country Planning (Determination by Inspectors) (Inquiries Procedure) Rules 1988. In 724 cases (50·8 per cent. of the total) the inquiry was held within the timetable set out in the rules.

Tourism

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to ensure that local authority districts in which a large part of the income comes from tourism are not penalised for this in the revenue support grant calculations for 1990-91.

Mr. Chope: In the proposals for revenue support grant for 1990-91, no account is taken of income from tourism in calculating individual authorities' standard spending assessments.

Elderly People

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to exempt from the community charge elderly people who are being looked after in private homes and who would otherwise require residential or nursing care at public expense.

Mr. Chope: No. Any elderly person being looked after in the community will be eligible for community charge benefit in their own right if they meet the income and capital requirements of the benefit scheme. Benefit can cover up to 80 per cent. of the community charge bill, and any elderly person receiving income support will have included in it an amount reflecting the fact that they have to pay the other 20 per cent. Thus, there should be no financial incentive for people caring for elderly relatives to seek to place them in residential or nursing care. We have recently announced changes in the regulations to ensure that people being cared for in the community will receive the same relief from the standard community charge as those in residential care homes.

Satellite Dishes

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which planning rules apply to the erection of satellite television dishes on blocks of flats; whether he has any intention to change these rules; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: Part 25 of the General Development Order 1988 gives permission for up to two satellite antennae up to 90 cm in diameter on blocks of flats over 15 m high, provided the antennae are sited to minimise their visual effect. That permission does not apply in conservation areas, national parks, areas of outstanding natural beauty or the Broads. My right hon. Friend hopes to issue a consultation paper on planning controls over satellite antennas and other telecommunications development within the next 2 months.

Noise Control

Mr. Gerald Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance he intends to give to local authorities on the control of noise pollution; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: My Department is currently consulting local authorities about the adequacy of their powers to control noise nuisance under the Control of Pollution Act 1974, with particular reference to acid house and similar parties. We have already received helpful responses from the Association of District Councils, the Association of Metropolitan Authorities and the London Boroughs Association. Together with other Government Departments, we shall take whatever action is necessary to strengthen the law in relation to noise nuisance generally. We will also give clear guidance to local authorities about exercising their powers.

College Green

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has authorised the erection of the double-decker media hut on the green opposite the Palace of Westminster; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations he has had, concerning the erection of temporary huts on College green; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Permission was given to ITV and Channel 4 to put up the hut for broadcasting purposes associated with the state opening of Parliament and the experimental televising of the House of Commons. Further permission was given for the hut to remain in place until after the election for the leadership of the Conservative party. It will be dismantled and removed on Thursday 7 December. It is usual to allow the media to put temporary facilities on Abingdon street gardens to cover important events.

European Environment Agency

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the United Kingdom will participate in the proposed European Environment Agency; whether United Kingdom statistics on environmental damage would be made available to East European countries through such an agency and vice versa; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Unanimous political agreement was reached at the Environment Council which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State attended in Brussels on 28 November. There is a firm commitment that the United Kingdom will participate in the agency's work.

The EC regulation, endorsed at the Environment Council, makes specific reference to participation of non-EC countries, such as EFTA and the eastern bloc, in the work of the agency. Participation will be based on agreements drawn up between individual third countries and the agency, requiring unanimous agreement by the Council. Such agreements should allow for United Kingdom statistics on environment damage to be made available to east European countries through the agency and vice versa.

Forestry Industry Committee

184. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the chairman of the Forestry Industry Committee of Great Britain; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend has not held any meetings with the committee, but I have received a copy of its report on "Options for British forestry 1989-1990"; and the recommendations in this are being considered by the Forestry Commission and other relevant Departments.

Mersey Tunnel

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to reply to the Mersey tunnel's case for Government assistance which has recently been sent to him.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 4 December 1989]:* I have been asked to reply.

We are considering Merseytravel's request for Government financial assistance. A decision on the case it has presented will be made as soon as we have considered it fully.

THE ARTS

Arts Council and Crafts Council (Merger)

Dr. Glyn: To ask the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received about the merger of the Arts Council and the Crafts Council; and if he will take steps to ensure that the balance of funds available to the Arts Council and the Crafts Council will remain the same.

Mr. Luce: I have received many representations on this issue. No decision will be taken until the new year, but I have already given indicative figures of the level of support for the crafts for the next three years, in my grant announcement of 15 November.

NATIONAL FINANCE

VAT

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when serious misdeclaration penalty and default interest for value added tax will be introduced; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: Customs and Excise has been publicising, and traders have been preparing for, the introduction of the final phase of the Keith civil penalty regime from 1 January 1990. In the light of the recent consultation exercise of the VAT (Accounting and Records) Regulations, and of the technical arrangements for introducing the new regime, I have been giving further careful consideration to the timing.

The regulations, incorporating important changes beneficial to business, have been laid before the House today and will come into force as planned on 1 January 1990. As part of the procedures, traders will have the opportunity to make separate voluntary disclosure of their larger errors to Customs, thereby avoiding penalty, rather than, as at present, including them on their VAT returns or adjusting their VAT accounts. In order that all traders may become familiar with the new regime, I have decided that serious misdeclaration penalty and default interest will not be introduced until 1 April 1990.

Employee Share Ownership

110. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the provisions for encouraging employee share ownership in the United Kingdom and in other member states of the European Community.

Mr. Lilley: Major legislation providing tax reliefs to encourage the spread of employee share ownership in the United Kingdom was introduced in the Finance Acts of 1978, 1980, 1984 and 1989. These provisions have been improved or extended in most of the intervening years. By March 1988, they had resulted in more than 1·75 million employees receiving shares or interests in shares with an initial market value of £4 billion. The available information in other European Community countries is limited, but we are aware that Belgium, Denmark, France, the Republic of Ireland and the Netherlands also provide fiscal incentives to promote employee share ownership.

Civil Service (Southend)

111. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many persons are employed in Civil Service duties in Southend-on-Sea; and what was the comparable figure 10 years ago.

Mr. Ryder: At 1 April 1989, there were 3,875 non-industrial civil servants (full-time equivalents) serving in Southend-on-Sea. This compares with a total of 4,924 at 1 April 1979.

Taxation

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total tax burden (including value added tax and indirect taxes) on the average family at the present time; and what was the burden in 1979.

Mr. Lilley: The total tax burden (excluding rates) on a married man with two children on average male earnings is estimated to be about 33 per cent. of gross earnings in 1989-90, compared with around 32 per cent. in 1978-79. The corresponding figures for a married man with no children on average male earnings are about 38½ and 39½ per cent. respectively. If real earnings had remained at their 1978-79 levels, both family types would now be paying a considerably lower proportion of their earnings in tax than in 1978-79: down to 29½ per cent. for the married man with two children, and down to 36½ per cent. for the married man with no children.

Pensions

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans the Government have to review inequalities in occupational pension levels among retired public servants of the same grade or rank who retired in different years.

Mr. Ryder: None.

Interest and Exchange Rates

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what effect he estimates that the increase in interest rates and the exchange rate will have on incomes in the banking sector and in industries wholly or mainly engaged in producing importable and exportable goods.

Mr. Ryder: I have no sectoral estimates of the type requested.

Married Couples (Taxation)

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what provisions he has made in the married couple's allowance to be introduced in April 1990 for those couples who choose to maintain independent financial affairs in marriage.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 4 December 1989]:* Under independent taxation, husbands and wives will be treated as individual taxpayers, and their incomes and gains will be taxed independently. The arrangements for giving the married couple's allowance enable couples to maintain independent financial affairs.

Retail Prices Index

Mr. Wray: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list all the European Community countries which do not include *(a)* mortgage interest rates and *(b)* house rent payments in the calculations for their retail prices indices.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 4 December 1989]:* Of European Community countries, Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Spain, Portugal, Denmark and Greece do not include mortgage interest payments in their calculation of the retail prices index. Only Portugal does not include house rent payments.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what items have been *(a)* taken out and *(b)* incorporated into the calculations in the retail prices index, for each year since 1979.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 4 December 1989]:* Only minor changes have been made to the coverage of the retail prices index since 1979 the most important of which took place at the beginning of 1987 when, following recommendations of the Retail Prices Index Advisory Committee, the index was restructured to incorporate a number of items on which expenditure was relatively small and which had previously been excluded. The items in question were:

fees paid by households for educational and recreational courses;
subscriptions to trade unions and professional associations;
non-food expenditure on pets;
fees for medical, dental and optical treatment and the provision of spectacles;
premiums for house contents insurance;
expenditure on hobbies not covered by any other section of the index.

In addition housing subsidies, which used to be partly included in the calculation of the retail prices index, were excluded from 1987. At the begining of 1989, the coverage of fees was extended to take account of new charges for eye tests and dental checks, and in April 1989 community charge payments were brought into the retail prices index in respect of Scotland in place of domestic rates.

The methods by which the retail prices index has been compiled have remained essentially unchanged. Price changes are obtained for a selection of goods and services and this selection is continually updated in order to maintain the index as a reliable and representative measure of the change in prices across all the goods and services commonly bought by consumers.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Paice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the extent of United Kingdom manufacturing companies' investment in research and development; and how this has changed since 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 4 December 1989]:* Figures for United Kingdom manufacturing companies' investment in research and development from 1978 to 1987 are included in the relevant aggregates of intramural expenditure on research and development carried out in United Kingdom industry which were published in *British Business* on 3 February 1989, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Figures for 1979 are not available. 1987 is the latest year for which figures are published.

Wealth Tax

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what contribution is made by the annual wealth tax on housing in West Germany and by domestic rates in the United Kingdom in the last year for which figures are available; and what would be the yield of a wealth tax in *(a)* housing and *(b)* other assets in the United Kingdom at the rate charged in West Germany.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 30 November 1989]:* The latest figures for receipts from the annual taxes on immovable property and on net wealth in West Germany are available in "Revenue Statistics of OECD Member Countries 1965-1988". The net payments of domestic rates in the United Kingdom were £7,553 million in 1987-88.

An estimate of the yield of a wealth tax applied to assets in the United Kingdom using the West German tax rate and system of allowances, exemptions, reliefs and valuation rules could only be provided at disproportionate costs.

Duty-free Allowances

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proposals he is making to the European Economic Community on the future of duty-free allowances for travellers within the European Economic Community; what studies have been carried out by his Department of the costs of benefits of *(a)* increase and *(b)* abolition; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 30 November 1989]:* The Commission recently proposed transitional increases in the travellers' allowances for goods obtained duty and tax-paid in another EC country. Between 1990 and 1992 limits would rise in three stages from 300 to 600 cigarettes, 1·5 to 3 litres of spirits and from £250 to about £1,000 for goods subject only to VAT.

The Government welcome these proposals and would indeed prefer to see a single early increase rather than three stages; but decisions have not yet been taken by the Council. An immediate increase to the levels proposed would cost about £17 million a year.

The Commission has made no proposals affecting allowances for passengers arriving from outside the EC, where the Government would also like to see higher limits. Nor have proposals been made affecting goods obtained duty—and tax-free within the EC, but the Commission's assumption is that duty-free shopping for intra-EC travel will cease after 1992.

Official Secrets Act (Correspondence)

Mr. Richard Shepherd: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer why two letters, dated 30 August and 23 October, from the American Privacy Foundation in Washington DC to the Campaign for Freedom of Information in London, on the subject of the Official Secrets Act and the interception of communications, have been opened for inspection by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 1 December 1989]:* Her Majesty's Customs and Excise have powers to require the opening by the Post Office of any postal packet or letter arriving in the United Kingdom. These powers are used only in the pursuit of contraband and especially drugs which are frequently discovered in the mail. Drugs such as heroin, cocaine and LSD are often concealed in flat, apparently innocent, letters and packages.

Detection in these circumstances is extremely difficult and is made no easier by the possibility that packets containing certain drugs may contaminate other mail. Innocent letters and packages may be opened for internal examination, but will be resealed immediately if it is apparent that no contraband is present.

The size of the drug threat in the mail may be judged from the fact that 2,000 seizures of drugs have been made in a single year at one postal depot alone. Attempts to evade customs controls have led drug smugglers to use ingenious and sophisticated methods. They have been known to address a letter or package to a famous or highly respected person or organisation in the hope that it will not be examined, arrangements having been made for it to be extracted from the mail before delivery.

No letters are opened for examination at Customs' request for any other reasons than to discover goods prohibited by law.

Rating Reform

Mr. Gould: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what gain in revenue arises by virtue of the termination under the poll tax rules of the right of self-employed people to claim their rates liability income tax; and what is the estimated average loss to the self-employed.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 1 December 1989]:* The introduction of the community charge will not affect the income tax treatment of business rates payable on non-domestic property. These rates will continue to be deductible in computing profits for tax purposes. No deduction will, however, be available in respect of the personal community charge payable by persons who use their homes partly for business purposes, because the charge is not a business expense but is personal to the individual concerned. Information is not available centrally upon which to base an estimate of the additional income tax which may be payable in consequence.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Family Credit

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people in Northern Ireland are currently in receipt of family credit; and, of these, how many were advised in writing to return their books to central benefits branch because of the new regulations issued in October.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The number of families receiving family credit at 23 November 1989 was 14,131.

No family credit recipients were asked to return their order books because of the Family Credit, Housing Benefit and Income Support (General) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1989 which came into force on 1 October 1989 or because of the guidance from the chief adjudication officer issued recently on the interpretation of provisions in the main regulations on the treatment of expenses incurred in self-employed cases.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish the new regulations in respect of family credit applications which came into effect from 1 October, with reference to self-employed persons; and if he will make a copy available in the Library.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Family Credit, Housing Benefit and Income Support (General) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1989 which came into force on 1 October 1989 have been published and a copy is available in the Library. The regulations, which provide for payments of allowances to adopters under approved schemes to be disregarded in the calculation of income, cover but do not specifically refer to self-employed persons. Recent guidance for adjudication officers on the interpretation of provisions in the main regulations which deal specifically with self-employed cases has also been published and a copy is available in the Library.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what were the new regulations formulated in respect of family credit; and, of those whose books were requested for adjustment, how many received *(a)* an increase and *(b)* a decrease in allowance.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Family Credit, Housing Benefit and Income Support (General) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1989, which came into operation on 1 October 1989, provide for payments of allowances to adopters under approved schemes to be disregarded in the calculation of income for the purposes of family credit. In addition, the chief adjudication officer recently issued guidance on the interpretation of the Family Credit (General) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1987, as amended, which provide for the calculation of the net profit of self-employed earners. Only expenses which are wholly and exclusively incurred for the purposes of the self-employment may be allowed in calculating the net profit. No order books have been requested for adjustment as a result of either the new regulations or the guidance.

Detainees

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons have been held under the Emergency Provisions Act and the Prevention of Terrorism Act, respectively, in Northern Ireland *(a)* between 1970 and 1975 and *(b)* between 1984 and 1989 for periods of less than 48 hours, for periods of between 48 hours and five days and for periods in excess of five days; and of those persons held, how many were subsequently charged with scheduled offences permitting trial before a non-jury court.

Mr. Cope: Readily available information is as follows:

Persons detained under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Acts 1974, 1976, 1984 and 1989

	1974[1]	*1975*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*[2]
Number of persons detained	0	8	908	938	1,309	1,459	1,717	843
Held for under 48 hours	0	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	868	1,077	1,248	624
Held for over 48 hours and under 5 days	0	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	350	295	394	197
Held over 5 days	0	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	91	87	75	22
Charged under 48 hours[3]	0	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	215	205	192	61
Charged over 48 hours and under 5 days[3]	0	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	108	97	138	73
Charged over 5 days[3]	0	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	35	41	43	13

Notes:

n.a.—Not available.

[1] The Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1974 came into force on 29 November 1974.

[2] Information up to 30 June 1989.

[3] Persons charged—not necessarily with scheduled offences.

Comprehensive figures on the operation of the emergency provisions Acts are not available before 1975. Between 1984 and 31 March 1989, 3,589 individuals were arrested by the police using powers under section 11 of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978 and detained for a maximum of 72 hours; 18 individuals were arrested by the police under section 13 of the Act; and 638 people were arrested by members of Her Majesty's forces under section 14 of the Act and held for a maximum of four hours (a number of whom were subsequently re-arrested under the PTA). In total, 655 individuals were charged with scheduled offences during the period as a result of these arrests. The powers under section 11 of the EPA were repealed in 1987.

Police and Criminal Evidence Order

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he intends to lay before Parliament the draft codes of practice under the Police and Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1989.

Mr. Cope: Draft codes of practice under article 65 of the PACE (NI) Order 1989 dealing with the exercise of police powers, and the detention, treatment, questioning and identification of persons in custody, were laid before both Houses of Parliament today.

An order bringing the codes into operation on 1 January 1990 will be laid shortly.

It had been the Government's intention to lay at the same time a draft of the code of practice on the tape-recording of police interviews with suspects; but this code will not now be laid in draft until the steering committee set up to implement and monitor the procedures has had an opportunity to evaluate the tape-recording pilot schemes which will get under way in the new year and to assess and consider the arrangements which would be appropriate for Northern Ireland.

When this has been completed the draft code of practice on tape-recording will be laid before Parliament and thereafter an appropriate order will be made placing (subject to parliamentary approval) the Royal Ulster Constabulary under a duty to tape-record interviews with suspects in accordance with the code.

Footpaths (Accidents)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will list the number of cases *(a)* of applications made and *(b)* in which compensation was paid to persons who tripped on a footpath in each of the last three years in each council district, or if more convenient each housing executive district;

(2) what sums have been paid out in compensation by public bodies in Northern Ireland in each of the last three years to persons who alleged they had tripped and hurt themselves on footpaths.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answers 28 November 1989]:* Information is not available in the precise form requested. The following table sets out the number of claims made for personal injury and compensation paid out in each of the three years requested.

Organisation	*1986-87*			*1987-88*			*1988-89*		
	(i)	*(ii)*	*(iii) £000's*	*(i)*	*(ii)*	*(iii) £000's*	*(i)*	*(ii)*	*(iii) £000's*
Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland) Roads Service Divisions									
Ballymena	306	20	118	314	26	65	264	47	209
Belfast	2,628	938	1,885	2,570	883	1,612	1,959	1,015	1,956
Coleraine	870	216	243	742	188	282	461	128	221
Craigavon	586	186	283	626	214	373	513	186	388
Downpatrick	654	176	325	748	176	313	649	177	449
Omagh	239	127	231	271	65	193	234	130	365
SUB TOTAL	5,283	1,663	3,085	5,271	1,552	2,843	4,080	1,683	3,588
Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland) Water Service Divisions									
Eastern	297	114	210	238	132	205	322	122	363
Northern	42	21	42	44	16	27	27	17	18
Southern	58	29	49	77	30	64	45	25	35
Western	94	42	55	83	31	56	64	12	15
SUB TOTAL	491	206	356	442	209	352	458	176	431
Northern Ireland Housing Executive Regions									
Belfast	1,165	1,055	1,351	1,078	732	1,290	984	393	638
South East	275			301			274		
South	263			245			157		
North East	229			232			180		
North West	542			460			299		
West	96			89			87		
SUB TOTAL	2,570	1,055	1,351	2,405	732	1,290	1,981	393	638
Northern Ireland Electricity	198	68	72	189	48	94	173	19	25
TOTAL	8,542	2,992	4,864	8,307	2,541	4,579	6,692	2,271	4,682

(i) Number of personal injury claims received.
(ii) Number of claims in which compensation was paid.
(iii) Amount of compensation paid.

Patrols

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will state the number of *(a)* Royal Ulster Constabulary patrols, *(b)* Regular Army patrols, *(c)* Ulster Defence Regiment patrols as a percentage of the total number of patrols carried out by the security forces, for each month since November 1985 and *(d)* Ulster Defence Regiment patrols which were accompanied by the Royal Ulster Constabulary, as a percentage of the total number of patrols conducted by the regiment, for each month since November 1985 and the dates by which he intends to ensure that (i) 70 per cent., (ii) 80 per cent., (iii) 90 per cent., (iv) 100 per cent. of Ulster Defence Regiment patrols will be accompanied by the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 4 December 1989]:* As I told the hon. Member on 23 October at column 305, information is not regularly collected in the form requested and cannot be provided except at disproportionate cost. The Government are committed to increasing the present level of RUC accompaniment of military patrols, especially those which are likely to come into direct contact with members of the community. But the question whether or not a particular patrol should be accompanied by the RUC is an operational matter, and it would not therefore be appropriate for the Secretary of State to lay down firm timetables of the kind envisaged in the hon. Member's question.

Traffic Flows

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will show for the latest available date, the number of vehicles passing along *(a)* the Ballyrobin road, *(b)* the Killead road and *(c)* the Oldstone road per 24 hour period; and if he will indicate the maximum and minimum hourly traffic flows.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Latest traffic survey figures are:

Road/Location of survey	*Date of survey*	*Peak daily flow vehicle per day*	*Peak hourly vehicles per hour*	*Minimum daily flow vehicles per hour*
A				
Ballyrobin road/Templepatrick side of traffic lights	August 1989	8,636	913	10
Ballyrobin road/Airport side of traffic lights	August 1989	13,903	1,125	16
B				
Killead road/Killead Village	August 1986	13,099	1,279	7
C				
Oldstone road/North of traffic lights	June 1987	8,225	715	5

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Breath Testing

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Attorney-General what criteria the Crown prosecution service applies when undertaking the independent legal review of charges brought by police for alleged excess alcohol offences arising from breath tests administered to motorists stopped at random.

The Attorney-General: The CPS applies the criteria set out in the code for crown prosecutors. Accordingly, crown prosecutors must be satisfied that there is admissible evidence sufficient to allow a realistic prospect of a conviction before authorising continuance of the criminal proceedings. For this purpose the matters which it will take into account include the following:

(i) It is lawful for a police officer in uniform acting in the execution of his duty to require the driver of any vehicle on a road to stop.

(ii) A police officer who stops a vehicle on a road with the purpose of investigating whether its driver has alcohol in his body is acting in the execution of his duty.

(iii) It is accordingly lawful for a police officer in uniform to stop vehicles at random with that purpose, provided there is no malpractice such as oppression or capricious conduct on the part of the officer.

(iv) It is lawful for a police officer in uniform to require a driver who has been stopped in such circumstances to provde a specimen of breath for a breath test, provided that the officer has reasonable cause to suspect that the driver has alcohol in his body.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Special Educational Needs

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) at what stage pupils with special educational needs will be tested;

(2) whether special educational needs will be tested at seven, 11 and 16 years regardless of the level or attainment target they are working on at the time.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The national curriculum and its assessment arrangements will apply equally to all but the very small minority of pupils in respect of whom a statement provides otherwise or a statutory exception has been made.

The attainment targets, programmes of study and assessment arrangements are being designed to bring out positive achievement at all levels.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if *(a)* special schools will be expected to publish results and *(b)* schools will be expected to publish results of pupils with special educational needs.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Regulations under section 22 of the Education Reform Act concerning the publication of information about aggregate pupils' achievements under the national curriculum will be made in due course. My right hon. Friend will consider nearer the time whether special provision is appropriate for pupils with special educational needs.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will allow more time to be given for preparation of individual programmes for pupils with special educational needs within the national curriculum framework;

(2) if he will consider giving extra time for the disapplication procedures for special educational needs children;

(3) what consideration he has given to the problems of those SEN pupils who require developmental curriculums as opposed to academic ones.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The national curriculum requirements will not apply to pupils with statements of special educational needs until August 1990, one year later than for other pupils. This will allow time for statements to modify or disapply national curriculum requirements and for individual programmes to be prepared. We have no plans to extend the year's delay beyond August 1990.

Under section 18 of the Education Reform Act, a statement may modify or disapply any or all of the requirements of the national curriculum. My right hon. Friend expects statements containing modifications or disapplications to set out the alternative provision to be made. However, where exceptions have been made, maintained schools are still under a duty to ensure that the curricula they offer pupils are balanced and broadly based, in accordance with the requirements of section 1 of the ERA.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will consider a dispensation from the national curriculum for special educational needs children with severe learning difficulties and speech problems from taking a foreign language.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Section 18 of the Education Reform Act already makes provision for the national curriculum requirements to be lifted or modified for pupils with statements of special educational needs. This could include exemption from the modern foreign language requirements; but my right hon. Friend expects the benefits of learning a modern foreign language to be made available to as many children as possible.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what extra resources he is prepared to give to schools to help in teaching the national curriculum to pupils with special educational needs;

(2) what plans he has to allocate extra resources to mainstream schools to enable special needs children to have maximum access to the national curriculum;

(3) what plans he has to allocate extra resources to special schools in order to equip them to offer a broad, balanced curriculum to all children.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The cost of implementing the national curriculum will be met largely from the redirection of existing resources. However, we are giving local education authorities specific grant support for the introduction of the national curriculum. This financial year there will be support for over £100 million expenditure. It is for authorities to decide how much to spend to enable pupils with special educational needs, whether in mainstream or special schools, to have maximum access to the national curriculum and a broad, balanced curriculum.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he intends to take to ensure that when local education authority centrally retained funds are reduced from 10 to 7 per cent. the services provided by the local education authority to special needs children will not be adversely affected.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Under LMS, LEAs will retain the statutory duty to ensure that the requirements of statements of special educational need are fulfilled for those children who have such statements. A number of LEAs believe that the needs of statemented pupils can best be met by delegating resources to schools and have made appropriate proposals in their submitted LMS schemes. Others have indicated that they wish to retain central control of such resources. As LEAs move towards the target of reducing the proportion of funds retained centrally, it will remain for individual LEAs to judge whether the needs of pupils can best be met by delegating or retaining central control over resources and services for those with special needs.

Learning Difficulties

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if national priority training money will be made available to provide national curriculum training for all teachers to enable the most effective response to be made to the needs of children with significant learning difficulties.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Substantial support for training teachers to implement the national curriculum is available through the LEA training grants scheme. This support includes training in respect of national curriculum requirements as they relate to pupils with special educational needs.

Educational Psychologists

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science to what extent he proposes to make additional resources available to meet the extra demands made on educational psychologists in advising on modifications of the national curriculum for some children.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Modification to and disapplications of the national curriculum for children with statements of special educational needs are expected to occur only in exceptional cases. Advice in this area should not place any significant extra demands upon the schools psychological service.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he intends to take to ensure that the demands of statutory work on educational psychologists do not reduce the amount of time available to deal with the psychological interests of children who have the specific learning difficulties in dyslexia.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Local education authorities are responsible for the employment of educational psychologists in the maintained sector of education, and it is for them to ensure that adequate numbers are employed to meet local needs.

Psychological Services

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science under local management of schools what action he will be taking to ensure that psychological services continue to be available to all children and their families.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Under LMS, LEAs may choose whether to continue to manage centrally the provision of educational psychology services or to delegate the responsibility and resources for such provision to schools. LEAs will continue to have the statutory duty to secure the advice of educational psychologists when assessing children for the purposes of statements of special educational needs.

Teachers' Pay

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about the setting up of a committee of inquiry into teachers' pay and conditions; and what has been his response.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Professional Association of Teachers has recently suggested to my right hon. Friend that a committee of inquiry into teachers' pay and conditions should be established. My right hon. Friend, in reply, has made it clear that in his view this would not be appropriate.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many salary allowances to teachers have been awarded to teachers for good classroom practice without the acceptance of additional responsibilities since 1986.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government have stressed from their introduction in 1987 the importance they attach to incentive allowances being used to reward teachers who demonstrate outstanding ability in the classroom. There is some evidence in the 1988 secondary school staffing survey that, in the first year of operation, a significant number of allowances were awarded to teachers for reasons other than the taking on of extra responsibilities.

PhD Students

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his Department's policy towards the recruitment of PhD students into research; and how the proposed changes in the funding of research departments will support this policy.

Mr. Jackson: The main objective of the Department's expenditure on the support of postgraduate research students is to secure an adequate supply of very highly qualified manpower for research in industry and academic institutions. This expenditure is administered by the research councils and the British Academy, which are best placed, in consultation with academic institutions and employers, to assess national needs for PhDs and to maintain the quality of postgraduate education and training.

The new funding arrangements to be introduced through the Universities Funding Council will help to improve management of resources for both teaching and research in universities. This will benefit all students, including PhD students.

Primary Schools (Statistics)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make it his policy to remove the requirement under the Education Reform Act for every primary school to compile comprehensive statistics and replace it with a sampling method.

Mrs. Rumbold: The recent HMI report "The Implementation of the National Curriculum in Primary Schools" pointed to the need for primary schools to pay more attention to the overall planning of time. The annual curriculum return (schedule 1 to the Education (School Curriculum and Related Information) Regulations 1989) will serve as a useful framework for schools in planning their curriculum provision and will also provide information about schools' use of time for local and national monitoring.

Magnet Schools (Bradford)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many visits his officials have made to Bradford during the past year, to date, to discuss magnet schools; and if he will list the names and designation of officials and the dates on which visits were made and the names of Bradford council elected members and officials they met.

Mrs. Rumbold: None.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the names of Ministers, Bradford council members, Bradford council officers and officials of his Department who met on 28 September to discuss Bradford's proposal for development support funding for magnet schools; where the meeting took place; what documents were passed to Ministers by Bradford council members; and if he will place copies of all such documents in the Library.

Mrs. Rumbold: I met Councillor Eric Pickles and Councillor Mike Gaunt at the Department's headquarters in London. It is not accepted practice to name officials of the Department, three of whom were also present. A copy of the document "Magnet Schools: Promoting Quality and Diversity in Bradford" was passed to me, and has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what response he has made to the proposal for development support funding for magnet schools in Bradford outlined in documents passed to his Minister of State by members of Bradford council on 28 September; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: At my meeting on 28 September, I noted with interest the plans being developed by Bradford council for a magnet schools initiative. The council subsequently submitted bids for specific grant and capital funding to support the initiative. The Government's response to these bids is set out in the reply that I have given today to a separate question from the hon. Member on the same subject.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what supplementary bid for local authority training grants scheme support in connection with magnet schools he has received for Bradford council; what is the total amount of this bid; when he expects to reach his decision on this bid; what other bids under other programes, linked to magnet schools, he has received from Bradford council; what is the total amount of all such bids; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: A supplementary bid amounting to £204,000 in 1990-91 has been received from Bradford for funds to enable the local education authority to carry out further training of its staff in preparation for the introduction of a magnet schools programme. The maxima of expenditure by local education authorities that will be supported by grant under the LEA training grants scheme in 1990-91 will be announced shortly. Bradford has already been informed that there was no prospect of the supplementary funds it was seeking being made available as this could only be done at the expense of another authority.

Bids under the education support grant programme for 1990-91 totalling about £1·25 million have also been received from Bradford in respect of the magnet schools programme. These are currently being considered; my right hon. Friend expects to announce ESG allocations for 1990-91 around the end of this year. In addition, Bradford's capital expenditure plans for 1990-91 include £1·5 million for school improvements related to a magnet schools programme. The annual capital guidelines for 1990-91 will be announced shortly.

Earth Sciences Departments

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many jobs are likely to be lost as a result of the rationalisation of earth sciences departments; where these are expected to occur; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: Nationally, the rationalisation exercise will result in the creation of some 45 new posts. Implementation is a matter for the Universities Funding Council, in collaboration with the institutions concerned.

HEALTH

Child Care

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish the brief provided to the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys for the study of child care needs; and how long he anticipates the research to take before it is completed.

Mr. Freeman: The survey being carried out by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys is designed to obtain a detailed picture of the arrangements parents make for the care of children under eight. The pattern of attendance at day nurseries, nursery schools and classes, primary schools and playgroups will be covered as will the use of child minders, relatives and friends to look after the children, inside and outside the home. Parents will be asked to express satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the arrangements and to say whether the arrangements represent their first choice. The survey will also collect information about the stability of arrangements. Questions will also be asked about attendance at clubs, etc. after school and arrangements made during school holidays.

The pilot survey work was carried out by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys in October; the main fieldwork stage is planned for October-December 1990, in order to obtain accurate and recent data about the summer holidays. The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys expects to have completed the main part of the analysis about a year after the main fieldwork stage.

I would be happy to give the hon. Member further details, if she considers that would be helpful.

Food (Radiation)

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what checks or monitoring his Department carries out on radiation levels in food imported from eastern European countries, either direct or via other European Community countries, following the accident at Chernobyl; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Port health authorities are continuing to monitor radiation levels in food imports from countries outside the European Community in accordance with the latest European Council regulation (EC 3955/87 of 22 December 1987).

Opting Out (South Yorkshire)

Mr. Flannery: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the names of the hospitals in south Yorkshire which have shown an interest in opting out.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) on 29 November at columns *297-300*. There is, of course, no question of any hospital "opting-out" of the NHS.

BSE

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on links between bovine spongiform encephalopathy and meningitis.

Mr. Freeman: There are no known links between bovine spongiform encephalopathy in cattle and meningitis in humans.

District Health Authorities (Cuts)

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on the number of district health authorities that will be cutting beds and operation lists before the end of the financial year.

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on the number of district health authorities that will be cutting beds and operation lists before the end of the financial year.

Mr. Ernie Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on the number of district health authorities that will be cutting beds and operating lists before the end of the financial year.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We do not hold the information requested centrally. The provision of local health services is the responsibility of local health authorities subject to local needs and priorities.

Catheters

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will add catheters to the list of items exempt from prescription charges.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The present exemptions from prescription charges are for particular groups of people. They do not include exemptions for individual drugs or appliances, other than for contraceptive substances and listed contraceptive appliances. We have no plans to change these arrangements.

Child Abuse

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children were removed from the child abuse register in London in 1987-88.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information from the survey of child protection registers in the year ending 31 March 1988 is published in "Survey of Children and Young Persons on Child Protection Registers Year ended 31 March 1988". Copies are available in the Library.

The number of recorded deregistrations in Greater London in 1987-88 (excluding Greenwich and Westminster) was 2,905.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if each area covered by a social services department maintains a central register of children in the area who have been abused or are at risk from abuse.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Yes.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will break down the £7 million which is used for training of social services staff on child abuse.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The £7 million provided for the training of local authority staff working with children has been allocated as follows: £100,000—to fund the central training group on child sexual abuse, national workshops and other development and review work;

£2,140,000—flat rate allocation of £20,000 to all local authorities in England, except the City of London and Isles of Scilly, for improvements in their training infrastructure; £4,760,000—allocations to all local authorities in England based on the number of staff working with children. Details of allocations to individual local authorities have been placed in the Library.

Training programmes submitted by local authorities indicate that £4·6 million will be spent on general training and £2·3 million on training in child protection work including child sexual abuse.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will introduce special assessment teams, composed of local authority health authority and police officials, to deal with the problem of child abuse.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is for the local authority, health authority and local police force jointly to consider the introduction of specialist assessment teams. The Department's guidance document "Working Together" (1988), copies of which are available in the Library, commends agencies to consider carefully the conclusions and recommendations of the report of the inquiry on child abuse in Cleveland 1987 on this issue.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will meet voluntary organisations concerned with children to discuss the setting up of a national register list of aid for children.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department regularly meets voluntary organisations with responsibilities in the child care field. I refer the hon. Member to my previous response to her of 15 November at column *338*.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what services are available to a child or family removed from the child abuse register.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Children removed from the child protection register and their families are eligible for the full range of services provided by local authority social services departments and health authorities. Paragraph 5.29 of the Department's guidance document, "Working Together" (1988), copies of which are available in the Library, states:

> "removal of a child's name from the register should not lead to an automatic withdrawal or reduction in services. The risk of child abuse may have been eliminated or reduced but a variety of services may still be needed by the child and family, and in some cases the child will be in the care of the local authority either on a voluntary or compulsory basis".

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment is being made of the results of the Open university training package for training in recognition of child abuse.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: As the training pack has only been on the market since the end of March, it is too early to provide a full assessment of its impact. Sales of the training pack have been very encouraging; from the end of March 1989 to September 1989, 2,319 student packs and 620 tutor packs were sold. The training pack included an assessment module, and 1,000 students have so far registered to take part in the assessment exercise. Early results indicate that students' knowledge of child abuse is increased substantially after having completed the course.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on the number of local authorities providing day nurseries, play groups, child minding, family aides, family centres and other facilities which can support and advise and aid in the prevention of child abuse within families.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Statistical information is collected annually from each local authority about day nurseries, play groups and child minders provided by the local authority. Information is sought about the number of premises/persons, the number of places and, for day nurseries and playgroups, the numbers on the register. Information is also sought about the number of children in voluntary or private play groups or day nurseries or with child minders who are placed and paid for by the local authority. This information is published, together with some details of private and voluntary provision. The most recent publication is "Children's Day Care Facilities at 31 March 1988; England" a copy of which is available in the Library.

Details of expenditure are also collected for each authority; these details cover expenditure on family centres as well as day nurseries, playgroups and child minders.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many area child protection committees investigating child abuse there were in 1988.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In July 1988, the Department published a guidance document, "Working Together" and an accompanying circular (LAC(88)10/HC(88)38), copies of which are available in the Library, which called for the redesignation of area review committees as area child protection committees covering one local authority area. The process of redesignation continued into 1989, and involved the reorganisation of some larger area review committees into area child protection committees which were conterminous with local authority boundaries. There are currently 108 area child protection committees.

Bradford DHA

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he next intends to visit Bradford to meet the chairman of the district health authority.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has no plans at present to visit Bradford to meet the chairman of the health authority. I hope to visit Bradford in the new year.

NHS Costs

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of the rate of increase of costs in the National Health Service in 1987, 1988 and 1989.

Mr. Freeman: Costs in the National Health Service increased by an estimated 7·9 per cent. in 1987-88 and by 10·1 per cent. in 1988-89. An estimate of increased costs in 1989-90 will not be available until after the current financial year has ended.

Disabled People

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy that before the implementation of section 42 of the National Health Service and Community Care Bill, there will have been the full implementation of sections 1, 2 and 3 of the Disabled Persons (Consultation, Representation and Services) Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: We have always made it clear that further implementation of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 could take place only if the necessary resources were available without jeopardising high priority social services. We are currently considering action to identify the resources which would be required to implement sections 1, 2 and 3 of the Act.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will set up a statutory committee of voluntary organisations involved in the provision of care services to disabled people, of which disabled people themselves would be members.

Mr. Freeman: Although we have no plans to set up such a statutory committee, we will continue to consult the relevant voluntary organisations as and when appropriate.

Ambulance Dispute

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has visited any ambulance station to talk to ambulance personnel since the beginning of the dispute *(a)* at West Bridgford ambulance station, *(b)* in Nottingham and *(c)* nationally.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Neither I nor my colleagues have visited any ambulance stations since the beginning of the dispute. I have talked with staff from West Bridgford ambulance station at my constituency office.

NHS Reform

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the representations on the White Paper from patients and doctors by the Nottingham health authority.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We cannot identify separately from the information we hold the number of representations received from people living within each individual authority area.

Commercial Activities

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give an estimate for the income generated by each district health authority from commercial activities following the provisions of section 4 of the Health and Medicines Act.

Mr. Freeman: Section 7 of the Health and Medicines Act 1988 gives health authorities the power to generate additional income.

In the current year, we expect £28 million to be generated by the NHS in England. The average amount generated by each district will be about £140,000.

Aging

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how often meetings are held between Ministers and officials from different Government Departments to co-ordinate Government policy on aging and related issues.

Mr. Freeman: Meetings are not held regularly but as and when necessary and in order to consider issues which arise.

Devon (Inward Migration)

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on what information the latest statistical forecast of high inward migration to Devon was based.

Mr. Freeman: Estimates of population for local and health authorities in England have been extrapolated forward from 1988 to 1989 and 1990. It has been assumed that recent average changes in each area arising from births, deaths, and migration will be maintained, subject to constraints set by the latest (1988-based) national population projections for England made by the Government Actuary's department. Past estimates of migration have been derived from re-registrations on the National Health Service central register as people move from a doctor's list in one family practitioner committee area to a list in another such area (migration within the United Kingdom), and from results of the international passenger survey (international migration). The net inwards migration levels assumed for 1988-89 and 1989-90 on this basis are less than the levels estimated for each of the previous four years.

Milk

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals he has received for changing the basis on which welfare milk is paid for; and whether he will make it his policy to ensure that any change does not reduce the incomes of self-employed milkmen.

Mr. Freeman: As part of the Government's initiative to secure value for money in all their purchases, negotiations have been held with representatives of all sectors of the dairy trade about the price paid by the Department for the supply of liquid welfare milk. The results are being closely studied and the interests of all the parties involved will be carefully considered before any decisions are made.

Mental Health Act 1983

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to lay before Parliament the code of practice required under section 118 of the Mental Health Act 1983.

Mr. Freeman: We have today laid the code of practice, and copies have been placed in the Library.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

South Africa

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what meeting has been held since September with representatives of the Government of the Republic of South Africa and the United Kingdom on the arrangements for South Africa to join the nuclear non-proliferation treaty; what other non-proliferation treaty depository states have been involved in such discussions; and what future plans there are for further meetings with South Africa on the non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Maude: There has not been any such meeting since September. However, representatives of the United Kingdom, the United States and the Soviet Union (which are the depositary states of the non-proliferation treaty) are to meet South African representatives in Vienna on 11 and 12 December to discuss the question of South African accession to the treaty.

South Korea

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Government of South Korea to have removed the concrete wall which borders the demilitarised zone.

Mr. Maude: North and South Korea are still technically at war. The choice of defensive measures on their side of the demilitarized zone is a matter for the Government of the Republic of Korea.

Radar Equipment (China)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why permits were issued for the sale of radar equipment in Chinese fighter aircraft in September; whether such permits were excluded by the Madrid European Community summit declaration; and whether Export Credit Guarantees Department help was given to the Chinese Government for the purchase of such equipment.

Mr. Maude: In accordance with the Madrid declaration we have banned exports to China of weapons, together with any equipment which could be used for the purposes of internal repression, and postponed the examination of new requests for credit insurance. The avionics equipment to be supplied by GEC Marconi falls outside the embargo. It is subject to ECGD export credit cover, but as this was finalised prior to the events of June, it is not covered by the Madrid declaration.

Consular Fees

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much money has been levied in consular fees as a result of misfortunes happening to British citizens abroad who have had to seek help from embassy staff outside working hours.

Mr. Maude: The information requested is not readily available, and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

PRIME MINISTER

Eastern and Central Europe

Q12. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Prime Minister what consultations she has had with European allies concerning the security implications of recent political developments in eastern and central Europe.

The Prime Minister: I discussed recent developments in eastern Europe with my EC colleagues in Paris on 18 November, and will have the opportunity to do so again in Strasbourg on 8-9 December. I was also able to discuss these issues with European and other NATO colleagues at the briefing which President Bush gave yesterday in Brussels on his meetings with President Gorbachev.

Environment

Q27. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a further statement on the proposals in the Gracious Speech relating to the environment.

Q129. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a further statement on the proposals in the Gracious Speech relating to the environment.

The Prime Minister: Our Environmental Protection Bill is further proof of the Government's firm commitment to protecting and enhancing the domestic and international environment. It will encompass a range of innovative and widely welcomed measures to tackle pollution at source. New and more effective controls will be introduced to regulate pollution and waste disposal. Other provisions include strong measures to crack down on litter and improvements to the structure of our conservation agencies.

Education Reforms

Q31. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Prime Minister whether she will make a statement on implementation by local authorities of the Government's education reforms.

The Prime Minister: Local authorities are making satisfactory progress with implementing the Government's education reforms which will increase parental choice in the schooling for their children and increase the say of parents in the way the schools are run. In England and Wales, preparations for local management of schools and colleges are on target and the implementation of the national curriculum is going well. In Scotland, establishment of school boards for education authority schools is proceeding well, and authorities are participating in all aspects of our initiatives on curriculum and assessment for five to 14-year-olds.

Berlin

Q32. **Mrs. Currie:** To ask the Prime Minister whether she has any plans to visit Berlin.

The Prime Minister: I have no present plans to do so.

Eastern Europe

Q107. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the proposals made by Her Majesty's Government to the European Community calling for increased aid and investment in eastern European countries seeking to introduce democracy and a freer market economy; and what progress is being made in that regard.

The Prime Minister: The Government are committed to supporting economic and political reform in eastern Europe, and have played a leading role in encouraging the very positive response of the EC and its member states to the emerging democracies. Nationally, the United Kingdom was first in the field with a know-how fund for Poland, now valued at £50 million. On 29 November, we announced that we would be contributing £15 million to an agriculture project in Poland and that we would make a contribution of $100 million to the stabilisation fund for Poland. For Hungary, a know-how fund, valued at £25 million, will come into operation early next year.

Within the Community we have contributed to a comprehensive assistance package for Poland and Hungary comprising:

- some £210 million for aid projects for both Poland and Hungary in 1990;
- GSP status, bringing reductions in tariffs and levies on industrial and certain agricultural products;
- suspension or abolition of quantitative trade restrictions;
- eligibility for EIB lending.

In addition, the Community has provided £70 million-worth of free food for Poland. We expect to announce soon a further contribution.

Moreover, the EC is establishing a pattern of agreements with the countries of eastern Europe which will encourage trade and investment.

Her Majesty's Government will continue their strong support of the EC's policy of differentiation in favour of those countries which introduce reforms leading to democracy and a free-market economy.

Easenhall, Rugby

Q193. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to make an official visit to Easenhall near Rugby.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Inner Cities

Q210. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a further statement on proposals on the Queen's gracious speech relating to the inner cities.

The Prime Minister: Excellent progress is being made in the regeneration of our inner cities under the Government's action for cities programmes. In developing our policies for the future we will seek to develop a genuine partnership between all those involved in the regeneration of their areas. The Government are working with business, local government, the voluntary sector and local people to build on the progress already made and to ensure that the pace of inner-city regeneration is maintained.

European Free Trade Association

Q223. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the proposal by President Mitterrand and others to permit the United Kingdom to rejoin the European Free Trade Association.

The Prime Minister: There is no such proposal. The United Kingdom is and will remain an active, committed and influential member of the European Community.

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 December.

Q2. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 December.

Q3. **Mr. Jessel:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 December.

Q4. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 December.

Q5. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 December.

Q6. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 December.

Q7. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 December.

Q8. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 December.

Q9. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 December.

Q11. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 December.

Q12. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 December.

Q22. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 December.

Q42. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 December.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening, I hope to have my regular audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

South Korea

Mr. Parry: To ask the Prime Minister (1) if she raised the question of human rights in South Korea at her recent meeting with the president;

(2) what representations she has made concerning human rights in South Korea; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: During my talks with President Roh on 28 November, I encouraged him to continue to make progress with domestic political reform.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Prime Minister whether she made any representations to the President of South Korea during his recent visit regarding the alleged ill-treatment of dogs and cats prior to their killing for human consumption; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: President Roh is well aware of the strong views of the people of Britain on this issue.

WALES

Schools

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps are being taken to provide quality supply cover in schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The responsibility of the Government is to ensure that there are sufficient qualified teachers from whom LEAs can recruit. This year, total recruitment to the public sector initial teacher training institutions in Wales exceeded recruitment targets by over 17 per cent.

Our education support grant programme to assist teacher recruitment urges LEAs to encourage flexible working practices, including part-time working. This should stimulate the employment of supply teachers. However, the employment and deployment of teachers is a matter for LEAs and schools. It is for them to decide how many supply teachers to appoint. They also have discretion to pay teachers on short-notice contracts at rates they consider appropriate in order to recruit and retain the teachers they need.

Schools

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will indicate the date on which he plans to publish rules for implementation of local management schemes for schools in each of the Welsh county councils.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Sections 33 and 34 of the Education Reform Act 1988 require local education authorities to prepare and submit to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, for his approval schemes for financing county and voluntary schools maintained by them. Advice on the introduction and implementation of the schemes is contained in Welsh Office circular 36/88, a copy of which is in the library.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will state for the latest available financial year for *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools (i) expenditure on books in Wales in total and by local education authority and (ii) average expenditure per pupil on books in Wales and by education authority.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The amounts spent by LEAs in respect of books, equipment and materials for 1987-88 are shown in the following table:

	Expenditure on books and equipment[1]		*Expenditure per pupil on books and equipment*[1]	
	Nursery/ Primary[2] £	*Secondary* £	*Nursery/ Primary*[2] £	*Secondary* £
Clwyd	708,931	1,275,590	19·8	44·5
Dyfed	728,939	1,658,103	24·0	69·3
Gwent	962,194	1,842,706	24·1	60·4
Gwynedd	457,647	1,121,762	23·6	65·0
Mid Glamorgan	1,212,483	2,291,762	22·8	58·1
Powys	298,725	482,177	30·1	58·7
South Glamorgan	811,907	1,445,203	23·6	53·0
West Glamorgan	950,516	1,475,811	28·7	61·5
WALES	6,131,342	[1]1,593,114	23·9	58·2

[1] Expenditure on books only is not available.

[2] Data in respect of primary schools cannot be separately identified.

Doctors

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many doctors have resigned from the National Health Service in Wales since 1 January 1980.

Mr. Grist: Between 2 October 1979 and 1 October 1987, 188 general medical practitioners left the general medical service for reasons other than death, retirement or to enter hospital service. During the same period, 97 practitioners were readmitted to the service.

Information on the resignations of consultants and senior registrars in the hospital service will take some time to extract; I will reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible and place a copy of my reply in the Library of the House.

Water

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many water supplies in Wales have aluminium in excess of the terms of the European drinking water directive; and how much investment is currently made to water treatment facilities in Wales.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has accepted undertakings under section 20(5)(b) of the Water Act 1989 and granted relaxations under regulations 4(1)(c) and 4(2) of the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 1989 in respect of aluminium standards at 89 of Dwr Cymru's treatment works. The Prospectus on the Water Share offers, a copy of which has been placed in the Library, shows Dwr Cymru's current estimates of the expenditure required by the K investment programme in the period to 31 March 2000. The estimated expenditure on water treatment (at November 1989 prices) is £265 million.

Kidney Patients

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many lithotripter machines for kidney patients are installed in Welsh hospitals; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many Welsh patients needing lithotripter machine treatment travel to English centres; if he will list those centres; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what plans there are to install lithotripter machines in hospitals in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: There are at present no lithotripter machines in National Health Service hospitals in Wales. Information on the number of Welsh patients referred to centres in England for lithotripter treatment is not held centrally. South Glamorgan health authority has been invited by the Welsh Office to prepare, in association with other health authorities in Wales, a detailed statement of need, appraisal of location options and specification for a lithotripter.

Gower

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many times he has visited Gower since his appointment to his present post.

Mr. Peter Walker *[holding answer 28 November 1989]*: I have undertaken two engagements in Gower, and a further 13 engagements in the Swansea area.

DEFENCE

War Widows' Pensions

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the actuarial basis on which war widows' pensions are calculated; whether they are in any way contributory; and whether they represent a percentage of the husband/service man's salary.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: War widows' pensions are not paid by the Ministry of Defence. Provided, however, that they are eligible, service widows may receive special rates of pension under the terms of the armed forces pension scheme if their husband's death is attributable to his service. The special rates are on scales related to the rank held by the husband at the date his service ended. They approximate to 90 per cent. of the pension which he would have earned had he completed the maximum period of reckonable service required for a full career pension, less an adjustment to reflect the difference between the standard rate of war widow's pension and the normal rate of national insurance widow's pension. No direct contributions are paid to secure the benefits of the armed forces scheme, but an adjustment is made by the Armed Forces Pay Review Body, taking into account the value of those benefits as part of the total remuneration package, in determining recommended rates of pay for the armed forces.

Ambulance Dispute

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will call for a report on the suspension and returning to barracks of the staff sergeant acting on 23 November, as Army liaison officer in the control room of the ambulance headquarters at Welwyn Garden City following a fatal road traffic accident on the A505 between Letchworth and Royston; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The individual concerned has not been suspended. He was required in Colchester to brief other medical personnel before returning for a further period of duty in Hertfordshire.

Gibraltar Garrison

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made on restructuring the Gibraltar garrison; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As indicated by my right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger) in his statement on 30 January, we have considered the matter in detail and have decided not to retain a resident infantry battalion in Gibraltar after March 1991, when the current tour of the 3rd battalion Royal Green Jackets ends. Some of the tasks currently undertaken by the resident battalion, including ceremonial duties, will in future be performed by the Gibraltar Regiment, the permanent cadre of which will be more than doubled. The establishment of a part-time company and home service force company will allow the regiment to reorganise into an all-infantry force of three rifle companies with the appropriate command and support elements. The Artillery Battery and Air Defence Troop will no longer be required, although the personnel in these units will be given the opportunity to remain in the restructured regiment. The Gibraltar Regiment Corps of Drums will be retained, and in addition a military band will be provided for certain important occasions. Separately, we are also reviewing the arrangements in Gibraltar for logistics support, and for command and control with a view to establishing a joint force headquarters.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

Austin Rover

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission what was the total sum paid by the National Audit Office to outside auditors involved in producing the report on the sale of Austin Rover.

Sir Peter Hordern: Under the National Audit Act 1983 the operations of the National Audit Office are entirely a matter for the C. and A. G. The Commission does not have any powers in this respect. However I understand that, for the purposes of its examination of the Rover Group sale, the National Audit Office did not use outside auditors. As indicated in paragraph 1.12 of the C. and A. G.'s report, it obtained specialist advice on taxation matters from chartered accountants (Touche Ross) and on the value of surplus sites from chartered surveyors (G. L. Hearn and Partners). It also sought comments on the draft report from an expert on the motor industry (Professor Garel Rhys of the University of Wales).

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Payroll Giving

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many Members take advantage of the payroll giving scheme, either in whole or in part.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: There are currently 49[illegible] Members who have authorised deductions from their parliamentary salaries under the charity payroll giving scheme.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

West Germany

Mr. Flannery: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects British manufacturing trade to be in balance with *(a)* West Germany and *(b)* the rest of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Redwood: The Government are committed to free trade as being in the best interests of the United Kingdom. We cannot expect this to produce a trade balance with every partner; nevertheless, the Government recognise the importance of continuing to encourage and support exports through, inter alia, the activities of the British Overseas Trade Board and ECGD.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will estimate the manufacturing trade deficit with West Germany.

Mr. Redwood: In the first nine months of 1989 imports of manufactures into the United Kingdom consigned from the Federal Republic of Germany exceeded United Kingdom exports to that country by £7·4 billion.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give the growth in imports in manufacturing goods from West Germany since 1979.

Mr. Redwood: Imports of manufactured goods from West Germany have risen, at current prices, from £5·3 billion in 1979 to £16·6 billion in 1988, an increase of £11·3 billion.

Balance of Trade

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the countries in the European Community with which the United Kingdom has a trade deficit, giving the amounts in each case.

Mr. Redwood: The information is given in the table.

Manufacturing trade: January to September 1989

	Crude balance £ million
France	−933
Belgium/Luxembourg	−621
Netherlands	−1,705
Federal Republic of Germany	−7,411
Italy	−1,595
Denmark	−153
Portugal	−53

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the deficit or surplus in *(a)* manufacturing and trade and *(b)* invisibles in each of the last 10 years with (i) West Germany, (ii) Japan and (iii) the United States of America.

Mr. Redwood: The crude balance of visible trade in manufactured goods and total visible trade for the identified countries is given in the following table. Information on invisible trade is not available.

	West Germany		*Japan*		*United States of America*	
	Manufactured goods £ million	*Total visible trade £ million*	*Manufactured goods £ million*	*Total visible trade £ million*	*Manufactured goods £ million*	*Total visible trade £ million*
1979	−2,523	−1,560	−960	−882	−541	−881
1980	−2,002	−587	−1,185	−1,110	−1,422	−1,465
1981	−2,152	−425	−1,657	−1,586	−1,107	210
1982	−3,314	−1,994	−2,045	−1,978	−1,262	210
1983	−4,926	−3,597	−2,653	−2,556	−950	989
1984	−5,070	−3,604	−2,913	−2,845	−1,214	791
1985	−5,833	−3,689	−3,205	−3,103	−310	1,593
1986	−6,713	−5,589	−3,918	−3,743	1,024	1,899
1987	−7,455	−6,379	−4,165	−3,969	928	1,878
1988	−8,671	−8,145	−5,373	−4,766	−518	−224

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are the figures for exports and imports for each of the last five years between the United Kingdom and *(a)* Poland, *(b)* East Germany, *(c)* Czechoslovakia and *(d)* Hungary.

Mr. Redwood: Visible trade between the United Kingdom and the countries concerned is given in the following table:

	1984		*1985*		*1986*		*1987*		*1988*	
	Export £ million	*Import £ million*	*Export £ million*	*Import £ million*	*Export £ million*	*Import £ million*	*Export £ million*	*Import £ million*	*Export £ million*	*Import £ million*
Poland	170	267	184	322	167	309	181	304	176	328
East Germany	92	198	64	204	82	195	81	180	113	153
Czechoslovakia	78	117	100	120	109	126	114	141	130	148
Hungary	101	76	107	84	102	78	101	83	131	98

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom.

Textile and Clothing Imports

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what detailed surveys of the level of imported textile and clothing goods on sale in major high street stores in the United Kingdom he is planning to undertake;

(2) what is his estimate of the level of imported textile and clothing goods on sale in major high street stores in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Redwood: The overall level of imports of textiles and clothing is shown in the trade statistics. I have no plans to survey the level of imported goods in particular stores.

Hosiery and Knitwear Industry

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received from the hosiery and knitwear industry in the east midlands regarding the current state of trade; what reply he has sent; and what action he intends to take in this matter.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Department takes a close interest in matters of concern to the knitwear industry and has taken into consideration the many letters and representations received over the past year.

My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Trade met the Knitting Industries Federation on 11 September and more recently the Apparel, Knitting and Textiles Alliance on 4 October to discuss current issues.

The Government will continue to act to defend the knitwear and hosiery industry on trade issues where it is in the United Kingdom's overall economic interest and within the constraints of our EC and GATT obligations.

Internal Market Council

Mr. Irvine: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will report on the Internal Market Council held on 23 November.

Mr. Redwood: The Council reached agreement on the abolition of the Community transit advice note (TAN), on the reduction of frontier controls for transport (subject to a United Kingdom parliamentary scrutiny reserve) on a "new approach" directive on standards for certain weighing machines, and on the third motor liability insurance directive.

Important progress was also made on the proposed EC merger regulation. The main outstanding issue is a German proposal to allow certain cases to pass to national competition authorities. The Council will discuss the regulation further at the Internal Market Council on 21 December. I refer the hon. Member to the previous answers that I gave on this subject on 24 November 1989 at columns *41-42* and on 29 November at column *291*.

The Council discussed proposed directives on public procurement (excluded sectors), rights of residence, gas appliances and life insurance services and made useful progress. All will be discussed again at the December Internal Market Council. The question of tax exemption for temporarily imported vehicles was also discussed, but was not agreed, following concerns expressed by a number of member states.

The Commission reported that it would bring forward specific recommendations based on its analysis of barriers to takeovers in member states by the end of March 1990.

Privatisation

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what accountancy firm advised his Department on the sale of *(a)* Rover and *(b)* Royal Ordnance plc.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 4 December 1989]:* My Department took professional advice on the sale of its shareholdings in the Rover Group from Baring Brothers and Slaughter and May. The privatisation of Royal Ordnance plc is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence.

European Patent Office

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he is satisfied that the European Patent Office is in a fully competitive position with the United States of America and other parts of the world.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 30 November 1989]:* The European Patent Office is not in competition with the United States patent and trade mark office and patent offices in other parts of the world. In order to obtain a patent in a state which is a member of the European Patent Organisation (13 European states including the United Kingdom), an application must be made either to the EPO or to the national patent office of the state concerned.

The EPO is very successful and last year attracted more than 50,000 applications—far more than predicted when the office was established in 1977.

Korea (Cruelty)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make it his policy to use trade sanctions in respect of trade in animal products to bring pressure on the Government of Korea to end the inhumane treatment of dogs and cats intended for human consumption in that country.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 30 November 1989]:* I condemn the inhumane treatment of animals wherever it occurs, and I view with concern reports that dogs and cats are being treated inhumanely in Korea. I do not believe, however, that trade sanctions are the proper response.

My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary drew the attention of the Korean Foreign Minister to the strong concern which many people in this country feel about this matter during the recent visit to Britain of the president of the Republic of Korea.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Private Nursing Homes

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list, by region, the maximum level of fees for private nursing home care, funded by his Department; and if he will indicate which specific regions have the largest and smallest budgets for such care.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I regret that information in the form requested is not available.

Children

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the cost of bringing up a child to the age of 18 years in Britain at the present time.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: There are no agreed criteria on which such an estimate could be based.

Pensions

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will present the data in the answer to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) on 15 November, *Official Report,* columns *313-15,* for single pensioner households and two person pensioner households.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Because the equivalence scale does not distinguish between pensioners and other adults, the information requested is the same as that provided in tables 2 and 3 (for one adult and married couple households respectively) of the answer to the hon. Member for Birkenhead on 15 November, columns *313-15.* Tables 2 to 6 of that answer illustrate the value that the equivalised average would represent for different households at each level of the income distribution and therefore contain the same information, as fixed multiples of each other, in accordance with the different values assigned to different household sizes by the Department's equivalence scale. They do not, of course, contain information about actual income changes for the household types shown.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether ME sufferers are entitled to be awarded attendance allowance by his Department under the terms of page 61 of his Department's handbook to delegated practitioners.

Mr. Scott: As the Attendance Allowance Board's "Handbook for Delegated Medical Practitioners" makes clear, entitlement to an attendance allowance depends entirely on the need for frequent attention, continual supervision or watching over arising from severe disability. Anyone whose attendance needs satisfy these criteria will qualify for an allowance, irrespective of the precise nature of their illness or disabling condition.

Young People (Benefits)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, further to the oral reply to the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) of 27 November, *Official Report*, column 420, if he will indicate the nature and scale of the difficulties faced by 16 and 17-year-olds in claiming benefit and give the numbers of those affected and refused.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Our monitoring has confirmed that our policy operates without difficulty for the vast majority of 16 and 17-year-olds. Such isolated difficulties as have arisen range from a possible misunderstanding of procedures by local office staff to lack of knowledge of the benefit provisions on the part of some young people. To overcome these, we have introduced the administrative changes which I announced on 27 November.

Benefit Records

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many social security offices have had their benefit records transferred to Glasgow; what is his estimate of the cost/benefit of the transfer; and how mistakes discovered in the records will be rectified.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Two London offices, Ealing and Southall, have so far transferred their income support benefit records to the social security centre in Glasgow. Relocation of the income support work of Acton office commenced on 4 December.

Overall the current estimate gives a cost benefit of some £16 million over 20 years for the three social security centres. The fundamental reason for relocation, however, is to improve service to the public.

Benefit records are rigorously examined for accuracy when they are received at the social security centre in preparation for loading onto the income support computer system. Where errors in payment have been made, they will be rectified and arrears due will be paid promptly.

Social Fund

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the money advice training budget for social fund officers in the years 1988-89 and 1989-90.

Mr. Scott: Guidance on money advice forms an integral part of the internal training provided for social fund officers, and there is no separate budget allocated to that part of the training programme.

Money advice training occupies two days in the total training period of three weeks and comprises: the role of the social fund officer in helping clients with financial problems; identification of priority debts; giving advice on budgeting and financial expenditure; interviewing skills relevant to money advice interviews.

Pensioners

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total value of retirement pensions being paid during the current year, or the most recent year for which figures are available, to people resident overseas who emigrated from the United Kingdom and stopped paying national insurance contributions in the United Kingdom before 1960; and what is the total value of the national insurance contributions which were paid by those people.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I regret that this information is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the cost of paying fully uprated state retirement pensions to all British pensioners overseas who are currently not covered by a reciprocal social security agreement to this effect.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) on 29 November 1989 at column *253*.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will increase the cold weather payments for the coming winter in line with the cost of living.

Mr. Scott: No. We believe that £5 is a reasonable amount to pay towards the extra expenses for heating incurred in each week of very cold weather.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list for each social security office the budget surplus or deficit at the end of the winter 1988-89 for cold weather payment provision.

Mr. Scott: Local offices do not have budgets for cold weather payments. Such payments are regulated and consequently are not subject to local budgetary constraints.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list, for the winter of 1988-89, by Department of Social Security office, the amount of cold weather payments that were made.

Mr. Scott: In the winter of 1988-89, a total of 502 cold weather payments totalling £2,510 were paid by the Department's local office at Galashiels. No other awards were made, because the weather last winter was so mild.

Dietary Requirements

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what research is undertaken by his Department into dietary requirements of people in receipt of benefit.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: None. There is no reason to believe that dietary requirements of people in receipt of social security benefits are any different from those of corresponding groups not on benefit.

Correspondence

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to reply to the letter from Colin Barlow, a war disabled veteran, which was forwarded to his Department by the hon. Member for South Hams on 26 October.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: My noble Friend Lord Henley replied to my hon. Friend's letter on 30 November.

Care Expenditure

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the sum to be transferred to Scottish local authorities in repect of his Department's care expenditure in the years 1991-92 to 2001-2.

Mr. Scott: The Government will transfer to local authorities the resources which we would have otherwise provided to finance care through social security payments to people in residential and nursing homes. Final decisions will be taken in next year's public expenditure survey following discussions with the local authority associations. Chapter 8 of the recently published White Paper on community care (Cm. 849), a copy of which is in the Library, gives details of the factors that will be taken into account in the calculation of the sums to be transferred.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will provide a breakdown of board and lodging expenditure for residential care accommodation for Scotland, England and Wales by Department of Social Security region in the years from 1982;

(2) if he will provide a breakdown of board and lodging expenditure for residential care accommodation in Scotland by Department of Social Security local offices during the last financial year;

(3) if he will provide figures for board and lodging expenditure on nursing homes in Scotland, England and Wales by Department of Social Security region in the years from 1982.

Mr. Scott: I regret that reliable estimates for regions and local offices are not available.

Disability

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide estimated figures of disabled people for Scotland by Office of Population Censuses and Surveys disability categories for the years since 1978.

Mr. Scott: I regret that the information is not available. Only the OPCS disability surveys themselves provide information at the level of detail requested, based on data collected between 1985 and 1988.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he is able to give a firm date for the publication of proposals to alter social security benefits for disabled people.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) on 14 November at column *167*.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy to include social security provision for informal carers in his proposals to change the benefits for disabled people.

Mr. Scott: We have already confirmed our policy to provide extra help for informal carers in the range of measures announced by my right hon. Friend on 25 October. The measures include the introduction of a £10 carers premium in income support and housing benefit for people receiving invalid care allowance; an increase in the earnings rule for invalid care allowance; and the extension of invalid care allowance to those caring for people who will qualify for attendance allowance for the first time as a result of the other measures announced.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a complete list of all the research commissioned by his Department in connection with the proposals to change benefits for disabled people.

Mr. Nicholas Scott: The information is as follows:

1. Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (OPCS) surveys of disability in Great Britain—six reports published between September 1988 and July 1989.
2. Department of Social Security study, based on the family expenditure survey, to compare the financial circumstances of households with and without a disabled person.
3. Social policy research unit (SPRU), university of York study of 12 to 20-year olds' transition to adulthood.
4. IFF Research Limited market research report on occupational sick pay schemes published in June 1988.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in what form his proposals for changes to social security benefits for disabled people will be presented to Parliament.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) on 28 November at column *217*.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what discussions have taken place in connection with proposals to alter social security benefits for disabled people with voluntary organisations of disabled people and their families.

Mr. Scott: Discussions have taken place with a number of organisations representing disabled people including the Disability Benefits Consortium which represents over 250 disability organisations. We will be meeting the Consortium again shortly. We have also received a large number of comments from individuals and organisations as a result of the OPCS surveys of disability.

Interpreters

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he plans to expand the scheme employing interpreters in his Department's local offices in Leeds and Bradford to other offices of his Department serving areas with large non-English speaking populations.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We have no plans at present to extend the Leeds and Bradford service to other similar areas. In the meantime, of the Department's local offices where 10 per cent. or more of callers have little or no English, over three quarters maintain lists of staff who are willing and able to act as interpreters for ethnic minority customers.

Family Credit

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the latest available figures for the number of families in receipt of family credit in Wales, and what percentage this constitutes of the total number eligible for family credit.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The latest information is for September 1989, when the number of families receiving family credit who were living in Wales at the time their award was made was 22,000.

Information about the total number of families eligible for family credit can be obtained only for Great Britain, and only retrospectively, from family expenditure survey data.

Income Support

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest available figure of the number of persons in receipt of income support in Wales and the percentage this constitutes of the total number eligible for income support.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The latest available estimates are that 246,000 claimants were in receipt of income support in Wales at May 1989. Information about the total number of people eligible for income support can be obtained only for Great Britain, and only retrospectively, from family expenditure survey data.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, how many people who have been in receipt of attendance allowance at (i) the higher rate and (ii) the lower rate have had their attendance allowance reduced in each year since 1983.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 27 November 1989]:* I regret that not all the requested information is available. The available information is in the table.

Attendance allowance: number of awards reduced and terminated 1984-89

Year	*Awards*[1]	*Awards*[2] *terminated*
1984	2,572	21,774
1985	2,705	22,985
1986	2,886	23,701
1987	2,671	22,717
1988	3,107	25,141
[3]1989	2,602	20,563

[1] Reduced from higher-rate to lower-rate.

[2] Includes higher-rate and lower-rate awards which were terminated other than on expiry of the award or on death of the recipient.

[3] To 30 September 1989.

SCOTLAND

Chernobyl

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what checks or monitoring his Department does for radiation level in food imports from eastern European countries since the accident at Chernobyl; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Responsibility for checking food imports rests under the Imported Food (Scotland) Regulations 1985 with district and islands councils. EC regulation 3955/87 currently sets down the maximum permissible levels of radioactivity in imported foods. My Department has received no reports of these levels being exceeded.

Boarding Schools

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many boarding schools in Scotland have school boards.

Mr. Lang: The only wholly residential schools under education authority management are six special schools. One of these has a school board following the first round of elections.

Civil Servants

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many civil servants have been attached to his Department in each year since 1970.

Mr. Rifkind: Information in respect of the staff in post in the Scottish Office, Scottish prison service and state hospital at 1 April each year is set out in the table. Part-time staff are counted as half units and casual staff are excluded.

The figures take account of the following transfers of staff arising from machinery of Government changes:

Date	*Number*	
July 1975	155	Staff from Department of Trade and Industry
April 1978	501	Staff from Property Services Agency
April 1980	107	Staff from Property Services Agency
March 1984	448·5	Staff to state hospital
November 1984	96	Staff from Department of Trade and Industry
April 1985	51	Staff from the then Department of Health and Social Security
October 1985	162	Staff to Royal museums of Scotland
March 1986	169·5	Staff to Royal botanic garden
July 1987	52	Staff to Scottish legal aid board
April 1988	61	Staff to Crofter's Commission/Red Deer Commission
Total	+17	staff (net)

	Scottish office	*Prisons*	*State hospital*	*Grand total*
1 April 1970	7,029	1,849	276	9,154
1 April 1971	7,121	1,903	292	9,316
1 April 1972	6,993	2,130	312	9,435
1 April 1973	7,132·5	2,164·5	301·5	9,598·5
1 April 1974	7,306·5	2,080·5	317	9,704
1 April 1975	7,526	2,174	339·5	10,039·5
1 April 1976	8,014·5	2,376	356·5	10,747
1 April 1977	7,670·5	2,489·5	352·5	10,512·5
1 April 1978	7,993·5	2,558	348·5	10,900
1 April 1979	8,233	2,582	359·5	11,174
1 April 1980	7,941·5	2,692·5	369	11,003
1 April 1981	7,659·5	2,748·5	393·5	10,801·5
1 April 1982	7,406	2,728	407·5	10,541·5
1 April 1983	7,126	2,721	438	10,285
1 April 1984	7,035·5	2,738·5	[1]—	9,774
1 April 1985	7,031	2,880·5	[1]—	9,911·5
1 April 1986	6,793·5	3,204	[1]—	9,817·5
1 April 1987	6,683·5	3,184·5	[1]—	9,832
1 April 1988	6,445	3,392	[1]—	9,837
1 April 1989	6,273	3,803·5	[1]—	10,076·5

[1] With effect from 31 March 1984, staff employed by the state hospital management committee.

Alcohol

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will consider instigating a Government-funded campaign to publicise the danger to health of excessive drinking in the light of evidence of increased incidence of alcohol abuse.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government attach high priority to tackling the problem of alcohol misuse and public education on this topic forms one of the Scottish health education group's major programmes. The next stage of the alcohol education media campaign developed by the group will be launched early in 1990.

The Government also provided financial support for the Scottish Council on Alcohol's "Drinkwise" campaign in February 1989.

Prisoners

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each year since 1974 *(a)* the number of prisoners in Scottish penal institutions for fine default, *(b)* the total number of convicted prisoners and *(c)* ([illegible]) as a percentage of *(b)*.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is set out in the table.

Year	*(a)* *Average daily population of fine defaulters*	*(b)* *Average daily population of convicted prisoners*	*(c)* *(a) as a percentage of (b)*
1974	269	4,212	6
1975	329	4,405	7
1976	322	4,324	7
1977	286	4,367	7
1978	309	4,507	7
1979	293	4,016	7
1980	386	4,303	9
1981	231	3,951	6
1982	233	4,237	5
1983	226	4,406	5
1984	256	3,983	6
1985	308	4,349	7
1986	329	4,791	7
1987	287	4,692	6
[1]1988	275	4,538	6

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[1] Provisional.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of convictions in Scotland for murder, attempted murder, culpable homicide, rape and crimes of violence, respectively, in each year from 1977.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is given in the table.

Persons with a charge proved for crimes of violence[1] in Scotland

	1977	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Murder	52	41	35	26	27	42	37	37	26	29	26
Attempted murder	53	42	49	35	35	44	27	29	26	46	39
Culpable homicide (common law)	30	30	30	38	43	36	45	31	50	27	46
Culpable homicide (statutory)[2]	44	44	30	34	25	27	26	20	29	26	28
Rape	35	[illegible]	34	30	40	31	30	20	39	29	34
Other crimes of violence	2,266	[illegible]	2,429	2,824	2,643	3,865	4,002	3,208	3,188	3,239	3,380
Total	2,480	2,919	2,607	2,987	2,813	4,045	4,167	3,345	3,358	3,396	3,553

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[1] Comprises group 1 (non-sexual crimes of violence) and the sexual assault category from group 2 (crimes of indecency) of the Scottish Home and Health Department's classification of crimes and offences.

[2] Statutory culpable homicide is the crime of causing death by dangerous or reckless driving.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the cost of supporting the spouses and families of men and women in prison in Scottish penal institutions.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is not held centrally and could not be obtained without disproportionate cost.

Hypothermia

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of deaths in Scotland where hypothermia is mentioned as the cause of death; and what is his estimate of the total number of deaths where hypothermia is a proximate cause of death.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The number of deaths in Scotland since 1984 mentioning hypothermia or showing hypothermia as the underlying cause are shown in the table:

Deaths from hypothermia (any mention), Scotland, 1984 to 1989

Year	*Total all mentions*	*Underlying cause*
1984	176	52
1985	232	60
1986	209	64
1987	153	34
1988	138	40
[1]1989	80	19

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[1] Provisional figures for January to September.

Care Expenditure

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will produce figures for local authority expenditure on residential care in Scotland from 1979-80 to 1988-89, broken down by social work authority;

(2) if he will provide figures for local authority expenditure on domiciliary care in Scotland between 1979-80 and 1988-89, broken down by social work authority.

Mr. Lang: The information for 1988-89 is not yet available. Figures for the other years are set out in the tables. A number of changes in accounting practice over the period result in the annual figures not being strictly comparable.

Table 1

Net expenditure by local authorities on residential care services

(£000)

Regions	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
Borders	1,437	1,625	1,863	2,063	1,948	2,069	2,006	2,094	1,960
Central	2,406	2,827	3,263	3,483	4,104	4,021	4,080	4,396	4,499
Dumfries and Galloway	1,361	1,522	1,857	1,938	2,377	2,045	2,175	2,303	2,273
Fife	4,282	5,111	5,636	6,465	7,695	7,502	7,428	6,725	7,151
Grampian	5,137	6,467	6,881	7,527	8,534	8,098	8,174	8,584	9,810
Highland	2,237	2,649	3,121	3,502	3,606	3,459	3,842	3,680	3,674
Lothian	11,900	15,079	16,281	16,491	19,925	16,999	16,959	16,976	18,106
Strathclyde	39,782	47,251	50,217	54,368	57,002	59,123	57,044	57,477	59,111
Tayside	6,158	7,531	7,627	8,940	9,960	9,500	8,871	9,011	9,915
Orkney	331	425	486	418	380	436	458	388	688
Shetland	259	587	671	632	703	801	844	816	883
Western Isles	679	698	878	1,011	1,035	1,065	1,005	1,032	990
Scotland	75,969	91,772	98,781	106,838	117,269	115,112	112,886	113,482	118,970

Notes:

1. The figures up to 1984-85 include unidentified levels of expenditure on wardens in sheltered housing. 1985-86 this is included in Table 2.
2. Unlike for other years, the 1986-87 figure for Okney does not include residential care for mentally handicapped and physically handicapped persons.

Table 2

Net expenditure by local authorities on Domiciliary Care Services

£(000)

Regions	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
Borders	349	403	407	420	549	603	750	788	1,003
Central	1,681	1,916	2,102	2,323	2,641	2,929	3,631	3,710	4,362
Dumfries and Galloway	767	853	929	853	1,062	1,144	1,352	1,500	1,563
Fife	2,185	2,375	2,689	2,894	3,374	4,004	5,051	6,201	7,567
Grampian	1,909	2,325	2,542	2,934	3,401	3,759	4,617	5,183	6,718
Highland	697	872	1,029	1,180	1,536	1,733	1,612	1,816	2,16
Lothian	6,069	7,126	6,819	6,690	7,796	7,187	9,238	10,374	12,572
Strathclyde	16,263	18,417	20,533	21,740	24,277	25,894	32,661	34,573	40,114
Tayside	1,856	2,173	2,297	2,538	3,227	3,643	4,618	5,189	6,352
Orkney	227	248	257	287	355	371	473	461	485
Shetland	257	336	410	518	529	469	504	555	665
Western Isles	561	616	637	742	961	827	1,021	1,049	1,145
Scotland	32,821	37,660	40,651	43,119	49,708	52,563	65,528	71,399	84,712

Note: The figures for 1979-80 to 1981-82 include only expenditure on home helps and meals on wheels; from 1982-83 onwards aids to daily living and home adaptations are added; from 1985-86 onwards expenditure on wardens in sheltered housing is added.

Drink-Driving

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what criteria procurators fiscal apply when considering reports from the police for alleged drink-drive offences following breath tests administered to motorists stopped at random.

Mr. Rifkind: I am advised by my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate that there is no code of practice in this area, but procurators fiscal will take into account the following matters:

(i) It is lawful for a police officer in uniform acting in the execution of his duty to require the driver of any vehicle on a road to stop.

(ii) A police officer who stops a vehicle on a road with the purpose of investigating whether its driver has alcohol in his body is acting in the execution of his duty.

(iii) It is accordingly lawful for a police officer in uniform to stop vehicles at random for that purpose, provided there is no malpractice such as oppression or capricious conduct on the part of the officer.

(iv) It is lawful for a police officer in uniform to require a driver who has been stopped in such circumstances to provide a specimen of breath for a breath test, provided that the officer has reasonable cause to suspect that the driver has alcohol in his body.

Procurators fiscal must be satisfied that there is sufficient evidence to merit prosecution in the public interest before instituting proceedings.

Judicial Appointments

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he intends to make any proposals relating to judicial appointments in the supreme courts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I have already announced that, in the light of responses to my consultation paper, "The Legal Profession in Scotland", I propose to extend the conditions for appointment to the office of senator to include solicitors who have exercised full rights of audience in the Supreme Courts or who have served as sheriffs principal or sheriffs, in each case for a minimum period of five years. Following the report of the review body chaired by the hon. Lord Maxwell on the use of judicial time in the supreme courts in Scotland I have decided to introduce new provisions relating to the appointment of temporary judges. Following consultation with the Lord President, I propose that the new eligibility criteria for appointment to the office of senator shall apply equally to the office of temporary judge: that vacancies in the inner house of the court of session shall be filled by the appointment of a Lord Ordinary nominated by the Lord President and the Lord Justice Clerk: that when under existing statute the Lord President directs any three judges of the court to sit as an extra division of the inner house, the Lord President shall direct which of them is to preside: and that the appointment of a Lord Ordinary to act as Lord Ordinary in exchequer causes shall be made by the Lord President without the need for it to be recorded in delegated legislation.

Water Supplies

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimates his Department has of the costs *(a)* to local authorities and *(b)* to central Government of bringing Scottish water supplies up to European Community standards; what equipment or capital plant is involved; and what sources of funds are available to complete this work.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 4 December 1989]:* Latest estimates from water authorities put the cost of bringing Scottish water supplies fully up to EC standards at approximately £100 million a year on average over a period of up to 15 years. However, authorities will shortly be required to prepare more detailed costed programmes of necessary works. The programmes will involve the construction of new improved water treatement works and the replacement and renovation of much of the distribution system.

It is largely for authorities to determine the sources of funds used within the capital expenditure rules set by Government. Grants for the improvement of rural water supplies are available to water authorities under the rural water supplies and sewerage Acts 1944-70.

Scottish Homes

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if Scottish Homes has any plans to sell off vacant houses to private landlords or other housing agencies and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 4 December 1989]:* One of Scottish Homes objectives is to increase housing choice in Scotland, and more specifically to encourage owner occupation. In pursuing this objective Scottish Homes will consider the opportunities provided by vacant houses in their stock including sale to its own tenants under its portable discount scheme, in the light of local needs and circumstances.

Under the terms of Section 2(3A) of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988 as introduced by Section 179 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 Scottish Homes power to dispose of land may be exercised only with the consent of the Secretary of State.

Woodlands

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he is taking to ensure that the bulldozing of woodland for agricultural purposes is avoided.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Forestry Commission operates a presumption against the conversion of woodland to agriculture and will not normally grant felling permission for this purpose.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Food Safety

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what will be the estimated capital and revenue costs of establishing and running the food safety directorate.

Mr. Maclean: It is not possible to identify separately all the costs of the new Food Safety Directorate in 1989-90 because some parts of the organisation are not subject to decentralised budgetary control. From 1990-91 the directorate's budget will be fully decentralised and the allocation, which is now being finalised, will be published in the Supply Estimates.

Toxic Farm Chemicals

Mr. Steen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to arrange for the collection of out-of-date toxic farm chemicals at no cost to the farmer.

Mr. Maclean: No. Purchasers of toxic chemicals are responsible for the safe disposal of surpluses and should think about disposal before they buy. Disposal costs can be reduced by co-ordinating collection. In the case of pesticides manufacturers and distributors have provided low-cost disposal arrangements when it has been necessary for Ministers to withdraw statutory approval for use. And I am pleased to note that the National Farmers Union is taking the initiative in making arrangements for the safe disposal of products not covered by industry schemes.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the amount of out-of-date toxic farm chemicals held on farms for which no safe disposal site is available.

Mr. Maclean: Safe disposal, off-farm, is available for any toxic chemical which cannot be used. There is no reliable information on the quantity or location of such waste, but the HSE's agricultural inspectorate does from time to time find unapproved pesticides in store. Anyone still holding unapproved pesticides should without delay ensure that it is stored in a safe condition and clearly labelled as not for use and make arrangements for a reputable specialist waste disposal contractor to collect the material for safe disposal.

Food Safety Bill

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on what basis he has calculated that the additional costs for local authorities arising from the Food Safety Bill will be £30 million; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Officials in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Department of Health have held consultations with interested parties in order to assess the resources local authorities will need in order to enforce the Food Safety Bill. The estimate that the additional cost for local authorities is likely to be of the order of £30 million was based on the information supplied.

Food Committees

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to increase representation from *(a)* consumer groups *(b)* enforcement agencies on food committees or working parties.

Mr. Maclean: The Food Advisory Committee has two members drawn from enforcement backgrounds and three members who have experience in consumer activities. All members of the committee are, however, appointed for their personal expertise and do not represent any particular interest. The new consumer panel will have nine ordinary consumer members nominated by various consumer organisations. I keep the membership of both committees under review and can where appropriate adjust the emphasis of the membership.

Meetings

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) on what dates within the last 12 months he met representatives of Trusthouse Forte; what matters were discussed; and if he plans any future meetings;

(2) on what dates within the last 12 months he met representatives of Sainsburys; what matters were discussed; if he plans any future meetings; and if he will make a statement;

(3) on what dates within the last 12 months he met representatives of Tesco; what matters were discussed; and what future meetings are planned;

(4) on what dates within the last 12 months he met representatives of Safeway; what matters were discussed; and what future meetings are planned;

(5) on what dates within the last 12 months he met representatives of Marks and Spencer; what matters were discussed; and what future meetings are planned.

Mr. Curry: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on Tuesday, 28 November 1989 at column *192*.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met a representative for Eli Lilly; what was discussed; and if has plans for any future meetings.

Mr. Maclean: So far as I am aware, no incumbent Minister has had such a meeting. However, in February 1988 my right hon. Friend the then Minister of State met company representatives to discuss matters relating to the licensing of veterinary medicines. There are no plans for further meetings.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met a representative from Monsanto; what matters were discussed; if he plans any further meetings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: So far as I am aware, neither my right hon. Friend nor his predecessors have had such a meeting. However, my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary met company representatives on 15 November to discuss matters relating to the licensing of veterinary medicines. There are no plans for further meetings.

Microwave Cooking

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the risk to consumers of using microwave for primary heating of food products if the manufacturer's instructions are followed.

Mr. Maclean: My Department's primary concern has been with the performance of microwave ovens in reheating already cooked food. As far as cooking from raw is concerned, the Ministry has not undertaken an assessment of oven performance compared with manufacturers' instructions but users can apply exactly the same tests to ensure that food is fully cooked as they do when using other means of cooking.

EC Surpluses

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the current situation concerning distribution of European Community surpluses to the elderly.

Mr. Curry: I assume that the question refers to the European Community's surplus food scheme. This requires member states to distribute surplus stocks of certain foods to the most needy in the community (defined in the United Kingdom as those on income support or family credit or people living in welfare hostels or of no fixed abode), not simply to the elderly.

The United Kingdom has some 3,000 tonnes of butter and 3,000 tonnes of beef available for distribution under the scheme, and all of this produce has been released from intervention stores. Distributions to eligible recipients have been taking place for some time now and I expect that most of the produce will have been distributed before the end of 1989, but the timing of distribution is a matter for the designated organisations to decide according to local needs and their own capacity.

Veterinary Laboratories

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the names and locations of all Government veterinary laboratories closed in the last 10 years, together with their date of closure.

Mr. Curry: The information requested is as follows:

Location	*Date of closure*
Weybridge	31 December 1980[1]
Cardiff	4 April 1986
Chester	4 April 1986
Gloucester	30 June 1986[1]
Leeds	30 June 1986
Northants	30 June 1986

[1] Veterinary investigation centre only.

The laboratories at Lasswade and Liverpool transferred to Roslin and Barton Hall in April 1986 and October 1986 respectively.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Burt: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give details of expenditure in 1988-89 and 1989-90 by the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce and the Agriculture Departments on market regulation under the common agricultural policy.

Mr. Gummer: Details are given in the table of the outturn for 1988-89 and the latest forecast of outturn for 1989-90.

£ million

	1988-89 (Actual Outturn)	*1989-90 (Forecast Outturn)*
(i) Expenditure by the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce		
Cereals	210·1	87·9
Oilseeds	177·8	193·8
Sugar	118·8	96·7
Beef and Veal	149·5	59·2
Sheepmeat	133·2	98·1
Pigmeat	0·3	1·4
Milk products	48·9	81·0
Processed goods	45·6	38·1
Others	27·2	49·1
Total	911·4	705·3
(ii) Expenditure by the Agriculture Departments		
Repayment of cereals levies	2·2	46·5
Suckler cow premium scheme	37·7	55·2
Annual premium on ewes	130·7	117·0
Payments to producers giving up some milk production	74·1	64·2
Beef special premium scheme (Northern Ireland)	—	10·1
Total	244·6	292·8
Grand Total	1,156·0	998·1

Some of the expenditure shown benefits consumers and trade interests rather than United Kingdom producers.

The figures for the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce are net of various receipts treated as negative expenditure. Receipts from levies on the production and storage of sugar and isoglucose and on third country exports, which are regarded as Community own resources, are excluded.

Of the estimated outturn for 1989-90, £1,292·8 million is expected to be financed from the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund (EAGGF); in 1988-89, £1,506·0 million was thus financed. However, because the United Kingdom is a net contributor to the European Community budget, the whole of this expenditure is attributable to the Exchequer. Receipts from the European Community do not always relate to expenditure in the period.

The individual figures may not add up to the totals due to roundings.

Mr. Burt: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give details of expenditure in 1988-89 and 1989-90 by the Agriculture Department on agricultural grants and subsidies excluding market regulation under the common agricultural policy.

Mr. Gummer: Details are given in the table of the outturn for 1988-89 and the latest forecast of outturn for 1989-90.

£ million

	1988-89 (Actual outturn)	*1989-90 (Forecast outturn)*
PRICE GUARANTEES		
Potatoes	—	—
Wool	0·1	2·0
Assistance to the egg industry	2·9	—
Total	3·1	2·0
SUPPORT FOR CAPITAL AND OTHER IMPROVEMENTS		
Farm and conservation grant scheme (EC)	—	3·0
Agriculture improvement scheme (EC)	25·9	22·8
Agriculture and horticulture development scheme	21·6	15·6
Farm structures	0·4	0·3
Agriculture and horticulture grant scheme	1·0	0·4
Agriculture improvement scheme (national)	7·1	3·6
Northern Ireland agricultural development programme	1·1	3·7
Farm woodland scheme	—	0·6
Farm and conservation grant scheme (national)	—	15·2
Guidance premiums	1·0	0·3
Farm accounts	0·4	0·3
Environmentally sensitive areas	6·8	9·9
Others	0·2	0·3
Total	65·6	75·8
SUPPORT FOR AGRICULTURE IN SPECIAL AREAS		
Hill livestock compensatory allowances	112·6	121·4
Additional benefit under AHDS, NIADP, AHGS, AIS (EC), AIS (national), FCGS (EC) and FCGS (national)	19·6	19·4
Others	4·9	10·2
Total	137·1	151·0
OTHER PAYMENTS		
Set-aside scheme	—	10·7
Milk outgoers scheme	11·4	6·4
Crofting building grants and loans (net)	3·1	3·2
Sheep compensation scheme 1986	0·9	0·9
Storm damage recovery scheme 1987	0·2	1·0
Co-operation grants	1·2	1·5
Farm diversification:		
Capital grants	0·5	3·4
Marketing and feasibility grants	—	0·6
Others	0·8	1·0
Total	18·2	28·5
Grand total	224·0	257·4

Some of this expenditure attracts contributions from the European Community. These are mainly received in the following year. In 1989-90, £66·3 million is expected to be received from the Fund compared with £44·9 million in 1988-89.

The individual figures may not add up to the totals shown due to roundings.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisoners (Mental Illness)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the numbers of inmates of British gaols who were transferred to psychiatric units or mental hospitals in each of the past five years.

Mr. John Patten: Sentenced and unsentenced prisoners in England and Wales may be transferred to psychiatric hospitals for treatment under sections 47 and 48 of the Mental Health Act 1983 respectively. The numbers transferred to hospital under those provisions between 1984 and 1988 were as follows:

	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
s. 47	108	100	107	130	120
s. 48	47	41	53	77	85
Total	155	141	160	207	205

Acid House Parties

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he proposes should be taken to deal with the problems caused by illegal acid house parties.

Mr. Waddington: The law needs to be strengthened to punish more effectively the organisers of such events. It is already an offence to provide music and dancing as a public entertainment or, if the relevant statutory provision has been adopted by the local authority, at a private entertainment promoted for private gain without a licence obtained in advance from the local authority, or in breach of any terms, conditions or restrictions to which such a licence is subject. But the penalties for these offences are so light in comparison to the profits to be made from acid house parties that the organisers can afford to ignore the law.

I have therefore concluded that magistrates should in future be empowered to impose fines of up to £20,000 or imprisonment for up to six months, or both, on people convicted of these offences. This will require changes to the London Government Act 1963, the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 and the Private Places of Entertainment (Licensing) Act 1967. In addition, my right hon. Friend intends to give magistrates power to order the confiscation of profits made by those convicted of organising illegal parties or allowing their land or premises to be used for them.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is today announcing the forthcoming provision of guidance to local authorities to tackle effectively the problem of noise nuisance at such events.

Skeleton Car Keys

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about the sale of skeleton car key sets; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We have received a large number of representations from members of the public and Members of Parliament, including the hon. Member, about a "skeleton car key set" being offered for sale by Westway Locksmiths, formerly MB Locksmiths. As the hon. Member is aware, criminal proceedings against MB Locksmiths are in progress and, in the circumstances, it would not be appropriate to comment further.

Broadcasting

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has received any representations from Scottish broadcasting or community organisations about quality measurements of television franchise bidders arising from his most recent proposals for reform of broadcasting.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has received any representations from Scottish broadcasting and community organisations about quality measurement of television franchise bidders arising from his most recent proposals for reform of broadcasting.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has received any representations from Scottish broadcasting and community organisations about quality measurement of television franchise bidders arising from his most recent proposals for reform of broadcasting.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has received any representations from Scottish broadcasting and community organisations about quality measurement of television franchise bidders arising from his most recent proposals for reform of broadcasting.

Mr. Mellor: A number of the responses to the broadcasting White Paper made by the Scottish ITV companies and by Scottish local and regional authorities have commented on the safeguards for quality contained in our proposals for allocating Channel 3 licences.

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to ensure the continuation of a regional framework for Independent Television; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: As the Broadcasting White Paper made clear, the Government are committed to maintaining a regionally-structured Channel 3 (or ITV). We are proposing that there should be statutory requirements on regional Channel 3 licensees to provide regional programmes, some of which must be produced within the region, and regional news. The precise geographical structure of the Channel 3 regions will be a matter for the Independent Television Commission to determine, but the Government have noted the statement of the chairman designate of the ITC that he would see advantages in retaining the existing regions.

Ex-prisoners

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners were discharged from prison without permanent accommodation in which to live during the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. John Patten: This information is not collected centrally. The prison and probation services promote various initiatives to provide accommodation for homeless discharged prisoners. The Home Office allocates £5 million a year to provide 4,500 bedspaces in some 350 accommodation schemes.

Pub Bombings

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met Lord Denning to discuss the case of the Birmingham Six.

Mr. G[illegible]cott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met Lord Denning to discuss the case of the Birmingham Six.

Mr. Waddington: I have not met Lord Denning to discuss this case.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many officers of the West Midlands serious crime squad who were recently transferred to non-operation duties were involved in the Birmingham pub bombing investigation.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On 26 October in response to a question from the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd) replied that one member of the serious crime squad, which was disbanded in the summer, was involved in the investigation. I regret that this was incorrect. Further inquiry has established that a total of four officers who were members of the serious crime squad when it was disbanded had been involved in interviewing those convicted of the Birmingham pub bombing.

Police Manpower

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the proportion of police to public in Essex; and what is the comparable figure for other counties.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on population per police officer is as follows:

Force	*Population per police officer*[1]
Avon and Somerset	460
Bedfordshire	508
Cambridgeshire	544
Cheshire	512
Cleveland	371
Cumbria	423
Derbyshire	515
Devon and Cornwall	521
Dorset	522
Durham	434
Dyfed-Powys	495
Essex	521
Gloucestershire	453
Greater Manchester	369
Gwent	442
Hampshire	531
Hertfordshire	508
Humberside	427
Kent	512
Lancashire	436
Leicestershire	503
Lincolnshire	493
Merseyside	308
Norfolk	546
Northamptonshire	508
Northumbria	408
North Wales	486
North Yorkshire	516
Nottinghamshire	435
South Wales	415
South Yorkshire	434
Staffordshire	472
Suffolk	539
Surrey	452
Sussex	482
Thames Valley	540
Warwickshire	489
West Mercia	538
West Midlands	383
West Yorkshire	391
Wiltshire	513
Average provincial forces (excluding the City of London)	452
City of London	5
Metropolitan	253
Average England and Wales	404

[1] The figures are calculated on the basis of mid-1988 population figures and authorised establishments of forces at 1 April 1989.

Mr. Duffy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on manpower levels in the South Yorkshire police; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On 31 October there were 2,944 officers on the strength of the South Yorkshire police. This is 384 more than when the Government took office 10 years ago. My right hon. and learned Friend has approved a further 20 police posts for the force establishment, raising it from 2,978 to 2,998, subject to the police authority's confirmation that it is prepared to meet its share of the costs.

Betting

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had recently with the Horse Race Betting Levy Board on allocation of income.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It is not the practice for us routinely to discuss with the levy board the allocation of its income in pursuance of its statutory duties. The purposes for any additional levy income featured in the submissions on the 28th levy scheme which my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd) discussed with representatives of the Board and the Bookmakers' Committee on 14 February. My right hon. and learned Friend plans to meet the chairman of the board on 6 December, when the general question of the financing of racing is likely to be discussed.

Litter

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were fined under the Litter Act 1983 in 1988; and what proportion of these received the maximum sentence of £400.

Mr. John Patten: The number of persons fined under the Litter Act 1983 in 1988 was 1,551. Of these 0·1 per cent. (two defendants) received the maximum sentence of £400.

Violence

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he plans to take to curb the increase in crimes of violence and sexual attacks.

Mr. John Patten: Measures to prevent these offences include tougher maximum penalties for violent offences (carrying firearms and knives); increases in police manpower; targeting of high crime areas by police; measures to deal with alcohol-related disorder; education, research and crime prevention. Further action, including new measures to tackle domestic violence, are being taken forward by the ministerial groups on crime prevention and on women's issues. Some of the recorded increase in violent crime and sexual offences is due to increased reporting by the public and recording by the police.

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of violent offences against the person consists of incidents of domestic violence.

Mr. John Patten: The results of a recent ad hoc survey of offences of violence recorded by the police indicated that one in eight offences of violence against the person involved domestic violence. Some results from this study are published in Home Office Research Bulletin No. 27, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Drugs

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures police forces are taking in conjunction with local education authorities to warn pupils of the dangers of drug taking.

Mr. Mellor: Drugs education in schools is the responsibility of local education authorities and of the schools. We encourage police forces to develop a wide programme of police/schools liaison in consultation with the local education authorities and with individual schools. This may include contributing to education about drugs as part of personal and social education in schools.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the full costs of the drugs raid on Broadwater Farm, including the full time costs of the officers employed, the processing costs of dealing with the prisoners, the opportunity costs and the administrative on-costs.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: As I stated in answer to the hon. Member on 6 November 1989 at column *429*, the additional overtime costs were about £42,500. Full costs are not available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many seizures of illicit drugs have been made by police and customs in 1989 to date; and what is the estimated value of drugs seized.

Mr. Mellor: In the period 1 January to 6 November 1989 Customs report a provisional total of 6,830 seizures of controlled drugs. It is estimated that these would have had an equivalent street value of some £230 million. Comprehensive figures are not yet available for police seizures in 1989; the latest information is for 1988 when police made 32,947 seizures and customs 5,288 seizures of controlled drugs.

Mr. Raffan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on plans for the next phase of the national drug misuse prevention campaign.

Mr. Mellor: The Health Department's final plans for the next phase of the national drug prevention publicity campaign will be considered at the next meeting of the ministerial group on the misuse of drugs. The campaign is planned to start early in the new year. In addition my right hon. and learned Friend has announced the setting up of drug prevention teams from April 1990, initially in nine local areas, to stimulate and harness community involvement in the prevention of drug misuse.

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many drug searches in Her Majesty's prisons have resulted in finds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Information is not available in the form requested by my hon. Friend. But up to 14 November, some 3,000 finds of substances believed to be drugs had been reported by prison establishments in England and Wales during 1989. Some 92 per cent. of these involved cannabis.

Safer Cities Initiative

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cities in the north west of England are covered by his Department's safer cities initiative; and what plans he has to extend the programme.

Mr. John Patten: Of the 16 projects established in the first two years of the safer cities programme, three are located in the north-west of England—at Rochdale, Salford and Wirral. We plan to set up four more projects in the financial year 1990-91, but the areas have not yet been selected.

Probation Officers

Mr. A. MacKay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy towards the call of the Association of Chief Officers of Probation for a review of social security provisions to ensure that benefits policy supports criminal justice aims.

Mr. John Patten: The Government continue to monitor the effects of the recent changes in social security provision. As part of this monitoring the Home Office maintains close liaison with the Department of Social Security. We are also considering carefully the findings of the recent research carried out for the Association of Chief Officers of Probation by the university of Lancaster.

As a result of the monitoring arrangements my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Social Security recently announced (27 November 1989 at columns *420-21*) a number of procedural improvements which are designed to ensure that claims for income support from young people, including young offenders, are dealt with more effectively and sympathetically. These changes demonstrate the Government's willingness to act when areas of genuine difficulty are identified.

The Home Office has already issued guidance to the probation service on the effects of the Social Security Acts 1988 and 1989. Further guidance is being prepared to explain what benefits are available to offenders and ex-offenders.

Firearms

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the implementation of new controls on gun clubs.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Consideration is being given by my right hon. and learned Friend to the implementation of the new tighter controls on gun clubs in the light of advice received from the firearms consultative committee.

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further steps are proposed, in the light of recent incidents in Greater Manchester and elsewhere, to impose tighter controls on gun clubs.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: As my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary announced recently, he is minded that in future his approval will not be granted to any club operating a "day membership" scheme or offering any form of temporary membership facility. Visiting membership for full members of other approved clubs will be permitted. An applicant for probationary membership will have to be sponsored by two full members of the club, both of whom are themselves firearm certificate holders. Probationary members must be constantly supervised when in possession of a firearm or ammunition, either by the range master or by a full member of the club who personally holds a firearm certificate. Probationary members must be given a course of instruction in the safe and proper use of firearms. The number of probationary members of an approved club must not exceed the number of full members. The police will be able to use their powers under section 15(5) of the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988 to enter and inspect club premises to ensure that clubs are complying with the provisions of the Secretary of State's approval. We will continue to make clear to clubs that the exemption under section 15 of the 1988 Act from the requirement to hold a firearm certificate covers only target practice and does not extend to competition. Consideration is being given by my right hon. and learned Friend, to the implementation of these proposals in the light of advice received from the Firearms Consultative Committee.

Charities

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had about the level of Government support to charities.

Mr. John Patten: Ministers and officials have frequent discussions with a range of individuals and groups about Government support to charities and other matters affecting the voluntary sector. On 17 October my right hon. and noble Friend the Earl Ferrers, my noble Friend the Paymaster General and I met members of the Council for Charitable Support to discuss a number of issues relating to charity.

Adoption

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many children have been allowed into the United Kingdom, for adoption by United Kingdom citizens, from each of the countries which do not have the same laws and procedures on adoption as exist in the United Kingdom, during each of the past five years; and what is the average length of time it takes for inquiries to be carried out into prospective adoptive children from such countries.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information is not available in the form requested, as the statistics collected on passenger admissions do not separately identify children who come to the United Kingdom for adoption. However, the available information is shown in the table. Corresponding information for 1984 and 1985 could be produced only at disproportionate cost.

Adoption orders made by the courts in certain designated countries are recognised as valid for the purposes of United Kingdom law. Some 63 countries are designated for this purpose under the Adoption (Designation of Overseas Adoptions) Order 1973. There is no provision in the immigration rules for the admission of children adopted in non-designated countries. However the Secretary of State may exceptionally exercise discretion to allow a child to come here for adoption if he is satisfied that this is appropriate in the particular case.

Information on the average length of time required for inquiries to be carried out into prospective adoption cases is not available; the time varies according to the circumstances of the particular case.

Acceptances for settlement in the United Kingdom on grounds of adoption, after initial admission for a limited period, of children from countries not designated in the Adoption (Designation of Overseas Adoptions) Order 1973[1]

Nationality	*Number of children of each nationality*		
	1986	*1987*[2]	*1988*
India	7	7	8
Pakistan	5	7	8
Brazil	7	1	0
El Salvador	4	1	3
Colombia	5	1	1
Philippines	4	2	1
Thailand	3	2	1
Peru	2	1	1
Korea	1	2	0
Poland	0	1	2
Bolivia	1	1	1
Sierra Leone	0	0	2
Sudan	0	2	0
Burma, Hungary[3]	0	0	1
Chile, Egypt, Morocco, Paraguay, Venezuela[3]	0	1	0
Ecuador	1	0	1
Bangladesh, China, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Panama, Yemen Arab Republic[3]	1	0	0
Total	46	33	37

[1] This order designates those countries whose adoption orders are recognised as valid for the purposes of United Kingdom law.

[2] 1987 figures may not be entirely complete.

[3] Number from each country in these year(s)

East Germany

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, since the opening of the borders of East Germany, any East German citizens have applied for entry to the United Kingdom as residents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Citizens of the German Democratic Republic require visas to enter the United Kingdom and neither of the British posts in Berlin has received any applications for visas for settlement in this country since the opening of the border between east and west Berlin on 9 November. There have been no reports from any other quarter of any East German citizens seeking entry to reside in the United Kingdom.

Police Operations (Ethnic Minorities)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of civilian employees from the ethnic minority community in the employ of the Greater Manchester police authority.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the police authority that there are 31 civilian staff, including traffic wardens, from the ethnic minorities employed by the Greater Manchester police authority.

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of police officers recruited from the ethnic minority community in the Greater Manchester police force; what has been the number of applications from ethnic minorites during each of the past five years; and how many ethnic minority police officers have left the force during the same periods of time.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On 27 November 1989, 102 members of the ethnic minorities were serving as police officers in the Greater Manchester police. The other information requested is given in the following table:

	Applications for appointment	*Left the force*
1985	128	4
1986	90	4
1987	142	2
1988	90	6
[1]1989	100	8

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[1] To date.

Police Operations (Media Presence)

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he proposes to meet the Association of Chief Police Officers to discuss the presence of media personnel on police operations.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to meet the Association of Chief Police Officers to discuss this matter.

Political Refugees

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for what reason an identity card was removed by United Kingdom immigration authorities when Navaratnasingham Vathanan was ordered back to Sri Lanka, having applied for entry to the United Kingdom as a political refugee.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand that Mr. Vathanan's identity card was taken in order to obtain a travel document for him from the Sri Lanka High Commission. I regret the fact that it was lost. Pages had been removed from the passport on which he had arrived.

Parole

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many prisoners are currently beyond parole eligibility date awaiting a decision; and what has been the number in each of the last 12 months;

(2) what has been the average delay beyond parole eligibility date for each of the four prison department regions in each of the last six months.

Mr. Mellor: Information is not available in the form requested. About three quarters of cases are decided on the basis of local review committee recommendations alone. There are now no general delays in these cases, compared with the position in the summer of this year when one quarter of them were delayed by an average of about one month beyond PED. The delay in parole board cases, which exceeded three months in the summer, has now been reduced to about two-and-a-half months beyond PED. There is no evidence of any significant regional variation in the delays.

Further and more rapid improvements should follow the administrative changes my right hon. and learned Friend announced in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) on 30 November at column *396*. The aim is to eliminate completely the present delays by March next year.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the longest period beyond parole eligibility date that a prisoner is currently waiting.

Mr. Mellor: Information in this form is not readily available from central records.

West Midlands Police

Mr. Wall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met the chief constable of the West Midlands; and what was discussed.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met the chief constable of the West Midlands; and what was discussed.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last discussed the pub bombings case with the chief constable of the West Midlands.

Mr. Waddington: I have had no meetings with the chief constable of the West Midlands since I took office as Home Secretary.

Animal Experiments

Mr. Norris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) on how many occasions in 1989 a member of the Home Office inspectorate has visited the dog toxicology unit at Huntingdon research centre; or how many occasions the conditions in which animals were housed and cared for were found to be satisfactory and in line with the Home Office code of practice for the housing and care of animals used in scientific procedures;

(2) on how many occasions in 1989 a member of the Home Office inspectorate has visited Huntingdon research centre;

(3) on how many occasions in 1989 a member of the Home Office inspectorate has visited the rodent toxicology unit at Huntingdon research centre; and on how many occasions the conditions in which the animals were housed and cared for were found to be satisfactory and in line with the Home Office code of practice for the housing and care of animals used in scientific procedures.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It is not our practice to disclose this information in relation to individual establishments. For 1988, the last year for which figures are available, inspectors paid 7,354, mainly unannounced, visits to departments within the 375 places designated under the

Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986. The Home Office code of practice for the housing and care of animals used in scientific procedures (1989; HC 107) was published in February this year. Establishments which were not already complying with it in every detail are expected to do so within a realistic time scale.

Young Recidivists

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in how many cases young recidivists have re-offended in the years 1986-87 to 1988-89.

Mr. John Patten: Statistics are not readily available in the form requested. Information on the sentencing of young offenders reconvicted within two years of discharge from prison service establishments in England and Wales is published annually in Prison Statistics (tables 9.7 and 9.10 of the latest volume, for 1988, Cm. 825), copies of which are available in the Library. Of an estimated 28,800 young persons discharged from prison service establishments in 1985, 18,300 were reconvicted within two years of discharge, of whom 10,600 were recommitted to custody.

Chief Constables (Talks)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what issues were discussed at his Department's last meeting with representatives of chief constables.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 4 December 1989]:* My right hon. and learned Friend last met representatives of the Association of Chief Police Officers on 10 November. They discussed a number of matters including police appointments and the organisation of the police service.

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who instructed the immigration and nationality department to resolve applications for political asylum from those believed to be members of, or to have links with, the Pakistan People's party, without interview; when the instruction was issued; how many applicants, to date, have had their applications resolved without interview; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 28 November 1989]:* In April my right hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd) approved special case-working arrangements for resolving a backlog of about 900 asylum applications from Pakistani nationals. The great majority of the asylum claims were based on links with the Pakistan People's party. Following the death of President Zia in August 1988 the democratic process was reinstated in Pakistan; the Pakistan People's party participated freely in party politics at national and provincial level, and, following the elections in November 1988, became the governing party nationally. In all the circumstances it was decided that applications based solely on Pakistan People's party connections could be refused without interview. Applicants raising other matters continue to be dealt with in the normal way and would be interviewed before a refusal decision was taken. All those who are refused without interview have a right of appeal, exercisable in this country, against refusal of leave or deportation.

Our statistical records do not distinguish between refusals with and without interview. It is known, however, that some 483 asylum applications from Pakistani nationals have been refused so far in 1989.

Pornography

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to ban all pornographic material dealing specifically with sexual violence towards women and children.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 27 November 1989]:* Among other measures, the Obscene Publications Act 1959, the Indecent Displays (Control) Act 1981, the Video Recordings Act 1984 and the duties of the broadcasting regulatory bodies (which will be re-affirmed in our Broadcasting Bill) provide controls over pornographic material in its various forms. We have made it plain that we should favour a stronger test of obscenity to replace that in the 1959 Act. We have no other proposals at present.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will convene a meeting between representatives of groups objecting to the sale of pornography and retailers to discuss current retailing practice.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 27 November 1989]:* No. We have drawn the strength of feeling represented to us about the availability of certan publications to the attention of major newsagents, and it is open to those who object to the sale of what they regard as pornography to protest directly to the retailers.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what studies his Department conducted, has commissioned or is aware of concerning the link between pornographic material and sexual violence towards women and children; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 27 November 1989]:* We have not conducted or commissioned specific studies into any possible link between pornography and sexual violence towards women and children, but we are aware of numerous studies on the impact of pornography. These have not, to our knowledge, shown definitely either that there is or that there is not such a link. We are planning a review of the available evidence.

TRANSPORT

Ports

109. **Mr. Janman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of progress which has been made in British ports since the abolition of the dock labour scheme towards increased competitiveness and the attraction of new business; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The former scheme ports have responded with impressive enthusiasm and energy to the new opportunities opened up by the possibility of eliminating overmanning and restrictive practices. Business inquiries are at a high level. The way is now open for new industrial developments in dock areas and for the larger of these ports to win back some of the deep-sea trade that is routed through ports on the continent.

Leaded Petrol

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the number of cars that have converted back to leaded fuel in the last 12 months.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I have been asked to reply.

We have no statistics on the number of cars converted back to leaded petrol.

Heavy Goods Vehicles

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of heavy goods vehicle journeys were checked for excessive weights in each of the past six years; and what percentage of *(a)* British and *(b)* foreign vehicles were found to be over the weight limits.

Mr. Atkins: It is estimated that in 1984-85 about 0·04 per cent. and 1987-88 about 0·05 per cent. of HGV journeys were checked for excessive weight. Figures for other years are not available.

The percentages of British and foreign vehicles from those checked found to be over the weight limits were as follows:

Year	*British Per cent.*	*Foreign Per cent.*
1984-85	23·4	27·6
1985-86	25·8	25·1
1986-87	24·2	27·6
1987-88	22·0	25·0
1988-89	18·5	24·9

The statistics relate to those vehicles weighed by Department of Transport and local authority trading standards enforcement staff. The police also weigh vehicles but no information on the numbers weighed is available.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has passed to the chairman of British Rail the representations from hon. and right hon. Members to consider all alternative proposals for the high speed rail link to the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Portillo: Yes. However, as I said in my answer to the hon. Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) on Monday 4 December, I accept that now that BR and Eurorail have announced their preferred route through Kent and terminal in London it will not be practicable for them to devote great efforts to examining other proposals.

Cyclists

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to remove the potential danger to road users of the use by cyclists of personal stereos; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: There is no clear evidence that personal stereos are causing accidents. However, all road users—and vulnerable ones in particular—should make sure that they are able to concentrate fully on driving or riding. They should avoid unnecessary sources of distraction. The highway code for young road users, produced by the County Road Safety Officers Association and sponsored by General Accident, advises cyclists not to wear a personal stereo and we are considering adding similar advice to the highway code.

Vehicle Emissions

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what further steps he is taking to reduce vehicle emissions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Draft amendments to the construction and use regulations were published on 1 December.

The new regulations will mean that virtually all new cars from 1992 onwards will be fitted with catalysts. They set for the first time in the United Kingdom, specific requirements for the user of a vehicle to keep the engine in tune and any emission control equipment in working order.

Cars and lorries need to be designed to meet much tighter emission limits. It is equally important for drivers to recognise their responsibility to keep vehicles properly tuned to keep emissions down. These new regulations will make this responsibility clear.

Road Lighting

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many miles of motorway there were in 1988, 1978 and 1968; and what proportion of each were lit.

Mr. Atkins: The information requested is as follows:

	Miles	*Percentage lit*
1968	493	5
1978	1,261	20
1988	1,577	27

These figures relate to motorways in England for which the Secretary of State is the highway authority. The figure for the percentage lit in 1988 is an estimate based on latest available data.

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will specify the research known to his Department to have been conducted into driver reaction times in changing from lit to unlit conditions; and if he will place copies of the research in the Library.

Mr. Atkins: The research in question is detailed in "The Effect on Vision of Terminations of Isolated Lengths of Fixed Lighting", published by the Australian Road Research Board in 1973. A copy has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what criteria he uses to determine whether or not a stretch of motorway or trunk road should be lit.

Mr. Atkins: The criteria are published in "Appraisal of New and Replacement Lighting on Trunk Roads and Trunk Road Motorways", the Department's highways and traffic advice note TA 49/86. A copy is in the Library.

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what evidence he has that lighting on motorways can reduce night-time accidents by 30 per cent., and if he will place copies of that evidence in the Library.

Mr. Atkins: The Department's current assessment that the provision of lighting on motorways can lead to a 30 per cent. reduction in night-time accidents is based on international research. That research has been studied by the transport and road research laboratory. It confirmed the Department's assessment. Details of this study are given in "Light on Motorway Accident Rates", an article published by the Institution of Highways and Transportation in 1987. A copy has been placed in the Library.

A20

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make a decision on the route of the eastern section of the A20 extension into Dover.

Mr. Atkins: Following public inquiries last year into draft proposals for the Court Wood to Dover section of the A20, my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Transport and for the Environment are announcing their joint decisions tomorrow. I have arranged for my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) to receive a copy of the decision which is being sent today to all those who submitted objections and representations to the draft proposals and to those who attended or were represented at the inquiries.

Freight Railway Lines

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many freight railway lines have been opened to passenger traffic under the Transport Act 1962 (Amendment) Act 1981; and if he will list these with mileages of track, dates of opening and whether they remain open to passenger traffic.

Mr. Portillo: Fifteen stretches of freight line have been opened or re-opened by British Rail to passenger traffic under the Transport Act 1962 (Amendment) Act 1981. The details are as folows:

Line	*Year*	*Approximate mileage*
Penistone-Barnsley	1983	7·5
Newbridge Junction-Bathgate	1986	10·2
Kettering-Corby	1987	5·5
Dore Curve (Derbyshire)	1987	0·25
Morecambe-Heysham Harbour	1987	4·0
Oxford-Bicester	1987	10·0
Coventry-Nuneaton	1987	10·0
Coatbridge Central-Motherwell	1987	5·0
Cardiff City	1987	4·15
Abercynon-Aberdare	1988	5·75
Lichfield City-Lichfield Trent Valley	1988	1·25
Bishop Auckland-Stanhope	1988	9·6
Walsall-Hednesford	1989	9·75
Thornton West Junction-Thornton South Junction (Fife)	1989	0·25
Altrincham-Stockport	1989	8·0

Note:

All these lines remain open to passenger traffic.

EMPLOYMENT

Health and Safety

17. **Mr. Jack Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals he has to improve health protection and safety conditions in the workplace.

95. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals he has to improve health protection and safety conditions in the workplace.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Commission's "Plan of Work for 1989-90 and Beyond" published in May 1989 set out the Commission's priorities for improving health and safety at work. As my right hon. Friend announced, the Health and Safety Commissions' request for additional funding has been met in full for the third year running. This will allow for a real growth in activity.

30. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how he plans to extend health and safety protection at work.

Mr. Nicholls: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) earlier today.

Labour Statistics

18. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the change in unemployment levels during the last year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fowler: In the 12 months to October 1989 seasonally adjusted unemployment in the United Kingdom has fallen by about 484,000 or 22·4 per cent. The percentage fall in unemployment has been larger, nationally and in the majority of regions, in the past year than in either of the previous two years.

82. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the current number of people in employment in the United Kingdom, and in other Overseas Economic Community Development countries.

Mr. Nicholls: In June 1989 the United Kingdom civilian workforce in employment stood at 26,035,000—12 per cent. higher than in June 1983. The following table shows civilian employment in other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries, where the information is available, over the same period.

Civilian Employment in O.E.C.D. Countries

Thousands

Country	*1983 Q2*	*1989 Q2*	*Absolute change*	*Percentage change*
Belgium	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Denmark	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Germany	24,795	27,075	2,280	9·2
Greece	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Spain	11,020	12,208	1,188	10·8
France	[1]21,229	[1]21,264	35	0·2
Ireland	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Italy	20,390	20,674	284	1·4
Luxembourg	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Netherlands	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Portugal	4,142	n/a	n/a	n/a
United States of America	99,945	117,290	17,345	17·4

Country	*1983 Q2*	*1989 Q2*	*Absolute change*	*Percentage change*
Canada	10,699	12,445	1,746	16·3
Japan	57,290	61,181	3,891	6·8
Australia	6,254	7,696	1,442	23·1
Austria	[2]3,146	[2]3,335	189	6·0
New Zealand	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Finland	2,368	2,475	107	4·5
Iceland	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Norway	1,907	2,018	111	5·8
Sweden	4,242	4,463	221	5·2
Switzerland	3,149	3,559	410	13·0
Turkey	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
United Kingdom	23,291	26,035	2,744	11·8

[1] Figures refer to 1982 Q4 and 1988 Q4 as Q2 figures not available.

[2] Figures refer to 1983 Q1 and 1989 Q1 as Q2 figures not available.

Source: "Quarterly Labour Force Statistics 4/1988 and 3/1989" (OECD) except United Kingdom (ED).

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the years 1968, 1978 and 1988 the number of employee and self-employed workers divided into manual and non-manual, male and female, adult and juvenile, and full-time and part-time.

Mr. Nicholls: Data for each of the groups requested is only available on a comparable basis from the labour force survey (LFS). Estimates from the 1988 and 1979 LFS (the earliest year for which comparable estimates are available) are shown in the table.

Employees and self-employed—Great Britain
Spring estimates

Thousands

	1979		*1988*	
	Employees	*Self-employed*	*Employees*	*Self-employed*
All	22,432	1,778	21,422	3,143
Of which:				
1. Employed in manual occupations[1]	11,934	747	9,599	1,403
Employed in non-manual occupations[1]	10,498	1,031	11,824	1,740
2. Males	13,302	1,442	11,728	2,358
Females	9,130	337	9,694	785
3. Aged 16 and 17	785	[3]—	683	11
Aged 18 or over	21,647	1,776	20,739	3,132
4. In full-time employment[2]	18,409	n/a	16,536	2,627
In part-time employment[2]	4,022	n/a	4,886	516

[1] Using broad occupational groupings based on OPCS Classification of Occupations, 1980.

[2] Based on respondent's own assessment, not on the number of hours usually worked. In 1979, the self-employed were not asked if they worked full or part-time.

[3] Sample size too small to provide a reliable estimate.

n/a = Not available.

105. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the 10 travel-to-work areas where unemployment is lowest.

106. **Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the 10 travel-to-work areas where unemployment is lowest.

107. **Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the 10 travel-to-work areas where unemployment is lowest.

108. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the 10 travel-to-work areas where unemployment is lowest.

Mr. Nicholls: The table shows the 10 travel-to-work areas in which the numbers of unemployed claimants expressed as a percentage of the work force plus the unemployed were the lowest in October 1989.

Travel-to-work area	*Unemployed claimants Per cent.*
Crawley	1·1
Winchester and Eastleigh	1·3
Windermere	1·3
Tunbridge Wells	1·4
Newbury	1·4
Bicester	1·5
Aylesbury and Wycombe	1·6
Guildford and Aldershot	1·6
Cirencester	1·6
Blandford	1·6

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of employed and self-employed people in Britain.

Mr. Eggar: In June 1989, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 21,932,000 employees in employment in Great Britain and 3,050,000 self-employed.

98. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current number of registered unemployment in Bexley and what was the figure for 1988 and 1987.

Mr. Nicholls: In October 1989, the number of unemployed claimants in the local authority area of Bexley was 3,661 compared with 4,866 in October 1988 and 6,603 in October 1987. These figures are slightly affected by the change in benefit regulations affecting under-18-year-olds in September 1988.

88. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the current level of unemployment.

104. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the unemployment change since June 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: In October 1989, the level of unemployment, seasonally adjusted, in the United Kingdom was 1,674,000, compared with 3,130,200 in June 1986, a fall of 46·5 per cent. Unemployment has now fallen for 39 months running, and is now at its lowest for nine years.

77. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many travel-to-work areas, on the most recent date for which figures are available, in south-east England, have an unemployment rate *(a)* over 10 per cent., *(b)* between five per cent. and 10 per cent. and *(c)* below five per cent.

Mr. Nicholls: Of the 39 travel-to-work areas in the south-east, 33 had an unemployment rate of less than 5 per cent. in October 1989 and the remainder had rates of between 5 and 10 per cent.

75. **Mr. Donald Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current unemployment rate in the United Kingdom and in other European Community countries; and if he will make a statement.

91. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the current unemployment rate in the United Kingdom and the average in the European Community.

Mr. Nicholls: In September 1989, the latest comparable date, unemployment in the United Kingdom was 6·3 per cent. compared to an EEC average of 9·1 per cent. The following table shows a full comparison. Over the past two years the unemployment rate in the United Kingdom has fallen faster than in any other major European country.

Unemployment rates for comparison between EEC countries Seasonally adjusted September 1989

	Rate
Luxembourg	2·0
West Germany	5·6
Portugal	5·7
United Kingdom	6·3
Denmark	7·4
Greece	[1]7·4
Belgium	9·6
Netherlands	10·0
France	10·1
Italy	11·0
Spain	16·4
Ireland	17·0
EEC average	9·1

[1] April 1987.

69. **Mr. Neale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were employed in the United Kingdom in May 1983 and October 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The information is not available for the months requested. The work force in employment in the United Kingdom was 23,613,000 in June 1983. It increased by 2,730,000 to stand at 26,343,000, the highest level ever, in June 1989.

57. **Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current level of male unemployment in the Bassetlaw constituency.

Mr. Nicholls: In October 1989 the number of male unemployed claimants in the Bassetlaw parliamentary constituency was 2,283.

55. **Mr. Kirkhope:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the current level of employment in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Nicholls: In June 1989 the work force in employment in the United Kingdom stood at 26,343,000, the highest level on record. This represents an increase of 479,000 or 1·9 per cent. since June 1988. The rising trend has now continued for six years.

56. **Mr. Brando-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were unemployed in the United Kingdom in May 1983, September 1983, March 1986 and October 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The table shows the levels of unemployment, seasonally adjusted, in the United Kingdom for May 1983, September 1983, March 1986, and October 1989. The level of unemployment in October 1989 is the lowest for nine years.

United Kingdom unemployment, seasonally adjusted

	Number of unemployed claimants	*Rate[1] per cent*
May 1983	2,785,300	10·5
September 1983	2,815,700	10·6
March 1986	3,126,600	11·2
October 1989	1,674,000	5·9

[1] Number of unemployed as a percentage of the estimated total workforce.

47. **Mr. Moate:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were unemployed in June 1987 and October 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: In October 1989 the level of unemployment, seasonally adjusted, in the United Kingdom was 1,674,000 compared with 2,857,200 in June 1987, a fall of 41·4 per cent. Unemployment is now at its lowest level for nine years.

31. **Mr. Churchill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement about the current level of unemployment in the north-west region.

40. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the reduction of unemployment in the north-west since June 1986.

Mr. Nicholls: In October 1989 the level of unemployment seasonally adjusted, in the north-west was 245,500 compared with 427,400 in June 1986, a fall of 181,900 or 42·6 per cent.

24. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the unemployment rate in the United Kingdom and in other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries.

Mr. Nicholls: In August 1989, the latest comparable date, the rate of unemployment in the United Kingdom measured on the agreed international basis was lower than in Canada, France, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Spain, Denmark, Greece and Ireland. Over the past two years the United Kingdom unemployment rate has fallen faster than the rate in any other major industrialised country.

25. **Mr. Wood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when the seasonally adjusted unemployment figures last showed an increase in the number of people out of work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The seasonally adjusted unemployment figures last showed an increase in July 1986. Since that date unemployment has fallen by about 1½ million or 47 per cent. This is the longest and largest sustained fall on record, and unemployment is now at its lowest level for nine years.

22. **Mr. Hill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the number of people in employment in the United Kingdom and in the other member countries of the European Community.

Mr. Nicholls: In 1987, the latest year for which comparable information is available for all European Community countries, there were 24·8 million people in civilian employment in the United Kingdom. This represents a growth of over 6 per cent. since 1983; more than three times greater than the growth rate in the rest of the EC countries combined.

50. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide the latest unemployment figures for Sheffield expressed as a percentage; and what is the national average.

Mr. Nicholls: In October 1989, in the Sheffield travel-to-work area the number of unemployed claimants expressed as a percentage of the total workforce was 8·6 per cent. This compares to a rate of 5·8 per cent. in the United Kingdom.

51. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are currently unemployed in the Liverpool travel-to-work area.

Mr. Nicholls: In October 1989, in the Liverpool travel-to-work area there were 64,235 unemployed claimants.

52. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will list the towns in England and Wales which now have 3 per cent. or less unemployment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The table shows the travel-to-work areas in England and Wales where the number of unemployed claimants expressed as a percentage of the work force was three per cent. or less in October 1989. In the last three years the rate of unemployment has nearly halved in the United Kingdom and this improvement is seen at local level throughout the country.

Unemployed claimants

Travel-to-work area	*per cent.*
Crawley	1·1
Winchester and Eastleigh	1·3
Windermere	1·3
Tunbridge Wells	1·4
Newbury	1·4
Bicester	1·5
Aylesbury and Wycombe	1·6
Guildford and Aldershot	1·6
Cirencester	1·6
Blandford	1·6
Basingstoke and Alton	1·7
Chichester	1·7
Reading	1·7
Andover	1·7
Cambridge	1·7
Bury St. Edmunds	1·7
Kendal	1·8
Evesham	1·9
Oxford	1·9
Woodbridge and Leiston	2·0
Slough	2·1
Clitheroe	2·1
Worthing	2·1
Penrith	2·2
Chelmsford and Braintree	2·2
Kettering and Market Harborough	2·3
Settle	2·3
Malton	2·3
Harrogate	2·4
Devizes	2·4
Bedford	2·4
Leek	2·4
Skipton	2·4
Milton Keynes	2·4
Haverhill	2·4
Hertford and Harlow	2·4
Diss	2·4
Northampton	2·5
Watford and Luton	2·5
Eastbourne	2·5
Hitchin and Letchworth	2·5
Newtown	2·5
Heathrow	2·5
Wareham and Swanage	2·5
Ripon	2·5
Warwick	2·6
Swindon	2·6
Northallerton	2·6
Welshpool	2·6
Newmarket	2·6
Shaftesbury	2·6
Wellingborough and Rushden	2·6
Chippenham	2·6
Poole	2·7
Chard	2·7
Huntingdon and St. Neots	2·7
Ipswich	2·7
Salisbury	2·7
Cheltenham	2·7
Pickering and Helmsley	2·7
Honiton and Axminster	2·8
Banbury	2·8
Brecon	2·9
Spalding and Holbeach	2·9
Bridport	2·9
Ludlow	2·9
Stafford	2·9
Macclesfield	2·9
Yeovil	2·9
Uttoxeter and Ashbourne	2·9
South Molton	2·9
Beccles and Halesworth	3·0
Colchester	3·0
Trowbridge and Frome	3·0
Melton Mowbray	3·0
Stamford	3·0
Fakenham	3·0
Stroud	3·0
Rugby and Daventry	3·0

Job Opportunities

19. **Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has received on the job opportunities provided through employment training to trainees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: A recent pilot survey of employment training (ET) leavers shows that over half of the people (53 per cent.) who completed their training went into jobs or self-employment. These encouraging early results provide further evidence of the programme's continuing success in helping large numbers of unemployed people back into work.

Older Workers

20. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of the population aged 55 years and over is expected to remain economically active during the course of the next 10 years; and what plans he has to combat discrimination on the grounds of age by employers.

Mr. Nicholls: My Department's latest projections which are largely based on past trends, show the proportion of people aged 55 and over who are economically active remaining in the range of 22 per cent. to 24 per cent. over the next 10 years.

We are constantly emphasising to employers that age discrimination is not in their interests, particularly as numbers of young people decline.

Training and Enterprise Councils

21. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many training and enterprise councils have received funding in the east midlands and eastern region; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend approved applications for development funding from five employer groups in the east midlands and eastern region.

90. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many training and enterprise councils have received development funding in the north-west region; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend has approved applications for development funding from eight employer groups in the north-west.

78. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many training and enterprise councils have received funding in the Yorkshire and Humberside region; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend has approved applications for development funding from four employer groups in Yorkshire and Humberside.

73. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current progress on setting up training and enterprise councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I have been very encouraged by the excellent response from employers throughout the country to our invitation to form training and enterprise councils (TECs).

Over 50 groups of senior employers in England and Wales have applied for development funding; the table lists the areas from which we have had applications and indicate their status.

List of training and enterprise councils that have applied for development funding

	Status
South East	
Milton Keynes	Approved
Hertfordshire	Approved
Essex	Approved
Hampshire	Approved
Isle of Wight	Approved
Thames Valley	Approved
Oxfordshire	Approved
Kent	Under Consideration
London	
Kingston/Merton	Approved
London East	Under Consideration
South London	Under Consideration
South West	
Devon/Cornwall	Approved
Dorset	Approved
Somerset	Approved
Avon	Under Consideration
West Midlands	
Birmingham	Approved
Walsall	Approved
Staffordshire	Approved
Coventry/Warwickshire	Under Consideration
Dudley	Approved
Wolverhampton	Approved
East Midlands and Eastern	
North Nottinghamshire	Approved
Norfolk/Waveney	Approved
Suffolk	Approved
Greater Peterborough	Approved
Bedfordshire	Under Consideration
Central and South Cambridgeshire	Under Consideration
Yorkshire and Humberside	
Sheffield	Approved
Calderdale/Kirklees	Approved
North Yorkshire	Approved
Rotherham	Approved
Leeds	Under Consideration
Barnsley/Doncaster	Under Consideration
North West	
Cumbria	Approved
East Lancashire	Approved
Rochdale	Approved
Oldham	Approved
South and East Cheshire	Approved
Wigan	Approved
Manchester	Under Consideration
Stockport/High Peak	Approved
Bolton/Bury	Under Consideration
St. Helens	Under Consideration
Northern	
Teesside	Approved
Tyneside	Approved
Wearside	Approved
County Durham	Approved
Northumberland	Approved
Wales	
Mid Glamorgan	Approved
North East Wales	Approved
West Wales	Approved
North West Wales	Approved
South Glamorgan	Approved
Gwent	Under Consideration

70. **Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many training and enterprise councils have received development funding; and if he will make a statement.

96. **Mr. Haselhurst:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many training and enterprise councils he expects will have been established by the end of 1989.

Mr. Eggar: At present over 40 training and enterprise councils have had development funding approved.

58. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many training and enterprise councils have received funding in the south-east; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend has approved applications for TEC development funding from seven groups of employers in the south-east.

33. **Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many training and enterprise councils have received development funding in the south-west; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend has approved applications for development funding from four employer groups in the south-west.

Child Care

23. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to encourage the provision of child care facilities in the workplace.

Mr. Nicholls: The Government believe that child care is a matter for parental choice and that it is best left to employers and employees to decide which arrangements for combining work and family responsibilities best suit their individual needs and resources. Workplace child care is not always the most practicable solution.

Youth Training

26. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the youth training scheme.

67. **Mrs. Currie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to promote improved training for young people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fowler: Since the introduction of the youth training scheme in 1983 well over 2 million young people have benefited from the programme. Over 85 per cent. of young people who complete their training programme now go into jobs, further education or training, and 64 per cent. gain a vocational qualification.

YTS has been a great success, but we now need to build on that success to meet the higher level skills that the economy will need in the 1990s and to enable training and enterprise councils to make the maximum impact in developing arrangments for youth training which will lift the skills and qualifications of young people in their areas. I have therefore decided to introduce new arrangements to promote training for young people to be known as youth training.

The central aims of the new arrangements will be to move to a situation where all young people are either in full time education or a job with training and have the opportunity to develop their potential, qualifications, and skill to the full.

All young people on YT will be offered training and vocational education leading to qualifications equivalent to, at a minimum, level 2 in the framework established by the National Council for Vocational Qualifications. Targets will be set annually for major and progressive increases in the skills to be reached, both generally and at craft and technician levels.

The Government's guarantee will continue. All young people up to the age of 18 who are in the labour market but without a job will be offered a training place on youth training.

There will continue to be a strong emphasis on health and safety and on equal opportunities for young people. There will be appropriate arrangements for identifying and providing for young people who are disabled or who have special training needs.

Disabled Persons

27. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what additional measures he will introduce to enable disabled persons to participate fully in the workforce.

Mr. Eggar: The adequacy of current measures to enable people with disabilities to participate fully in the workforce is being considered in the review of services for people with disabilities which my Department has been undertaking. A consultative document covering the conclusions reached in the review will be published as soon as possible.

Age Discrimination

28. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps his Department is taking to help reduce age discrimination in employment practices by employers in the public and private sectors.

Mr. Nicholls: The Government believe that older workers are a valuable resource. Unfair age discrimination both hurts individuals and damages businesses. We are putting across that message to employers through various media, particularly in the context of publicity about demographic change. In addition, jobcentre staff have been instructed to query all upper age limits on notified vacancies. I am encouraged that a growing number of public and private employers are adopting positive policies on recruitment and retention of older workers.

YTS

29. **Mr. Robert B. Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest information available to him on the percentage of YTS leavers in the Dacorum borough council area going on to *(a)* full-time employment, *(b)* part-time employment and *(c)* full-time education.

Mr. Nicholls: The latest available figures show that 76 per cent. of YTS leavers entered full-time employment, 2·3 per cent. entered part-time employment and 2·6 per cent. entered full-time education in the Dacoram borough council area.

100. **Mr. Butterfill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of YTS trainees secure jobs within six months of completing their training course; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: A total of 84 per cent. of young people were in employment shortly after completing their YTS training.

65. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people have participated in YTS since its inception; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: Over 2½ million young people have participated in YTS since its inception in 1983.

Tourism

32. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans his Department have to encourage regional tourism for European tourism year in 1990.

Mr. Nicholls: The British Tourist Authority is co-ordinating and orchestrating the United Kingdom's plans for European Tourism Year, a major theme of which is to encourage tourists to visit different regions. The plans embrace events throughout the country including the Gateshead garden festival.

80. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action is taken by his Department, in conjunction with local authorities, to ensure that tourist development is not permitted to spoil existing environmental amenity; and what specific action in that regard he is taking relating to the county of Rutland.

Mr. Nicholls: One of the aims of the English tourist board (ETB), which receives funding from my Department, is to ensure that tourism activities do not work to the detriment of the environment. In September 1988, the ETB launched in conjunction with the Rural Development Commission a publication "Visitors in the Countryside". This sets out how tourism developments can be undertaken whilst preserving or enhancing the environment in rural areas. The publication emphasises the key role played by local authorities in encouraging the development of tourism projects in keeping with this aim. My Department has not singled out the county of Rutland for any specific action in this regard.

42. **Mr. Robert Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the level of investment in tourism projects in the south-west following the suspension of section 4 grant aid.

Mr. Nicholls: The most up-to-date figures published by the English tourist board show that the value of tourism projects (worth £0·5 million or more) which were completed during the period January to June 1989 in the region covered by the West Country tourist board was £33 million. Further projects to a value of £155 million were still under construction on 30 June.

Collective Agreements

34. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals he has to encourage the conclusion of collective agreements for those at work.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend has no such proposals.

Women Workers

35. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to encourage the participation of women in full time employment.

Mr. Nicholls: The Government are taking a number of steps to facilitate the re-entry of women to the labour market—through training and through drawing employers' attention to the need to adopt flexible working practices. Childcare initiatives by the ministerial group on women's issues which are aimed at the voluntary and private sectors will also assist, but whether a woman chooses to work full-time or part-time or to stay at home to look after her family must be entirely a matter for her.

Parental Leave

36. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to introduce statutory parental leave, available equally for mothers and fathers.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend has no such plans.

Manufacturing Industry

37. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the average working week in manufacturing industry in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Nicholls: It is estimated from the 1988 labour force survey (LFS) that in spring 1988, the average number of hours usually worked (including paid and unpaid overtime but excluding meal-breaks) by persons in employment in the manufacturing industries in Great Britain, was 42·3 hours per week.

Bradford

38. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he next intends to visit Bradford.

Mr. Fowler: I have no immediate plans to visit Bradford.

Social Charter

39. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has been able to secure any changes to the draft European Community social charter.

Mr. Eggar: Following discussions with all member states, the French Presidency of the Community has submitted a revised version of the European Commission's proposal for a decision on adoption at the European Council in Strasbourg.

Training

41. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of those people who leave the employment training scheme find jobs; and if he will make a statement.

60. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of employment training participants secure jobs after completing their training; and if he will make a statement.

81. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make a statement on the pilot survey of the employment training scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: A recent preliminary survey of employment training leavers shows that 53 per cent. of the people who completed their training went into jobs or self-employment. Of those who did not even complete their training as many as 46 per cent. got jobs or went into self-employment. These encouraging early results provide further evidence of ET's continuing success in helping large numbers of unemployed people back into work.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people for each year since 1975 were on *(a)* the training opportunities programme, *(b)* the wider opportunities programme, *(c)* the job training programme in its original and revised forms and *(d)* employment training.

Mr. Nicholls: The table shows the numbers of people who started on each scheme from 1974-1975 to 1988-89. The figures include those who started for a second or subsequent time.

Thousands

Year	*Training Opportunities Programme*	*Wider Opportunities Training Programme*	*Job Training Scheme*		*Employment Training*[1]
			Old	*New*	
1974-75	45	—	—	—	—
1975-76	61	—	—	—	—
1976-77	90	—	—	—	—
1977-78	99	—	—	—	—
1978-79	70	—	—	—	—
1979-80	91	—	—	—	—
1980-81	83	—	—	—	—
1981-82	71	—	—	—	—
1982-83	73	—	—	—	—
1983-84	80	—	—	—	—
1984-85	88	3	—	—	—
1985-86	—	55	55	—	—
1986-87	—	92	69	2	—
1987-88	—	88	49	99	—
1988-89	—	44	24	51	239

[1] Employment training started in September 1988. The figure shown is cumulative starts for the period September 1988 to March 1989.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current size of the client group for employment training.

Mr. Nicholls: It is not possible to estimate the total number of people in the employment training client group. However, in October 1989 some 812,000 claimants aged 18 to 60 had been unemployed for more than six months.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action he intends to take in response to the Confederation of British Industry's proposal for giving every 16-year-old a £1,600 cash credit a year towards training.

Mr. Nicholls: There are many issues to be considered before any decision is reached on the recommendation in CBI's task force report in favour of training credits. The Government are examining the report's recommendations with interest.

103. **Mr. Viggers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the provision of training places by employers.

Mr. Nicholls: Employers are making a vital contribution to the succcess of both the youth training scheme and employment training through their provision of training places. Employer placements give trainees an opportunity to develop and demonstrate skills in a realistic work environment; ensure that there is a relevant and realistic occupational focus to their training and offer them the best chance of securing a permanent job or self-employment opportunity.

85. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are currently participating in the employment training programme.

Mr. Nicholls: The latest figures show that over 210,000 people are on employment training.

79. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are currently enrolled in employment training.

Mr. Nicholls: The latest figures show that over 210,000 people are on employment training.

72. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are participating in employment training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The latest figures show that over 210,000 people are on employment training. This clearly reflects the programme's outstanding success in attracting unemployed people to take advantage of the help it offers them to get jobs and skills.

66. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the progress of employment training in Cumbria.

Mr. Nicholls: Employment training in Cumbria, as nationally, continues to make excellent progress. It is currently helping nearly 1,500 unemployed people to obtain the skills and experience they need to get jobs.

54. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will revise the level of supplementary grant payable for employment training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: There are no plans to revise the level of supplementary grants payable for employment training (ET).

The Government believe that the level and number of supplementary grants currently payable is sufficient to provide training of good quality.

In future training and enterprise councils will be able to vary both the structure and level of payments to ET training managers.

Training Credits

43. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will introduce a pilot scheme to provide young people with training credits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: There are many issues to be considered before any decision is reached on the recommendation in

CBI's task force report in favour of training credits. The Government are examining the report's recommendations with interest.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

44. **Mr. Grylls:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have now participated in the enterprise allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement.

86. **Mr. Carttiss:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have participated in the enterprise allowance scheme since its inception; and if he will make a statement.

87. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many jobs have been created by the enterprise allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Since its inception in 1982, over 480,000 people have started up in business through the enterprise allowance scheme. Survey evidence shows that in addition to those receiving the allowance, for every 100 businesses still operating at the three-year stage 114 additional jobs have been generated.

Machine Tool Manufacture

45. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are employed in machine tool manufacture; what was the figure five years and 10 years ago; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The information is as follows:

Employees in employment
Unadjusted, Great Britain
Metal-working machine tools and engineers tools (Group 322)[1]

	Number
September 1979	110,764
September 1984	76,299
September 1989	74,796

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[1] Standard Industrial Classification 1980.

Youth Unemployment

46. **Mr. Bevan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current youth unemployment rate *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* in other European Community Countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: In September 1989, the latest comparable date, the unemployment rate in the United Kingdom amongst under 25-year-olds was under half that of the EEC average. The following table shows a full comparison.

Unemployment rates for comparison between EEC countries
Seasonally adjusted
Under 25 years—September 1989

	Rates
Luxembourg	4·1
West Germany	5·0
United Kingdom	8·2
Denmark	10·7
Portugal	10·8
Netherlands	15·8
Belgium	17·7
France	20·8
Ireland	23·5
Greece	[1]24·4
Spain	32·5
Italy	33·3
EEC average	17·4

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[1] April 1987.

EC Institutions

48. **Mr. Marlow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the implications of the social charter with regard to the extension of the power of European Community institutions to initiate and carry through legislation.

Mr. Eggar: The social charter would not itself extend the powers of the European Community institutions to initiate and carry through legislation. It might however be seen by those institutions, including the European Court of Justice, as a commitment to the principles embodied in it.

Minimum Wages

49. **Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to increase minimum wage levels.

89. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures he is undertaking to increase minimum wage levels.

93. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures he is undertaking to increase minimum wage levels.

Mr. Nicholls: Pay generally is a matter for employers and their employees to decide for themselves in the light of all the relevant circumstances. A national minimum wage would destroy jobs.

Benefit Fraud (Construction Sites)

53. **Mr. Couchman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will report on progress in tackling benefit fraud on construction sites; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Construction sites are regularly included in benefit fraud investigations by this Department. Exercises on these sites often prove successful in identifying fraudulent claimants. For example, a recent exercise in the Kent area investigated 592 construction site workers, resulting in 177 claims to benefit being withdrawn with a net benefit saving of £167,000. We will continue to investigate benefit fraud within the industry.

Private Employment Agencies

59. **Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any proposals for laying down basic standards for private employment agencies.

Mr. Eggar: Basic standards are already laid down in the Employment Agencies Act 1973 and the Associated Conduct Regulations (S.I. 1976, No. 715).

Maternity Rights

61. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans his Department has to improve maternity rights.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend has no such plans. The Employment protection legislation already gives substantial rights in respect of maternity.

Employment Rights

62. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how he intends to extend employment rights to all those in work.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend has no current plans to extend the employment protection legislation.

Small Businesses

63. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make a statement on the effective liaison and subsequent achievements of his Department, in helping small businesses over the last 12 months.

Mr. Eggar: My Department has close ties with the small business sector and since I was appointed Minister for Small Firms last July, I have made it my business to meet a wide range of organisations representing and providing services to small firms.

To assist with small firms development, my Department operates a number of programmes which includes the small firms service which provides a comprehensive information and advice service, as well as particular measures to help ease access to finance. An indication of how these measures have fared over the past 12 months is as follows:

In 1988-89, the small firms service answered over 281,000 inquiries (an increase of 6 per cent. on 1987-88), handled over 30,000 new counselling cases (an increase of 12 per cent. on 1987-88), and conducted over 43,000 counselling sessions (an increase of 10 per cent. on 1987-88);

This year, the number of small businesses to benefit from the loan guarantee scheme which underwrites unsecured loans for small businesses, was 2,292, an increase of 1,058 over the previous year;

In addition, the number of entrants to the Training Agency's enterprise programmes, the business enterprise programme and the enterprise training element of employment training, increased by 22 per cent. from 43,489 in 1987-88 to 53,003 in 1988-89, The number of entrants to the graduate enterprise programme, which helps graduates take the first steps to setting up businesses on their own, rose from 155 in 1987-88 to 1,150 in 1988-89;

My Department also provides financial assistance through the enterprise allowance scheme, and makes substantial grants to Business in the Community, local enterprise agencies and the Prince's Youth Business trust, amongst others.

Self-employed Statistics

64. **Mr. Gerald Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are currently self-employed in each region of the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The number of self-employed in the United Kingdom is estimated to be higher than ever before. The following table shows self-employment in each region for June 1989:

Self-employed in the United Kingdom
Unadjusted
June 1989

	Thousands
South East (including London)	1,106
East Anglia	142
South West	307
West Midlands	254
East Midlands	209
Yorkshire and Humberside	242
North West	298
North	117
Wales	151
Scotland	224
Northern Ireland	60
UNITED KINGDOM	3,110

Industry Training Boards

68. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether the successor bodies to the industry training boards will be eligible for funds from the European social fund; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State told the House during the debate on the Employment Bill on 8 November, we are discussing this matter with the European Commission with a view to allowing the successor bodies to industry training boards the same access to the European social fund as the existing boards. I shall keep the hon. Member informed of the outcome of these discussions.

Employment Service Staff (Assaults)

71. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of notified incidents of assault on members of employment service staff during 1989.

Mr. Eggar: Between 1 January and 17 November 1989 there were 126 notified incidents of actual physical assault on members of staff in the employment service. In the same period there were 821 reported cases of threatening behaviour and verbal abuse.

Construction Industry Training Board

74. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he next plans to meet the chairman of the construction industry training board.

Mr. Nicholls: On 9 November I wrote to the chairman of CITB informing him of our plans for future training arrangements for the construction industry and detailing the priorities for the new board. I have no current plans to meet the chairman at this time, but Training Agency officials have already met CITB officials to discuss how priority work can be taken forward.

97. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to make the payment of the construction industry training board levy voluntary for small builders and construction firms.

Mr. Nicholls: The Government have asked the board to devise new levy-grant arrangements which exclude more small firms from the levy and have the effect of extinguishing the levy liability of the better training employers.

Employment Training Agencies (Abuse)

76. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received about abuses by employment training agencies in the west of Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The operations of training agents and training managers in the west of Scotland, as in the country overall, are regularly monitored. I have no evidence of abuse and robust control is exercised to ensure contractual obligations are met.

Vocational Training

83. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to encourage those in work to have an opportunity to continue vocational training throughout their working lives.

Mr. Nicholls: This must be primarily the responsibility of individuals and their employers. The training and enterprise councils will help employers to undertake investment in people. They will be closely involved in an action programme on investing in people that I have asked the national training task force to join with the CBI and other business and training organisations in developing.

Industrial Relations

84. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to improve industrial relations in 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: My Department's aims include promoting a positive environment for work, in which industrial relations continue to improve. We shall continue to promote good practices, such as those connected with employee involvement described in the recently published booklet "People and Companies", and to review and reform industrial relations and trade union legislation as necessary to establish a fair balance under the law. We shall also continue to support the independent Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service, which is charged with the general duty of promoting the improvement of industrial relations.

Business Growth Training Scheme

92. **Mr. Hayes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the response to the business growth training scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Business growth training was launched in April, to help small businesses improve their competitiveness and profits through training. So far the response to business growth training has been encouraging with over 30,000 firms taking advantage of the options available under the initiative.

Trade Unions

94. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals he has to encourage workers to join trade unions.

Mr. Nicholls: None. As stated in our White Paper "Employment for the 1990's" (Cm 540), the Government believe that people should be free to choose for themselves whether or not they belong to a trade union.

Annual Leave

99. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to introduce annual leave for working people as a statutory right.

Mr. Nicholls: None. Terms and conditions of employment are a matter for employers and employees to determine.

Part-time Workers

101. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to extend the protection of part-time workers.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend has no such plans.

Equal Opportunities

102. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how his Department intends to encourage equal opportunities in the workplace.

Mr. Nicholls: Employment Department Ministers take every opportunity to emphasise to employers the importance of equal opportunities in the workplace and the need to treat people on their merits regardless of their race, colour, sex, age, disability, etc.

My Department's jobcentres and the Training Agency make equal opportunities a priority. Jobcentres have an important role both in advising people who feel they have suffered discrimination of their right to complain to an industrial tribunal and in challenging employers who notify potentially discriminatory vacancies to jobcentres.

The Training Agency's recent publication "Defusing the Demographic Time Bomb" which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State launched on 24 October will help to promote the need to develop all the work force.

The Training Agency also provides special training for ethnic minorities and for women to encourage them to enter industries and occupations in which they are under-represented, and part-time and flexible training courses which can be particularly helpful to women returning to work after time at home looking after their families, lone parents and disabled people.

My Department's race relations employment advisory service provides a free advisory, consultancy and training service to help employers implement effective equal opportunity policies within a multi-racial work force. Priority is advising on the CRE 1984 code of practice's recommendations to employers on the implementation of equal opportunity policies and promoting the use of the positive action provisions of the Race Relations Act.

Low Pay

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what he is doing to tackle the problem of low pay in the east midlands.

Mr. Nicholls: Pay in the east midlands, as elsewhere, is generally a matter for employers and employees to decide for themselves in the light of all the relevant circumstances. Any unnecessary intervention by Government could only be harmful to business and to prospects for jobs.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what response he has received from the business community about the establishment of training and enterprise councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I have been very encouraged by the excellent response from employers throughout the country to our invitation to form training and enterprise councils (TECs).

More than 50 groups of senior employers in England and Wales have applied for development funding; the table lists the areas from which we have had applications and indicates their status.

List of training and enterprise councils that have applied for development funding

South East	
Milton Keynes	Approved
Hertfordshire	Approved
Essex	Approved
Hampshire	Approved
Isle of Wight	Approved
Thames Valley	Approved
Oxfordshire	Approved
Kent	Under consideration
London	
Kingston/Merton	Approved
London East	Under consideration
South London	Under consideration
South West	
Devon/Cornwall	Approved
Dorset	Approved
Somerset	Approved
Avon	Under consideration
West Midlands	
Birmingham	Approved
Walsall	Approved
Staffordshire	Approved
Coventry/Warwickshire	Under consideration
Dudley	Approved
Wolverhampton	Approved
East Midlands and Eastern	
North Nottinghamshire	Approved
Norfolk/Waveney	Approved
Suffolk	Approved
Greater Peterborough	Approved
Bedfordshire	Under consideration
Central and South Cambridgeshire	Under consideration
Yorkshire and Humberside	
Sheffield	Approved
Calderdale/Kirklees	Approved
North Yorkshire	Approved
Rotherham	Approved
Leeds	Under consideration
Barnsley/Doncaster	Under consideration
North West	
Cumbria	Approved
East Lancashire	Approved
Rochdale	Approved
Oldham	Approved
South and East Cheshire	Approved
Wigan	Approved
Manchester	Under consideration
Stockport/High Peak	Approved
Bolton/Bury	Under consideration
St. Helens	Under consideration
Northern	
Teesside	Approved
Tyneside	Approved
Wearside	Approved
County Durham	Approved
Northumberland	Approved
Wales	
Mid Glamorgan	Approved
North East Wales	Approved
West Wales	Approved
North West Wales	Approved
South Glamorgan	Approved
Gwent	Under consideration

Claimants

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the average length of the permitted period given to unemployed claimants making a fresh claim for unemployment related benefits; and how many claimants are not given a permitted period, by region.

Mr. Eggar: The information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Job Interview Guarantee Scheme

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which areas of Newcastle have been targeted for the job interview guarantee scheme; how many agreements with employers have been made; and how many unemployed people have been assisted.

Mr. Eggar: The job interview guarantee pilot in Newcastle is being targeted on long term unemployed residents of the Cruddas Park and Loadman Street estates. Employers who participate can be drawn from any area within reach of jobseekers from these estates. The pilot was formally launched at the start of November. No agreements with employers have yet been signed, although many employers have already indicated their interest in participating.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 6 December 1989.

ENVIRONMENT

Regional Directors

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the frequency with which regional directors of the Department of the Environment have met together on a formal basis since 1984; what is the frequency with which full or partial meetings of the regional emergency committees are held; and if he will place minutes of the meetings in the Library.

Mr. Chris Patten: In addition to any ad hoc meetings that may be required, the regional directors meet regularly, about once a month, to discuss departmental business. The regional emergency committees meet as required, at the discretion of the chairmen.

It would not be appropriate to make available the minutes of either type of meeting.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the annual weight and volume of the waste sent to Drigg for each of the years 1980 to 1988 inclusive; and what are his estimates for the years 1989 to 2000.

Mr. Trippier: This is a matter for British Nuclear Fuels plc.

Water Distribution, London

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the leakage levels from the London water distribution system.

Mr. Howard: This is a matter for Thames Water. It is referred to in the first paragraph of page 415 of the prospectus for the water share offers, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House.

Water Leakage Control

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when he expects to publish the next leakage control policy and practice report;

(2) if he will place a copy of the appendix to the 1985 leakage control policy and practice report in the Library.

Mr. Howard: A copy of this report, together with its appendices, has been placed in the Library. There are no plans to publish a further edition.

Tendering

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what assessment he has made of the cost of tendering for public sector contract work under the Local Government Act 1988, in terms of time and resources; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is the proportion of local authority contracts won by *(a)* the private sector and *(b)* direct labour organisations in (i) catering, (ii) refuse collection, (iii) vehicle maintenance, (iv) street cleaning, (v) grounds maintenance, and (vi) building cleaning.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No figures are available at present. An in-depth research project is currently being carried out on behalf of the Department to assess the impact of competition policy and this will examine costs incurred as well as savings made. We expect the first phase of the project to be completed next May. Local authorities have been asked to complete a questionnaire which will provide information on the number of contracts awarded to DSOs and private contractors. I hope that the results will be available early next year.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance he gives to local authorities on the practice of using the schedule of rates in seeking competitive tenders from private contractors.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Advice issued by my Department in its circulars 10/81, 6/82 and 19/83 has encouraged the use of schedules of rates by local authorities. The Department has not issued guidance about the use of schedules but has, in those circulars, referred local authorities to guidance and practical advice produced by bodies such as the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, the National Federation of Building Trades Employers (now the Building Employers Confederation), the Society of Chief Quantity Surveyors in Local Government, the Institution of Municipal Engineers and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy.

Mr Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the Audit Commission's estimate of the savings to be made through compulsory competitive tendering.

Mr Heathcoat-Amory: The Audit Commission's occasional paper "Preparing for Compulsory Competition" published in January indicated that local authorities can obtain savings of 20 per cent. or more in contract price irrespective of whether work has been won by the private sector or by authorities' own work forces.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to encourage local authorities to provide sufficient information to enable private firms to tender competitively for contract work.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Under the competition provisions of the Local Government Act 1988, authorities are required to prepare and make available a detailed specification of the work for which tenders are being invited. Any failure to include adequate information might be regarded as anti-competitive and lead to the exercise of the Secretary of State's sanction powers.

House Prices

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what has been the average annual percentage rise in house prices in *(a)* England and *(b)* Wales since 1968; and what information he has on the annual average building society interest rate for depositors since 1968;

(2) what has been the average annual percentage rise in house prices in Scotland since 1968; and what information he has on the annual average building society interest rate for depositors since 1968.

Mr. Chope: The information is as follows:

	Year to year percentage change in Building Society mix-adjusted Price index[1]			*Building Society average net (UK) share rate*[2]
Year	*England Percentage*	*Wales Percentage*	*Scotland Percentage*	*Percentage*
1968	n/a	n/a	n/a	4·37
1969[3]	5	5	7	4·82
1970	8	7	7	4·94
1971	14	13	7	4·95
1972	31	24	19	4·88
1973	38	38	37	6·51
1974	7	10	15	7·53
1975	6	9	13	7·21
1976	6	9	18	7·02
1977	9	5	10	6·98
1978	16	18	14	6·46
1979	30	26	18	8·45
1980	21	20	15	10·34
1981	6	8	9	9·19
1982	3	5	7	8·80
1983	11	10	13	7·27
1984	11	4	7	7·74
1985	9	8	5	8·69
1986	15	8	6	7·75
1987	17	9	7	7·42
1988	27	20	8	6·87
1989[4]	24	41	17	[5]9·08

[1] Based on 5 per cent. building society mortgage survey which began in the second quarter of 1968. Figures for the fourth quarter of 1989 are not available.

[2] Net share rates from Council of Mortgage Lenders/Building Societies Association.

[3] Percentage change in index between last three quarters of 1968 and same period for 1969.

[4] Percentage change in index between first three quarters of 1988 and same period for 1989.

[5] Average rate paid at the end of June 1989 by largest 20 societies.

Relocation

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list all office relocations of his Department's staff since May 1979, stating in each case the location of origin and the location to transfer, together with the numbers of staff transferred;

(2) what relocations of his Department's staff, or agencies relating thereto, are curently being considered; and what are the numbers of staff affected.

Mr. Chris Patten: Approximately 60 posts in the Crown Suppliers were moved from central London to Bootle in 1982. The Department's Eastern Regional Office, comprising some 70 posts, was moved from London to Bedford in 1988. This year, the newly established Historic Royal Palaces Agency, with 20 posts, was transferred from central London to Hampton Court palace. The Department's rent charges unit, with 11 posts, has recently been moved from central London to the Department's north-west regional office in Manchester.

In April this year, the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission, for which the Department is responsible, moved its office dealing with properties in care in the northern region, with 20 posts, from central London to Newcastle upon Tyne.

Around 38 per cent. of the Department's staff of approximately 6,000 (excluding the Property Services Agency) are already located outside London, 24 per cent. outside the south-east. All other posts have been assessed for relocation potential, and some 1,350 posts have been identified for detailed investigation. Studies covering 320 posts are complete, leading to proposals to move some 90 posts out of London. These proposals—which include the relocation of the Historic Royal Palaces Agency and rent charges unit—are now being implemented. Studies covering the other posts will be carried out over the next two years or so, as operational requirements allow.

Seventy per cent. of the PSA's staff of 22,400 (including the Crown Suppliers) are already located outside London, 45 per cent. outside the south-east. The agency is being restructured in preparation for commercialisation. The scope for further relocation is being examined through the business planning process.

Methane

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to ensure that, wherever possible, methane from landfill sites and oil fields will be collected or flared efficiently.

Mr. Trippier: All those involved in landfill management have been urged to consider appropriate systems of monitoring and control for landfill gas in accordance with the technical memorandum in waste management paper No. 27. The Department of Energy is responsible for the control of gas from oilfields.

Global Warming

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the Government are taking measures to ensure that international exchange of data on global warming is not impeded by commercial considerations in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Trippier: The House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology has similarly suggested the need for unimpeded exchange of data relevant to global climate change in the sixth report. The Government will respond to this and other conclusions of the Committee in due course. Much data generated by global monitoring programmes will be available on the same basis as is currently the case for world meteorological data. Arrangements are in hand to provide data from the ERS1 satellite to suitably equipped and qualified universities and institutes groups. Discussions under way on data dissemination in the longer term will take into account the recommendations of the Select Committee.

Greenhouse Effect

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what consideration he has given to the conclusion contained in the Select Committee on Science and Technology report on the greenhouse effect about the Government's abandonment of research into fast reactor technology; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what consideration he has given to the conclusion contained in the Select Committee on Science and Technology report on the greenhouse effect about the United Kingdom's commitment to the proposal for a successor satellite to ERS1 (ERS2); and if he will make a statement;

(3) what consideration he has given to the conclusion contained in the Select Committee on Science and Technology report on the greenhouse effect about the Government's commitment to the ocean drilling programme beyond 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The Government will be responding in due course when full consideration has been given to all the conclusions and recommendations of the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology's sixth report.

Research and Development

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what funds the Government intend to allocate in 1990 and 1991 to finance research and development into the field of fuel use and emissions control in road transport.

Mr. Trippier: Projected Government expenditure (by financial year) on research and development into fuel use and emissions control covering the period in question is as follows:

Financial year 1990-91: £2·015 million
Financial year 1991-92: £1·150 million

Climate Modelling

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to develop better facilities for climate modelling at the Meteorological Office and if he will offer generous access to those facilities to relevant university research departments.

Mr. Trippier: As the Prime Minister announced in her speech to the United Nations General Assembly on 8 November, the Government intend to establish a new centre for climate prediction. It will build on the existing expertise at the Meteorological Office, which is of the highest international repute. An important function of the centre will be to identify research work including that done in universities, of relevance to climate prediction and to encourage and facilitate its incorporation into improved predictive modelling. International collaboration with other centres of expertise will be a fundamental aspect of the centre's work.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much grant his Department will make available in the next financial year to fund the United Kingdom centre for the prediction of climate change.

Mr. Trippier: Establishing a centre for climate prediction is expected to cost over £5·5 million in 1990-91.

Hazardous Waste (Imports)

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many tonnes of *(a)* special waste, *(b)* toxic waste and *(c)* radioactive waste have been imported through Newhaven for each of the last three years.

Mr. Trippier: The Department's records do not differentiate between toxic waste and special waste which is also classified as toxic waste. In 1986-87 23 tonnes were imported through Newhaven, and in 1987-88 48 tonnes. We have no record of any imports in 1988-89. Radioactive waste is not imported into the country.

Landfill Sites

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any proposals to increase the frequency of visits by inspectors of Her Majesty's inspectors of pollution to landfill sites; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: No. A primary role of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution is assessing the performance of the waste disposal authorities. This involves visiting a selection of landfills to assess standards and performance. Sufficient landfills are inspected for the inspectorate to reach a balanced view on how well the waste disposal authority discharges its statutory duties.

Homelessness

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the homelessness situation in Britain.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the statement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, on 15 November, on the conclusions of the Government's review of the homelessness legislation. A copy of the full report is in the House Library.

Litter

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to enable local authorities to take more severe action against those responsible for dropping litter.

Mr. Trippier: We propose to empower all district and borough councils to operate fixed penalty schemes for littering, similar to that currently operated by Westminster city council. In addition, we propose to increase the maximum fine for littering in England and Wales under the Litter Act 1983 from £400 to £1,000.

Radioactive Substances Act 1960

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what responses he has received to the consultation document on the proposed amendments to the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 and for a cost recovery charging scheme.

Mr. Trippier: Organisations responded to the consultation document issued jointly by myself with my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales, for Scotland and for Northern Ireland, and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. A list of these has been placed in the Library of the House: copies of individual responses may be obtained through the Library. Respondents gave a broad welcome to the proposals put forward in the paper.

In particular, there was enthusiastic support for the proposal to establish practicable de minimis levels of radioactive material and waste. Many comments were received on the section regarding the disclosure of information concerning possibly contaminated land and our proposals have been amended to clarify this section taking into account the suggestions made.

The proposal to introduce a cost recovery charging scheme attracted many comments with only a small minority objecting to the principles of charging. In developing the scheme we will take into account the helpful suggestions and comments received as a result of the current consultation exercise.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what response his Department received to the questionnaire sent to local authorities on 3 May about their progress in implementing the new community charge arrangements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: A total of 267 out of 366 local authorities in England responded to this questionnaire. The picture which emerged was generally reassuring. All authorities which responded were implementing the new arrangements and all confirmed they would meet the requirement to send community charge register entries to their residents by 1 December 1989. A report on the results of the questionnaire has been placed in the Library of the House.

Nature Conservancy Council

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the organisations which have *(a)* supported him and *(b)* criticised in writing to him his proposals for changes in the Nature Conservancy Council; and what representations he has had from Mr. Derek Ratcliffe on the future of science in the Nature Conservancy Council.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 4 December 1989]:* My Department has received a large number of representations about the proposals to reorganise the Nature Conservancy Council. It is not possible to allocate these in a meaningful way to the categories requested. A number of representations contained elements both of support and of criticism. A letter from the former chief scientist of the NCC, Mr. Ratcliffe, made a thoughtful contribution on the need for cohesive operational strategies, the maintenance of high standards in conservation science, evaluation and practice and on maximising the use of scarce resources. We took account of all the points made in the representations received in formulating the Government's proposals (announced on 23 November) to establish a statutory joint committee of the new country agencies to maintain scientific standards and take responsibility for the scientific aspects of nature conservation issues which have a Great Britain or international dimension.

Pollution

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the planned level of inspection of factory discharges into rivers by National Rivers Authority officials over the next 12 months; and what percentage of factory discharges this is estimated to represent.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 4 December 1989]:* I understand that the National Rivers Authority is currently reviewing its monitoring programmes, including the level of inspection of discharges by factories to rivers and other controlled waters.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many persons who inspect factory discharges are employed by the National Rivers Authority.

Mr. Howard *[holding reply Monday 4 December 1989]:* I understand that approximately 430 officers are engaged in pollution control duties in the field. They are involved in inspecting all forms of discharge, including those from factories.

TRANSPORT

M11 Extension Inquiry

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all those who have been excluded from the proceedings of the M11 extension inquiry; and if he will give the reason for exclusion in each case.

Mr. Atkins: The exclusion and readmission of individuals at the current inquiry into the A12 Hackney to M11 link road are matters for the independent inspector.

Several people have been excluded to prevent further disruption of proceedings. Their names are not known to the Department.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the proceedings of the M11 extension inquiry to be concluded; and what assurances he has received that all points of view will be properly aired and fully considered during the inquiry.

Mr. Atkins: The inquiry will conclude when the independent inspector is satisfied that he has heard all statutory objectors and those others with material points who, at his discretion, he chooses to hear. The inspector has already announced that this will mean the continuation of the inquiry in the new year.

It is for the inspector to decide whether representations made to him are appropriate to the specific purposes of this inquiry.

Relocation

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all office relocations of his Department's staff since May 1979, stating in each case the location of origin and the location of transfer, together with the numbers of staff transferred.

Mr. Atkins: Following is the information requested by the hon. Member:

Unit	*Location of origin*	*Location of transfer*	*Number of staff*
Air Accidents Investigation Branch[1]	London	Bramshott[2]	40
HM Coastguard Training Centre[1]	Brixham	Christchurch	8
London Marine Office	London	Orpington	30

[1] Then part of the Department of Trade and Industry.

[2] Bramshott (1982), and then to Farnborough (1984).

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what relocations of his Department's staff, or agencies relating thereto, are currently being considered; and what are the numbers of staff affected.

Mr. Atkins: It is planned to relocate the headquarters of the Driving Standards Agency from London to Nottingham in mid-1990. About 100 posts are involved. The location of certain other London headquarters directorates is being reviewed: up to a further 430 posts are involved.

Traffic Accidents (Children)

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many children of school age have been injured in traffic accidents in the last 12-months'; and how many have been killed.

Mr. Atkins: In 1988, 47,429 children aged between five and 16 were injured in road traffic accidents and 440 were killed.

This is the most recent 12-months-period for which full data are available.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many children of school age have been injured in traffic accidents involving designated school buses in the last 12 months; and how many have been killed.

Mr. Atkins: The information requested is not available.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many people in the last 12 months have been injured in traffic accidents; and how many have been killed.

Mr. Atkins: In 1988, 317,253 people of all road users were injured in road traffic accidents and 5,052 were killed. This is the most recent 12-months period for which full data are available.

Provisional estimates for the 12 months up to June 1989 show 320,576 injured and 5,082 killed.

School Buses

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of statutory regulations for operators of designated school buses which require standards of safety to be met *(a)* in the other member states of the European Community and *(b)* elsewhere; and what assessment he has made of their comparable figures for accidents involving children of school age and designated school buses.

Mr. Atkins: I have considered what we can learn from the statutory regulations applicable to school buses, so far as we are aware of them, in other European countries and elsewhere.

Some European countries require a special sign showing two children in silhouette on a yellow background to be displayed on school buses. We think that this simple, cautionary sign has much to commend it and as I told the House on 14 November, we shall shortly circulate for comment proposals along these lines.

In Japan all minibuses, buses and coaches, except those providing a local bus service, are required to be fitted with seat belts on every seat. I have received many representations requesting similar legislation in the United Kingdom. At present we are prevented from enforcing legislation while the European Community seat belt directive specifies that no seat belts need be fitted to minibuses and coaches. We shall continue to press for change, but the view of most of the other member states is that coaches and minibuses are so safe that seat belts would not be worth while except on the front seats. This we have already required. We believe that seats themselves can give a measure of protection in a frontal accident, but seat belts generally prevent ejection and can thus reduce death and injury in a roll-over accident.

We have no figures for accidents involving children of school age using buses either in the United Kingdom or in other countries. Our own figures show that in 1988 409 children were killed and 7,923 were seriously injured on the roads in all.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of traffic accidents involving designated school buses where children of school age have been injured or killed; and what consideration he has given to *(a)* the state of the road, *(b)* the type of vehicles involved and *(c)* the time of year as contributory factors.

Mr. Atkins: It is our established practice to make a detailed investigation covering every possible contributory factor leading to a spectacular and major crash. This applies equally to crashes involving buses carrying children of school age as to other vehicles.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration he has given to the need for an additional adult to be carried on designated school buses to ensure proper safety procedures are followed.

Mr. Atkins: Supervision is a matter for education authorities and schools. We encourage them to ensure that adequate arrangements exist.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what regulations exist to ensure that drivers of designated school buses are trained in first aid.

Mr. Atkins: There is no regulation requiring any driver to be trained in first aid.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what safety requirements exist for transport operators of school project trips; and if he will ensure that any new safety standards imposed on designated school buses must also be met on school project trips.

Mr. Atkins: The public service vehicle regulations apply equally to all bus operators. We will indeed propose that any new safety requirements for buses used to carry children between home and school shall also apply to school project trips.

Civil Aviation Authority

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport why he decided to allow the Civil Aviation Authority to delay by one year its response to his predecessor's request for advice on airports policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend acknowledged, when he sought advice on the adequacy of United Kingdom airport capacity through to 2005, that he had given the authority a testing undertaking. We recognise the need to carry forward airports strategy, but it is important that this is based on fully researched and considered advice. We respect the authority's judgment that it needs to carry out further work before responding.

Airports (Slot Allocation)

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list those sections of the relevant United Kingdom and EEC statutes which relate to the precedence of allocation of slots between charter and scheduled services at United Kingdom airports; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what examination of the validity under EEC law of his powers to make airport traffic rules has been undertaken; what are his powers to give preference in slot allocation to scheduled carriers over competing charter carriers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Section 31 of the Airports Act 1986 empowers my right hon. Friend to make traffic distribution rules which may, inter alia, specify classes or descriptions of air traffic that are permitted under the rules to use any of the airports concerned, and impose prohibitions or restrictions in relation to the use of any of those airports by air traffic of any class or description specified in the rules.

Section 33 of the 1986 Act empowers my right hon. Friend to require the Civil Aviation Authority to prepare for his approval a slot allocation scheme for airports at which a limit on movements has been set under section 32, or at which he judges that demand exceeds capacity, or is likely in the near future to do so. No such schemes have been made, and slot allocation at United Kingdom airports is carried out either by the airport operator or by the airport scheduling committee. Such committees are composed of representatives of airlines operating at the airport, and work in accordance with guidelines established by the International Air Transport Association.

The relevant EC legislation is Commission regulation (EEC) No. 2671/88. Article 1 exempts from article 85(1) of the treaty of Rome agreements between undertakings in the air transport sector, decisions by associations of such undertakings and concerted practices between such undertakings which have as their purpose slot allocation and airport scheduling in so far as they concern scheduled international air services between airports in the Community. Article 5 states that this exemption applies only if any rules of priority established are neither directly nor indirectly related to carrier identity or nationality or category of service and take into account constraints or air traffic distribution rules laid down by competent national or international authorities.

Car Insurance (Disabled People)

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will hold an inquiry into the cost of car insurance charged to disabled people; and if he will take steps to ensure that disabled drivers are not prevented from driving their cars by high insurance.

Mr. Atkins: No. It is for insurance companies to set premiums in the light of their own underwriting experience. I welcome the initiative the Association of British Insurers have taken to make available a dossier of insurance advice for disabled drivers and their offer to look into any individual difficulties.

British Rail

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last discussed *(a)* possible expansion of the network; *(b)* possible closure of passenger lines and *(c)* possible passenger fare increases with the chairman of British Rail.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend discusses a wide range of railway issues at his regular meetings with the chairman of British Rail. He has recently discussed with the chairman the objectives he proposes to set for the next three years. He hopes to publish them shortly.

British Rail (Chairman)

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will announce the appointment of the next chairman of British Rail.

Mr. Parkinson: I am very pleased to announce the appointment of Mr. Bob Reid to take over the chairmanship of British Rail next year. His distinguished career as a senior manager in private industry will bring valuable experience to bear on the challenges and opportunities which British Rail will face in the next decade.

At the same time, I pay warm tribute to Sir Robert Reid's achievements as chairman over the last six years. He has led British Rail to a new, more commercial approach, with a massive investment programme and more customer-orientated structure. The Government, and the travelling public, owe him a large debt of gratitude.

Mr. Reid's appointment will be for a five-year term, at a salary of £200,000 a year. Mr. Reid will join the board from 1 January as chairman-designate and for a period from 1 April until his responsibilities at Shell come to an end in October, he will be non-executive part-time chairman.

I am also pleased to announce the appointment of Mr. Derek Fowler as deputy chairman for a six-month period next year, and am grateful to him for agreeing to take on this important role. Mr. Fowler, at present vice-chairman and finance member, will become deputy chairman in April to provide continuity and to support Mr. Reid as non-executive chairman. Mr. Fowler has made a valuable contribution throughout his long service on the board, and this extension will make a fitting final stage in his career, to the benefit of British Rail.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Market Research

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many market research and sample surveys were carried out by or for his Department in the last 12 months; what was the cost of each; what was the total cost; how many were carried out in-house; how many were carried out for his Department by outside organisations; and what percentage of the total expenditure was paid to outside organisations.

Mrs. Rumbold: A total of nine individual ad hoc surveys were carried out by outside organisations at a cost respectively of £114,110, £10,626, £10,243, £230,630, £25,650, £33,732, £4,550, £4,300 and £100,000 making a total of £533,841 in the 12 months ending 30 November 1989. All these surveys were funded by the Department.

In addition, the Department has carried out three in-house sample surveys at an estimated total cost of £45,000. The percentage of total expenditure paid to outside organisations, therefore, was 92 per cent.

Relocation

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list all office relocations of his Department's staff since May 1979, stating in each case the location of origin and the location of transfer, together with the numbers of staff transferred.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department transferred 30 posts from London to its Darlington office in 1988. Only two of the staff transferred with the work.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what relocations of his Department's staff, or agencies relating thereto, are currently being considered; and what are the numbers of staff affected.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department is proposing to relocate a further 50 posts from London to its Darlington office during 1990. In addition, a senior official of the Department is about to undertake a study of the long-term location requirements of the Department in the light of the Government's policy on relocation. The study will consider various possibilities, including the handling of some functions regionally. It is not at present possible to say how staff will be affected.

PhD Students

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps are being taken by the Government to encourage PhD students into university research departments.

Mr. Jackson: Approximately 60 per cent. of full-time PhD students are supported from Government sources, primarily through grant in aid from the Department of Education and Science to the research councils and the British Academy. Three thousand nine hundred and ninety six new research studentships were awarded by these bodies in 1989, an increase of 134 over 1988. The postgraduate award-making bodies are better placed than Government to assess national needs for PhDs and to determine the optimum distribution of these studentships between different departments and subjects.

Energy Conference

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what departmental representation there was at the fourth international energy conference of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, on 4 and 5 December.

Mr. Jackson: I understand that attendance at the conference was by invitation. I am not aware that the Department of Education and Science received an invitation, and therefore the Department was not represented at this conference.

Disabled Children

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many disabled children are currently in special schools within the South Yorkshire area; and what steps he has taken to ensure that for each child, the local education authority is issuing a statement of needs in accordance with the law.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The number of children in special schools within the southern Yorkshire area in January 1989 was 2,807. LEAs have a duty under the 1981 Education Act to identify special education needs and issue a statement when appropriate. It is for each authority to decide on their own local policy.

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what estimates he has of the true cost of supporting disabled children in main stream education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The Department does not collect data on spending on children with statements of special educational needs in ordinary schools.

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the extent of in-service teacher training on disability awareness; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: No information is collected centrally on the extent of awareness training on disability. The Government provide substantial support, through the local education authority training grants scheme, for training to meet special educational needs, which include certain disabilities. Five categories of training in respect of special educational needs are currently designated as national priorities, eligible for support at the higher rate of grant under the scheme. In the current financial year, grant is available to support expenditure of £6·6 million in these areas. In addition, authorities are free to draw on the grant available to them under the scheme at the lower rate, in support of further expenditure at their discretion on training on aspects of disability.

Greenhouse Effect

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much money is currently allocated by the Government for the funding of the study at universities of the behaviour of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere; and how much it plans to allocate for this purpose in 1990 and 1991.

Mr. Jackson: I understand that in 1989-90 the NERC has allocated £155,000 to higher education institutions for research into the chemistry and physics of greenhouse gases. This basic work is included in the £890,000 that the NERC is providing overall in 1989-90 for research in higher education institutions related to climate change and its impacts. It will be for the research councils to decide their future priorities for specific research areas, within the overall totals allocated. My right hon. Friend will shortly receive the ABRC's advice on the allocation of the science budget for 1990-91, and his decisions after receiving that advice will be announced in due course.

Climate Change

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what funds the Government intend to allocate for the United Kingdom's participation in the WCRP's global energy and water cycles experiment to place a lidar on one of the polar platform satellites in the late 1990's.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend has requested the ABRC's advice on what further allocation is appropriate for earth observation instruments, particularly on polar platforms, in addition to the minimum £6 million recently announced for an instrument associated with the proposed earth remote sensing satellite (ERS2). His decisions after receving that advice will be announced in due course. It will be for the research councils to decide, within the overall totals allocated, their priorities for specific research areas.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what funds the Government are making available in 1990-91 to ensure the maintenance in the United Kingdom of an independent national research programme into global climate changes.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend has requested the ABRC's advice on the allocation of the science budget for 1990-91. His decisions after receiving that advice will be announced in due course. It will be for the research councils to decide, within the overall totals allocated, their priorities for specific research areas. Global climate change is necessarily a problem on an international scale, and the strength of United Kingdom research enables our scientists to make key contributions to important international collaborative programmes.

Local Authority Bids

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his policy on the treatment of local authority supplementary bids for *(a)* education capital expenditure in 1990, 1991 and 1992, *(b)* education support grant in 1990-91 in respect of training for school governors, *(c)* education support grant in 1990-91 and *(d)* local authority training grants scheme support in 1990-91 where such bids are being made to support the development of magnet schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend is willing to consider any bids for grants within his responsibility which are submitted by local education authorities as being consistent with the objectives of the grant and the arrangements for its allocation, and are designed to support worthwhile developments. He is currently considering the bids submitted by LEAs for education support grant funding, including those for school governor training, and for LEA training grant scheme funding in 1990-91; the allocations for all LEAs will be announced around the turn of the year.

Annual capital guidelines are assessed in accordance with well-established criteria which are familiar to local education authorities. My right hon. Friend expects to make an announcement about annual capital guidelines for LEAs in 1990-91 shortly before Christmas.

Magnet Schools (Bradford)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what the minute of the meeting between his Minister of State and members of Bradford council on 28 September records as the statement of the policy which his Department would operate in relation to a supplementary bid for local authority training grants scheme support in 1990-91 in relation to magnet schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The statement of policy given at my meeting on 28 September was as set out in the reply that I have given today to a separate question from the hon. Member on the same subject.

Training Grants (Bradford)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what view was expressed in the letter from J. W. Whitaker of his Department, to Mr. Nils Purser, assistant director 13-plus, Bradford education directorate, dated 19 October, following a meeting between the Minister of State and elected members at Bradford council, about the availability of resources under the local authority training grants scheme support in 1990-91.

Mrs. Rumbold: The letter said that the Department could not offer any prospect of making available the significant additional funds the authority was seeking for 1990-91 from within the LEA training grant scheme, since the grant is allocated to LEAs on a formula basis and it was likely that resources would be fully committed on the lines indicated by the indicative allocations, which had been set out in DES circular 20/89. The letter went on to say that LEAs' expenditure is monitored at the end of each calendar year and spare resources resulting from projected underspending are reallocated for use in the final quarter of the financial year.

Medical Research Council

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has received the annual report of the Medical Research Council for 1988-89; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The annual report of the Medical Research Council for 1988-89 has been submitted to me under the requirements of the Science and Technology Act 1965. A copy has been laid before the House, and the report is being published today. I was most interested to study the report and, in an eventful year for the Council, I was particularly encouraged to note:

(i) Exciting fundamental research in such fields as neurobiology and molecular, cell and developmental biology offering the prospect of practical advances in diagnostic and therapeutic techniques and of commercially important developments. Examples include the work on protein function and design, on antibody engineering, on pre-implantation diagnosis of genetic disease, and on the role of neurotransmitters in the brain.

(ii) The establishment of the Council's human genome mapping project.

(iii) Promising research on the factors that influence susceptibility to coronary heart disease, and the trial of anti-coagulants in reducing the risk of thrombosis following myocardial infarction.

(iv) The continued build-up of the Council's broad programme of research on AIDS which includes work on vaccines and drugs, epidemiological studies, and a new joint Anglo-French clinical trail of zidovudine for patients who are infected with HIV but have not yet become ill.

(v) A major programme of breast cancer screening trials to determine: the optimum frequency of screening; the proportion of deaths which could be prevented by mammographic screening of women under 50; and the best way of detecting cancers by mammography. This is being funded jointly by the Medical Research Council, the Department of Health and the Cancer Research Campaign.

(vi) A wide range of work of direct relevance to the health services, particularly studies: of vision screening in infancy; of the care of asthma patients; of determinants of re-attendance at accident and emergency departments; of procedures for identifying elderly people at risk of hip fracture; of cervical screening procedures; and of the care of terminally ill cancer patients.

Economic and Social Research Council

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has received the annual report of the Economic and Social Research Council for 1988-89; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Macgregor: The annual report of the Economic and Social Research Council has been submitted to me under the requirements of the Science and Technology Act 1965, and a copy is being laid before the House today.

I was most interested to read about the council's achievements in a challenging year in which its headquarters moved to Swindon. I was particularly interested to note:

(a) the continued good progress in improving the communication of its research to a wider audience;

(b) the establishment of interdisciplinary research centres in micro social change at the university of Essex and in human communication at the universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow; and

(c) the priority given by the council to improved training in research methods.

I congratulate the council on these and its many other achievements and anticipate reading of further progress in next year's report.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

House of Fraser

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Attorney-General if the serious fraud squad has now completed its investigations into the implications of the House of Fraser report.

The Attorney-General: No. I frequently discuss the investigation with both the Director of Public Prosecutions and the director of the Serious Fraud Office. It is our joint intention that it should continue to be pressed forward with all dispatch and speedily concluded. The remaining inquiries, which are current, relate to matters outside the United Kingdom's jurisdiction.

Westway Locksmiths Ltd.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Attorney-General whether criminal proceedings are to be brought against Westway Locksmiths Limited relating to the sale and fraudulent advertising for sale of skeleton car keys; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Crown prosecution service has received no reports from the police concerning Westway Locksmiths. However, I understand that criminal proceedings brought by Tameside trading standards department are pending before Manchester Crown court. In the circumstances, it would not be appropriate to comment further.

Land Registry, Plymouth

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Attorney-General what was the average delay in replying to inquiries to the Land Registry in Plymouth in *(a)* November 1989 and *(b)* November 1988.

The Attorney-General: The great majority of urgent pre-contract and pre-completion applications are now completed within four days. The percentages of such applications taking longer than that are set out in the table.

	(a) November 1989 Percentage	*(b)* November 1988 Percentage
Searches of the whole of a registered title	0	1
Searches of part of a registered title	1	8
Searches of the index map	6	16
Office copies (register and filed plan only)	3	12

Note: Overall averages for the time taken to deal with such applications are not available.

THE ARTS

Community-based Arts

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he has any plans to give financial assistance to community-based arts organisations.

Mr. Luce: I fund the arts at arm's length. It is a matter for the Arts Council and the regional arts association to decide on the funding of such organisations.

Performing Arts (East Anglia)

Mr. Paice: To ask the Minister for the Arts what information he has on the performance arts in East Anglia for the financial years 1987 to 1990.

Mr. Luce: During this period, the performing arts in East Anglia have expanded as in the country as a whole. Audience attendance figures and levels of self-generated income have generally increased. Particular successes have included the Cambridge festival, Wingfield arts and music, and the Norfolk and Norwich triennial festival. For more detailed information, the hon. Member may care to write to David Cargill, the Chairman of Eastern Arts, which is the regional arts association with responsibility for East Anglia. The RAA's address is: Eastern Arts, Cherry Hinton Hall, Cherry Hinton Road, Cambridge, CB1 4DW.

SCOTLAND

Babies (Special Care)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each year since 1981 the number of babies born weighing under 1,500 grams.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The total number of babies born weighing less than 1,500 grams in Scotland in the years 1981-87 is as follows:

Year	*Number*
1981	649
1982	622
1983	650
1984	719
1985	664
1986	705
1987	684

British Medical Association

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet representatives of the British Medical Association (Scotland).

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend and I are regularly in contact with representatives of the British Medical Association in Scotland about a wide range of matters.

Sheriff Courts

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will publish the research funded by his Department and carried out by Dr. Carol Jones of the centre for criminology and the social and philosophical study of law at Edinburgh university, which was undertaken in 1987 into the study of the sheriff courts in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Dr. Carol Jones's report on contested cases in the Scottish sheriff courts has not yet been submitted in final form. The question of publication will be considered after it has been received.

Nature Conservancy Council

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), *Official Report*, 28 November, columns *188-89*, how many of the 179 respondents expressed *(a)* an unconditional welcome for the proposed NCC-CCS merger and *(b)* the need for a strong science base or co-ordination of standards, research and matters of British or international significance, and *(c)* the need for sufficient resources.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Development Department's consultation paper invited comments on the Government's proposals to bring forward legislation to merge the Countryside Commission for Scotland and the proposed Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland to form a natural heritage agency for Scotland. Of the 179 respondents, 159 expressed a view on his proposal and, of these, 98 in principle supported it. Almost all respondents commented on a range of issues including science and resources, or sought assurances that the Government would address particular issues before finalising their proposals. As a result, the responses are not capable of analysis in terms of the questions posed.

In connection with co-ordination on science issues, I refer to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment on 23 November, at columns *16-17*.

A file containing a copy of all the responses, except the few which were submitted in confidence, is available for inspection in the House of Commons Library.

Playground Supervision

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received in response to consultation on draft regulations on playground supervision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Sixty-four representations have been received from education authorities, teachers' associations and a wide range of other organisations and individuals representing parental and other educational interests.

There has been widespread support for the proposals in the draft regulations which would *(a)* put a statutory duty on education authorities to take reasonable care for the safety of pupils under their charge; and *(b)* introduce a specific statutory duty to provide adult supervision of primary school playgrounds in breaktimes.

Respondents also made a number of specific suggestions for improvement of the regulations, and the Government will be taking account of these in bringing revised regulations before Parliament. The revised regulations will require that the duty to provide playground supervision should extend to special schools as well as to primary schools. We will also provide for primary schools with fewer than 50 pupils to be exempt from the duty to have an adult supervisor in the playground except where circumstances require it. And we will require a clear definition to be made locally of what area is covered by the term "playground".

We regret that education authorities felt unable to meet the proposed timetable for implementation in January 1990. In the interests of smooth introduction of the new arrangements we now intend that the regulations should come into force in April 1990, although I will be encouraging local authorities to provide playground supervision before then if possible.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Disabled People

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will list the projects concerning the rehabilitation of people with disabilities which his Department is currently funding in developing countries; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what action he takes to consult organisations of people with disabilities in the countries concerned before making grants for projects concerning rehabilitation of people with disabilities in developing countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: The following projects concerning the rehabilitation of people with disabilities are being funded from ODA's bilateral programmes in 1989/90:

Country and Project

Bangladesh—Rehabilitation Institute and Hospital for the Disabled: Orthopaedic Surgeons.
Fiji —Disabled Children in the Community
Speech Therapist, Bailey Clinic.
India —Assistance to Spastic Societies in Bombay, Calcutta and Delhi.
Consultancies to Formulate Projects to Assist Various Disabled Groups.
Sri Lanka —Cleft Lips and Palates.

Zimbabwe: provision of orthopaedic technicians, equipment and training for a hospital in Harare (recently completed). These Government-to-Government programmes result from official requests received by Her Majesty's Government; consultation with local groups is usually a matter for the recipient countries' authorities though in some cases officials, including specialist health advisers in ODA will have direct contact with beneficiary groups at an early stage.

Under the joint funding scheme, ODA also provides grants to United Kingdom non-governmental organisations operating in developing projects for the partial funding of their countries. JFS projects are normally executed by local organisations working with the United Kingdom NGOs. ODA is currently financing the following JFS projects:

Agency/Country and Project

Action on Disability and Development
Africa
Employment of Development Officer
India
Development and Training Group of People with Disability
Orthopaedic Workshop, Bangalore
Training Course and Extended Orthopaedic Workshop
Sudan
Orthopaedic Workshop, Nyala Society for Disabled
Tanzania
Development Programme for Disabled People
Uganda
Regionalise Management/Support, National Union Disabled People
Zimbabwe
Income Generation for Disabled People

British Red Cross Society
Papua New Guinea
Special Education Centre
Uganda
Mulago Hospital Orthopaedic Project

Help the Aged
India
Rehabilitation of Handicapped in Rural Areas
Kenya
Refracting Service

Impact Foundation
India
Leprosy Disability Prevention and Limitation

Leonard Cheshire Foundation
Ethiopia
Medical Education and Rehabilitation Centre
Malaysia
Far East Region Training Programme
Video Training

Richmond Fellowship
India
Bangalore Pilot Project, Mental Health Rehabilitation

Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind
Bangladesh
Community Based Rehabilitation
Manpower Development Programme and Primary Eye Care
Malawi
Ophthalmic Assistants Training
Solomon Islands
Eye Care Services in the Pacific

Further assistance for the rehabilitation of people with disabilities is provided through the heads of mission gift scheme, the heads of mission small projects scheme and the British volunteer programme; a list of these is not readily available.

The overseas aid programme will continue to respond positively to requests to provide assistance for the rehabilitation of people with disabilities. It will also continue to support programmes aimed at combating tropical diseases which result in disabling conditions.

Sri Lanka (Aid)

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, further to his reply of 29 November to the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth, what is his forecast for aid for Sri Lanka for 1990-91; what type of projects in Sri Lanka are likely to attract British overseas aid; and what additional aid will be made available to Sri Lanka following the damage and injury caused by civil disturbance.

Mr. Maude: Britain supports a wide range of projects in Sri Lanka in the education, power, roads and natural resources sectors. Last year a grant of £20 million was signed for reconstruction aid, including the provision of vehicles, railway track, hospital and educational equipment, and support for NGO programmes. The grant has not yet been fully allocated to specific uses, and projects under consideration with the Sri Lankan Government include road rehabilitation and forestry. Britain is also considering providing balance of payments support as part of an economic reform programme which the Sri Lankan authorities are discussing with the IMF and IBRD. Aid expenditure in 1990-91 is uncertain at this stage, and will depend upon a number of factors, including any delays caused by civil disturbances.

Market Research

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many market research and sample surveys were carried out by or for his Department in the last 12 months; what was the cost of each; what was the total cost; how many were carried out in house; how many were carried out for his Department by outside organisations; and what percentage of the total expenditure was paid to outside organisations.

Mr. Sainsbury: No market research or sample surveys have been undertaken in house in the past 12 months. In this period, one sample survey was carried out by an outside organisation at a cost of £10,470·75.

Public Appointments

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many persons above the age of *(a)* 60, *(b)* 65 and *(c)* 70 years he has appointed to public bodies in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Sainsbury: The information is not immediately available, and I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Immigration Service Union

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why his Department decided not to recognise the Immigration Service Union or to deduct membership contributions for its members seconded from the Home Office to his Department.

Mr. Sainsbury: Immigration service officers serving in Foreign and Commonwealth Office posts overseas remain members of the Home Civil Service. Any negotiations on pay and conditions of service of Immigration Service Union members overseas are conducted by the Immigration Service Union with the Home Office and/or Treasury as appropriate. The question of formal Foreign and Commonwealth Office recognition therefore does not arise.

South Africa

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Government of South Africa about the need to treat all British citizens equally with regard to visa requirements.

Mr. Maude: We would of course be concerned if evidence was presented of discrimination against a British citizen on grounds of colour by any country in the operation of their visa regime.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will set up an inquiry into the working of the United Kingdom's visa treaty with South Africa.

Mr. Maude: The United Kingdom has no visa treaty with South Africa.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received regarding the South African Government's guidelines for British citizens who travel to that country of *(a)* European and *(b)* not pure European descent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has received no such representations.

Poland and Hungary

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish the amount and types of economic assistance currently being given to Poland and Hungary; and what is the planned future level and types of such assistance.

Mr. Maude: I refer the right hon. Member to the answer my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, gave my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope) on 29 November, at column *318*. With regard to future amounts and types of assistance, the know-how funds for Poland and Hungary are expected to continue for five years: it is not possible at this stage to say whether additional assistance will be made available in the future.

Hong Kong

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many orphans there are at present in the camps in Hong Kong; how they are to be repatriated; and what measures he will entake to ensure a satisfactory result.

Mr. Maude *[pursuant to the reply, 4 December 1989, c. 26]:* No figures are available for the number of orphans in the camps in Hong Kong, but there are estimated to be about 1,000 unaccompanied minors. The Hong Kong Government are discussing with the UNHCR the establishment of special procedures under the comprehensive plan of action for dealing with unaccompanied minors, with the aim of identifying the most humane and appropriate course in each individual case. This might mean repatriation where the child's parents or closest relatives are in Vietnam, or resettlement where the nearest family ties are overseas.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Personal Debt

115. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the estimate of the current level of personal debt in the United Kingdom.

116. **Mr. Cunliffe:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the estimate of the current level of personal debt in the United Kingdom.

117. **Mr. George Robertson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the estimate of the current level of personal debt in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ryder: Figures for personal sector debt are given in "Financial Statistics" table 14·4. The amount outstanding at end June 1989, as shown in the November issue, was about £378 billion. An analysis of the greater part of this debt using an alternative instrument classification and showing the amount regarded as consumer credit is given in "Financial Statistics" table 9.3.

Exporters

118. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment his Department has made of the effect upon exporters of current Government policies on interest rates and the pound sterling exchange rate.

119. **Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if his Department has assessed the effect upon exporters of current Government policies on interest rates and the pound sterling exchange rate.

120. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment his Department has made of the effect upon exporters of current Government policies on interest rates and the pound sterling exchange rate.

Mr. Ryder: A forecast of exports for 1990 is given in the Autumn Statement.

Manufacturing Investment

121 **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by what amount investment by manufacturing industry in the north-west increased during 1988.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Regional information for 1988 is not yet available. Net capital expenditure by manufacturing industries in the north-west in 1987 was £1,204 million, compared with £1,000 million in 1986. The corresponding figures for the United Kingdom as a whole are £9,754 million and £8,705 million. These figures are expressed in current prices. Constant price estimates are not made, because regional price indices are not compiled.

House Purchase

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate at 1989-90 income levels the cost to the Exchequer of *(a)* raising the ceiling on mortgage interest relief from £30,000 to £50,000 and *(b)* raising the ceiling for exemption from stamp duty on land and buildings from £30,000 to £60,000.

Mr. Lilley: *(a)* The direct revenue cost at 1989-90 income levels of raising the ceiling on mortgage interest relief from £30,000 to £50,000 is estimated to be about £900 million. This estimate makes no allowance for any consequential change to the distribution of outstanding mortgages. It is based on a projection of the 1987-88 survey of personal incomes, and is therefore provisional.

(b) An increase in the stamp duty threshold for land and buildings from £30,000 to £60,000 is estimated to cost about £210 million at forecast 1989-90 levels.

Third World Debt

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will indicate what general guidance is given to banking institutions in the United Kingdom about the total proportion of Third world debt which would be appropriate for them to consider as irrecoverable for taxation purposes, as defined in his answer of 15 November, *Official Report,* column *330,* when writing off amounts of such debt in any one year.

Mr. Lilley: The Inland Revenue issued a statement of practice on 25 January 1983, a copy of which is in the Library, setting out the general principles which it regarded as applying in law to the tax treatment of sovereign and commercial debt. As to the amount, the Bank of England has issued a matrix to the banks to assist them in the process of setting provisions for supervisory purposes; the Inland Revenue has indicated that this should provide relevant material for considering the extent to which specific provisions are properly deductible for tax purposes.

Market Research

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many market research and sample surveys were carried out by or for the Central Office of Information in the last 12 months; what was the cost of each; what was the total cost; how many were carried out in-house; how many were carried out for the Central Office of Information by outside organisations; and what percentage of the total expenditure was paid to outside organisations.

Mr. Ryder: One hundred and forty-four separate research projects were undertaken by COI on behalf of various Government Departments in 1988-89. The total cost of these, including VAT, was £2·3 million. Interviewing, data analysis and the majority of report preparation was undertaken for COI by specialist commercial organisations, usually appointed on tender: some 70 per cent. of the above cost was paid to those outside organisations. The details of each project is a matter for the Department which commissioned the research.

Income Tax

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what research has been conducted into the effect of the ending of all personal income tax allowances and in particular the effects on the poverty trap; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: All options for reforming the tax system are kept under review.

VAT

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total repayment of value added tax to local authorities for the last complete period.

Mr. Ryder: Total value added tax repaid to local authorities in the last financial year, 1988-89, was £1,479 million and in the current financial year, up to the end of October, was £1,030 million.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to review the repayments of value added tax to local authorities.

Mr. Ryder: There are no plans at present for a review of the provisions of section 20 of the VAT Act 1983.

Relocation

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list all office relocations of his Department's staff since May 1979, stating in each case the location of origin and the location of transfer, together with the numbers of staff transferred.

Mr. Ryder: No relocations of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Department's staff have taken place since May 1979.

Married Couples (Taxation)

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much the married couple's allowance, which is to be introduced in April 1990, will be worth as a proportion of the current available personal allowances.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 4 December 1989]:* The value of the married couple's allowance in 1989-90 terms is £1,590, equivalent to the different between the present single person's and married man's allowances. My right hon. Friend will announce the level of allowances for 1990-91 in the usual way, in next year's Budget.

Mortgage Interest Relief

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate at 1989-90 income levels the level to which the ceiling on mortgage interest relief could be raised if the annual cost to the Exchequer were limited to *(a)* £0·25 billion, *(b)* £0·5 billion, *(c)* £1 billion and *(d)* £2 billion.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 4 December 1989]:* Provisional estimates of the costs of increasing the ceiling for mortgage relief above £30,000 are given in the table. All estimates exclude behavioural effects which, for the higher ceilings quoted, would be substantial.

Direct revenue cost at 1989-90 income levels

£ million	*Ceiling (£)*
250	34,000
500	38,000
1,000	54,000
2,000	no limit

Retail Price Index

Mr. Wray: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what items are included in the calculations for the retail price index of *(a)* Japan, *(b)* West Germany, *(c)* France, *(d)* the Netherlands, *(e)* Denmark, *(f)* Sweden, *(g)* Canada, *(h)* the United States of America and *(i)* the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 4 December 1989]:* Each national survey office includes a great number of items in its retail price index, details of which are published in national statistical sources. Copies of the relevant material have been placed in the House of Commons Library. The information requested for the United Kingdom was published by the Department of Employment in the *Employment Gazette* for April 1989.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the change in manufacturing output in *(a)* 1964 to 1970, *(b)* 1970 to 1974, *(c)* 1974 to 1979 and *(d)* 1979 to the latest date available; and what was the change in manufacturing output for (i) West Germany, (ii) Japan, (iii) USA, (iv) France, (v) Italy, (vi) Benelux countries and (vii) Spain during the same periods.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 4 December 1989]:* Following is the information requested.

(annual average percentage change)

	1964-70	*1970-74*	*1974-79*	*1979-88*
United Kingdom	2·8	2·2	−0·6	0·8
United States	4·4	4·7	3·8	3·9
Japan	13·7	5·1	3·3	3·9
Germany	5·5	2·0	1·9	1·1
France	5·1	5·9	1·4	0·4
Italy	6·9	4·5	2·2	1·5
Spain	12·1	11·1	0·3	1·5
Belgium	5·0	5·2	0·9	1·3
Luxembourg	2·9	5·0	−2·3	2·9
Netherlands	6·9	4·7	1·6	1·7

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Soft Loan Facility

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the future of the aid and trade provision soft loan facility.

Mrs. Chalker: In 1986, a soft loan facility within the aid and trade provision of the overseas aid programme was established for an initial period of five years, ending March 1991. It has enabled ATP grant funds to support long-term loans to developing countries, at concessional rates of interest, provided by private banks and guaranteed by ECGD, for agreed sound development projects. This complemented the existing mixed credit instrument by which ATP grants are provided normally in association with export credits to help finance the capital costs of sound development projects.

A review of the soft loan facility has now been completed. It has been agreed that the facility should be extended beyond March 1991. The method of ATP support will, however, be changed so that ATP funds used to reduce the rate of interest to the borrower, will be provided over the construction period of the project and during the drawdown period of the loan, rather than as at present over the full life of the loan.

The proposed new method of funding will enable us to dispense with the need for separate allocations of ATP funds for mixed credits and soft loans. This will enable us to respond more flexibly to individual circumstances using whichever financing mechanism is the more cost effective. The level of the overall ATP allocation within the aid programme is a matter for Ministers to review annually, but no significant future changes are seen at present from current levels of ATP project support.

WALES

Sheep

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many lowland sheep farmers in each of the Welsh counties have 500 breeding ewes or over; and what were the corresponding figures for each of the last five years.

Mr. Peter Walker: The number of holdings outside the less favourable areas with 500 breeding ewes or over is shown in the following table:

At June:

	1986	*1987*	*1988*
Powys	[1]3	[1]3	4
Gwynedd	40	40	41
Dyfed	22	27	28
Clwyd	35	34	33
South Glamorgan	7	6	9
Mid Glamorgan	3	4	5
West Glamorgan	3	4	3
Gwent	15	17	17

[1] Where fewer than 3 holdings are involved the precise number has been withheld in order to protect individual farmers' confidentiality.

Corresponding figures for earlier years are not available.

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has on *(a)* the average size of sheep flocks in Wales and *(b)* comparable sheep flocks in the rest of the European Economic Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: *(a)* At June 1988 the average size of a sheep flock in Wales was 587 (head).

(b) the latest comparable information available is in respect of 1985 and is shown in the following table:

Average size of sheep flock

Country	*Number*
Wales	540
United Kingdom	404
Belgium	18
Denmark	16
Federal Republic of Germany	27
Greece	38
France	69
Ireland	91
Italy	46
Luxembourg	18
Netherlands	41
Europe (10)	94

Nursery Factories (Ceredigion)

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action has been taken in the current year to build nursery factories in Ceredigion; and what further action is proposed.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Development Board for Rural Wales's factory construction programme for 1989-90 does not contain any proposals to build nursery factories in Ceredigion. I am currently considering the board's proposed factory construction programme for 1990-91 and expect to make an announcement in the new year.

Food Poisoning

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what actions were taken by his Department to establish the causes of food poisoning in Wales between the publication of the annual notification rate for 1985 and April 1989;

(2) what steps were taken by his Department between the publication of the 1985 returns for notification of reported cases of food poisoning in Wales and April 1989 to establish whether rises in the number of cases were linked to changes in food handling in the home;

(3) what steps were taken by his Department between the publication of the 1985 returns for notification of reported cases of food poisoning in Wales and April 1989 to establish whether rises in the number of cases were linked to changes in food production;

(4) what steps were taken by his Department between the publication of the 1985 returns for notification of reported cases of food poisoning in Wales and April 1989 to establish whether rises in the number of cases were linked to changes in agriculture;

(5) what steps were taken by his Department between the publication of the 1985 returns for notification of reported cases of food poisoning in Wales and April 1989 to establish whether rises in the number of cases were linked to changes in food technology;

(6) what steps were taken by his Department between the publication of the 1985 returns for notification of reported cases of food poisoning in Wales and April 1989 to establish whether rises in the number of cases were linked to changes in food distribution;

(7) what steps were taken by his Department between the publication of the 1985 returns for notification of reported cases of food poisoning in Wales and April 1989 to establish whether rises in the number of cases were linked to changes in retailing practices;

(8) what steps were taken by his Department between the publication of the 1985 returns for notification of reported cases of food poisoning in Wales and April 1989 to establish whether rises in the number of cases were linked to changes in catering.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave on 30 November at column *342*. The notifications to the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys and the analyses by the communicable disease surveillance centre will not necessarily indicate the point in the food chain where contamination might have occurred.

The purpose of the Food Safety Bill is to strengthen food law and improve controls across the whole of the food chain in order to minimise the incidence of food poisoning.

Area Health Authorities

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* chairpersons and *(b)* members of area health authorities in Wales he has appointed since June 1987, by reference to each authority area.

Mr. Grist: The information is shown in the following table:

Authority	*Chairmen*[1]	*Members*	
	All re-appointments	*New appointments*[2]	*Re-appointments*[2]
Clwyd	2	4	2
Dyfed	1	2	4
Gwent	—	4	—
Gwynedd	—	6	—
Mid Glamorgan	1	4	4
Pembrokeshire	—	1	4
Powys	—	1	4
South Glamorgan	1	5	3
West Glamorgan	—	6	1
	5	33	22

[1] The Chairman in Clwyd has been reappointed twice during the period in question.

[2] Three people were appointed and later reappointed during the period in question and appear in both columns.

Community Psychiatric Nurses

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many community psychiatric nurses are employed in each area health authority in Wales; and how many vacancies currently exist for such nurses.

Mr. Grist: Information on community psychiatric nurses in post is shown in the following table. Information on vacancies is not available centrally:

Community psychiatric nurses in post as at 30 September 1989 (whole-time equivalents)

	Mental illness	*Mental handicap*
Clwyd	49·1	13·0
East Dyfed	21·1	4·4
Gwent	31·5	16·2
Gwynedd	27·0	23·0
Mid Glamorgan	31·9	13·9
Pembrokeshire	5·0	—
Powys	19·0	6·5
South Glamorgan	43·7	12·0
West Glamorgan	25·0	11·4

"Working For Patients"

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he has received on the White Paper, "Working for Patients"; how many were in favour of the proposals; and how many were against.

Mr. Grist: The Department has received several hundred representations on this White Paper from MPs, MEPs, professionals and other representative bodies, trade unions, health authorities and the general public. A detailed analysis could be undertaken only at disproportionate cost.

Therapists

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many students are attending colleges and universities in Wales which will lead to qualifications entitling them to practise as *(a)* speech therapists, *(b)* occupational therapists, *(c)* physiotherapists and *(d)* sign language interpreters.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The number of students undergoing training in Wales is shown as follows:

	Number
Speech therapists	54
Occupational therapists	76
Physiotherapists	95

Speech therapy training is provided at the South Glamorgan institute of higher education. The occupational therapist and physiotherapist students are receiving their training at the combined training institute in Cardiff. A further 43 people are attending an in-service occupational therapy course administered by the Mid Glamorgan district health authority on behalf of the Health Service in Wales.

No information is held centrally about students training as sign language interpreters.

Community Care

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to provide training for social workers and other local authority staff who may be responsible for the community care programme.

Mr. Grist: The primary responsibility for training local authority staff in community care rests with local authorities. The Department has provided additional help through its service initiatives for particular client groups and is, for example, spending £436,000 this year on training within the all-Wales mental handicap strategy. Further steps to enhance training in the community care field, in particular in relation to management and to services for elderly people, are currently under consideration.

GP Budgets

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has received any notification from any doctor's practice in Wales to apply for its own budget pursuant to the proposal contained in the White Paper, "Working for Patients."

Mr. Grist: No.

Hospitals

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has received any notification from any hospital in Wales that it would seek to apply for a national health hospital trust.

Mr. Grist: No.

EMPLOYMENT

Textiles and Clothing Industries

122. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on job losses in the United Kingdom textile and clothing industries.

123. **Mr. Alan Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on job losses in the United Kingdom textile and clothing industries.

123. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statment on job losses in the United Kingdom textile and clothing industries.

Mr. Nicholls: Estimates of employees in employment in the textile and clothing industries in Great Britain from June 1984 to June 1989 are set out in the table which follows. Estimates for the United Kingdom are not available.

Employees in employment in textile and clothing industries (SIC 80) Great Britain

(Thousands)

	Textiles SIC 43	*Clothing including fur goods SIC 453*
June 1984	233·5	212·2
June 1985	234·5	213·0
June 1986	238·2	210·7
June 1987	229·0	205·0
June 1988	231·0	204·3
June 1989	217·8	192·8
Changes	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*
June 1984 to June 1989	−15·8 (−6·7)	−19·4 (−9·1)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many jobs have been lost in the textile and clothing industries in the United Kingdom over the last five years.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 5 December 1989]:* Estimates of employees in employment in the textile and clothing industries in Great Britain from June 1984 to June 1989 are set out in the table which follows. Estimates for the United Kingdom are not available.

Employees in employment in textile and clothing industries (SIC 80)
Great Britain *(Thousands)*

	Textiles SIC 43	*Clothing (including fur goods) SIC 453*
June 1984	233·5	212·2
June 1985	234·5	213·0
June 1986	238·2	210·7
June 1987	229·0	205·0
June 1988	231·0	204·3
June 1989	217·8	192·8
Changes		
June 1984—June 1989	−15·8 (−6·7 per cent.)	−19·4 (−9·1 per cent.)

Training Credits

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the proposals for training credits for young people.

Mr. Nicholls: There are many issues to be considered before any decision is reached on the recommendation in the CBI's task force report in favour of training credits. The Government are examining the report's recommendations with interest.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many training and enterprise councils in Wales have received development funding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend has approved applications for development funding from five groups of employers in Wales.

Employment Training

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which London boroughs participate in employment training; and how many places each of them has.

Mr. Nicholls: The London boroughs which are employment training training managers and the number of places each has contracted for are given in the following table. Boroughs may also participate through providing practical training placements or directed training (at their colleges) to other training managers. Information is not kept centrally on such involvement.

Employment Training
London boroughs: contracted places September 1989

Borough	*Places*
Enfield	300
Brent	250
Harrow	150
Kingston upon Thames	150
Hounslow	400
Hillingdon	100

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many persons in the Barnsley, East constituency are currently registered on the employment training scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: Information on the numbers on employment training is not available for the Barnsley, East constituency. On 24 November 1989, the latest date for which information is available, there were 1,752 trainees on employment training in Barnsley, which includes the Barnsley, East constituency.

British Coal (Disabled Employees)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has as to what percentage of the work force employed by British Coal are registered as disabled.

Mr. Eggar: As at 1 June 1988, 0·4 per cent. of the work force of British Coal were registered disabled, as published in the *Employment Gazette* in May 1989. Figures for 1989 will be published early in the new year.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans to designate employment training as an approved training scheme in 1990-91.

Mr. Nicholls: My Department has no plans to designate employment training as an approved training scheme.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans to make refusal of a place on employment training evidence that a claimant is not actively seeking work.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend has no such plans. Employment training offers a valuable route back into work which all long-term unemployed people would do well to consider. Well over 500,000 people have already benefited from training on the programme.

Restart

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans to make restart courses compulsory.

Mr. Eggar: There are no such plans, but conditions attached to restart courses are kept continuously under review.

Football Grounds (Safety)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment on what dates *(a)* Rochdale football club, *(b)* Manchester United football club, *(c)* Manchester City football club, *(d)* Stockport County football club, *(e)* Oldham Athletic football club, *(f)* Bury football club and *(g)* Bolton Wanderers football club were last inspected by the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is given in the table.

Club		*Date of last inspection*
(a)	Rochdale Football Club	14 February 1977
(b)	Manchester United Football Club	9 May 1984
(c)	Manchester City Football Club	No inspection visits made
(d)	Stockport County Football Club	No inspection visits made
(e)	Oldham Athletic Football Club	23 November 1977

	Club	Date of last inspection
(f)	Bury Football Club	No inspection visits made
(g)	Bolton Wanderers Football Club	8 June 1988

Inspections of football clubs by the Health and Safety Executive are restricted to the health, safety and welfare of employees. Enforcement of the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975, which covers spectator safety, is the responsibility of local authorities.

Relocation

Mr. Jim Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list all office relocations of his Department's staff since May 1979, stating in each case the location of origin and the location of transfer, together with the numbers of staff transferred.

Mr. Eggar: On 2 August 1989, my right hon. Friend announced that 1,100 jobs from my Department's headquarters in London, Watford and Reading will be moved to Runcorn (800) and Sheffield (300) over the next two to three years.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what relocations of his Department's staff, or agencies relating thereto, are currently being considered; and what are the number of staff affected.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 6 November 1989 at columns *471-72* to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood).

BAT Factory (Liverpool)

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate the overall effect on unemployment in Liverpool of the proposed closure of the British American Tobacco factory.

Mr. Nicholls: It is not possible to estimate the overall effect that the proposed closure will have on unemployment in Liverpool. The company has announced that 476 jobs will be lost at the Liverpool site.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if his Department was informed of the proposed closure of the British American Tobacco factory in Liverpool; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The company sent my right hon. Friend an advance copy of the press release which it issued on 24 November.

Industrial Tribunals

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the number of applications to industrial tribunals under section 58 of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 in the period of 1984 to 1988 and indicate how many were complaints under section 58(1)(a) and (b) compared with the number under section 58(1)(c); and if he will give the outcome of these cases under the two separate categories and indicate *(a)* the number of Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service conciliated settlements, *(b)* withdrawal, not via Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service, *(c)* successful at tribunal hearing, *(d)* dismissed at tribunal out of scope, *(e)* dismissed at tribunal hearing, other reasons and *(f)* disposed of otherwise.

Mr. Nicholls: The information, which is available in the form requested only from 1985 onwards, is set out in the tables:

Table 1—Applications registered

	1985-86		*1986-87*		*1987-88*		*1988-89*	
	581	*582*	*581*	*582*	*581*	*582*	*581*	*582*
Applications registered	822	15	4,760	12	421	6	334	3

Table 2—Outcome of applications to industrial tribunals

	1985-86		*1986-87*		*1987-88*		*1988-89*	
	581	*582*	*581*	*582*	*581*	*582*	*581*	*582*
ACAS—Settlement	[1]291	6	[2]907	3	[3]3,776	3	88	2
Other—Withdrawal	150	4	151	4	186	2	143	2
Successful	56	7	51	2	35	—	15	2
Dismissed—Out of scope	115	1	31	1	48	—	12	—
Dismissed—Other reasons	110	6	145	3	72	2	73	1
Disposed of—Otherwise	8	—	138	—	42	—	5	—
Total	730	24	1,423	13	4,159	7	336	7

[1] Including multiple application of c. 125.

[2] Including multiple application of c. 780.

[3] Including multiple application of c. 3400.

Notes on tables:

581 = Complaints under Section 58 (1)(a) and (b).

582 = Complaints under Section 58 (1)(c).

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the number of applications to industrial tribunals under section 27 of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 recorded in the period 1979-88 and indicate of those *(a)* the number of Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service conciliated settlements, *(b)* withdrawal not via the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service, *(c)* successful at tribunal hearing, *(d)* dismissed at tribunal out of scope, *(e)* dismissed at tribunal hearing, other reasons and *(f)* disposed of otherwise, respectively.

Mr. Nicholls: Most of the information is not available in the form requested, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Such information as is available is set out in the tables:

Table 1—Applications registered:[1]

	1987-88	1988-89
Applications registered	60	149

[1] The figures in this table refer to applications under sections 27, 28, 29, 31 and 31A of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978. Separate figures for applications under section 27 are not available.

Table 2—Outcomes of cases falling under section 27:

	1987-88	1988-89
ACAS—settlement	2	2
Other—withdrawal	14	[1]47
Successful	2	2
Dismissed—out of scope	3	—
Dismissed—other reasons	4	3
Disposed of otherwise	—	—
Total	25	54

[1] Includes multiple application of 28.

CBI Skills Report

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received about the Confederation of British Industry report "Towards a Skills Revolution—A Youth Charter"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 4 December 1989]:* There are many issues to be considered before any decision is reached on the recommendation in the CBI's task force report in favour of training credits. The Government are examining the report's recommendations with interest.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Cholecystokinin

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the veterinary products committee has considered an application for an animal test certificate in respect of cholecystokinin.

Mr. Maclean: No.

Spanish Fishing Vessels

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the number of Spanish fishing vessels registered as British in 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988 and the latest available month of 1989, the number of such vessels prosecuted for fishing offences in each year and the present location of Spanish vessels whose British registration was withdrawn under the Merchant Shipping Act.

Mr. Curry: Definitive annual figures are not available, but our current estimate is that the number of fishing vessels on the British register which were beneficially owned abroad (mostly in Spain) rose from about 43 in 1985 to about 140 at the time the new registration provisions of the Merchant Shipping Act came into effect on 1 April 1989. At present no vessel can be registered as a British fishing vessel unless its owners are resident and domiciled in the United Kingdom and the vessel's operations are directed and controlled from this country. The information on prosecutions of vessels believed to be beneficially owned in Spain is as follows:

Year	Number
1985	2
1986	0
1987	14
1988	7
1989 (to end March)	26

No comprehensive information is available on the location of vessels which ceased to be registered as British fishing vessels on 1 April. A number are laid up in this country; others are understood to be in Spain.

Liriomyza Trifollii

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will ban the importation of plants from Holland in order to control the spread of Liriomyza trifollii among plants;

(2) what compensation is proposed for those growers compelled to destroy crops inflicted with Liriomyza trifollii;

(3) what has been the incidence of Liriomyza trifollii in plants over the last 10 years: and what steps are being taken by his Department to counter this problem.

Mr. Curry: Between 1979 and 1988 there were about 350 confirmed Ministry findings of the North American leafminer, Liriomyza trifollii, on plants. The Ministry has maintained a policy of eradication of this pest and has so far succeeded in ensuring that it has not become established in this country. No compensation is given by the Government to growers who are compelled to destroy crops infested with the pest. However, we are operating eradication measures which are designed to limit the loss suffered by producers to the minimum necessary to secure eradication and in practice this often now means the destruction of plants can be avoided. We have recently reached agreement with the Dutch authorities on a wide range of measures necessary to combat the threat from the South American leafminer, Liriomyza huidobrensis. We are watching the situation very carefully and will not hesitate to take further action if necessary.

Porcine Somatotropin

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on how many occasions the veterinary products committee has considered the issue of porcine somatotropin; and whether they have reached any conclusion.

Mr. Maclean: The VPC twice considered an application for an animal test certificate for porcine somatotropin product in 1987 and recommended that it should not be granted.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether any current animal test certificates exists in respect of porcine somatotropin.

Mr. Maclean: No.

Sulphadimidine

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will review the clearance given to sulphadimidine; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Licensed veterinary medicines containing the active ingredient sulphadimidine are in the process of being reviewed as part of a general exercise to ensure that licensed products meet current standards of safety, quality and efficacy. Decisions on the granting or revocation of licences are being taken on a product-by-product basis.

Intervention Stocks

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish details of all those commodities for which an intervention regime exists, held in store, giving in respect of each, by volume and value, the current stocks and the level at the appropriate time in 1988.

Mr. Curry: Stocks levels in 1988 and 1989 of commodities for which an intervention regime exists are held in the Library of the House. Valuation figures may vary according to the age of the stock and are shown in the table for the United Kingdom (comparable figures for the European Community are not available).

Commodity	*1988 (£/tonne)*	*1989 (£/tonne)*	*Reference/month (end of)*
Butter	1,536·95	1,422·35	September
SMP	1,046·69	[1]—	September
Beef	1,807·64	1,309·63	August
Feed Wheat	63·86	35·77	October
Bread Wheat	68·83	[1]—	October
Barley	61·50	35·77	October
Rye	57·96	[1]—	October

[1] = No Stocks

Sheep Dips

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research his Department is conducting into alternatives to organophosphorous sheep dips; and if he plans to alter the regulations relating to such chemicals.

Mr. Maclean: The Department is currently funding research at Bristol university into fly control on sheep, with preference given to the use of non-organaphosphorous compounds. I have no plans to change the controls which apply to sheep dips under the Medicines Act.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the use of organophosphorous sheep dips.

Mr. Maclean: Sheep must be dipped to an approved standard under the terms of the Sheep Scab Order 1976, and the sheep dips authorised for this purpose under the Medicines Act have all been subject to a stringent review of their safety, quality and efficacy. Instructions and conditions of use are required to be specified on the product labels.

Relocation

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all office relocations of his Department's staff since May 1979, stating in each case the location of origin and the location of transfer, together with the numbers of staff transferred.

Mr. Curry: Full details of all office relocations over the period in question are not readily available. The following blocks of work have been or are being relocated away from the London area since May 1979:

Date	*Work Unit*	*Number of posts*	*Location of origin*	*Location of transfer*
1981	Finance (travel claims section)	32	Inner London	Alnwick
	Office Services (publications section)	20	Pinner	Alnwick
1987	Office Services (stationery section)	4	Pinner and Inner London	Alnwick
April 1988	Statistics (census and prices)	20	Inner London	Guildford
April 1988	Information Technology Directorate	5	Inner London	Guildford
August 1988	ADAS Cartographic Unit	11	Inner London	Gloucester
May-October 1989	Establishments (General) (Superannuation Section)	28	Inner London	Exeter
	Food Science Laboratory	20	Inner London	Norwich

About 70 per cent. of the Ministry's staff are currently located outside London.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what relocations of his Department's staff, or agencies relating thereto, are currently being considered; and what are the numbers of staff affected.

Mr. Curry: Officials of my Ministry are currently considering the potential for further relocation of headquarters' work away from the south-east, and a relocation concerning work of the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce is also under consideration. It is too early to say what numbers of posts may be affected. A decision has already been taken to relocate the Ministry's central science laboratory, involving about 400 posts, to a site in the midlands. A decision has also been taken to relocate the Ministry's records review work, currently being undertaken at Chessington, to Alnwick during the first half of next year. This work will replace that now being done by staff at Alnwick, but its transfer will not result in any redundancies in either location.

Aplastic Anaemia

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what evidence he has of the link between the development of aplastic anaemia and lindane and pentachlorophenol.

Mr. Maclean: The Health and Safety Executive is currently reviewing lindane and is looking at the available evidence for a link between lindane and the development of aplastic anaemia. The Advisory Committee on

Pesticides will be advising Ministers of the results of this review. I know of no evidence of a link between aplastic anaemia and pentachlorophenol.

Genetically Engineered Organisms

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has any proposals for the regulation of the use of genetically engineered organisms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I have been asked to reply.

Yes. As envisaged in the Queen's Speech, my Department intends to introduce an environmental protection Bill this parliamentary Session, which will include appropriate provisions. These will augment existing legislative controls over the use of genetically engineered or modified organisms to provide additional protection against any risks to the environment arising from the import, containment or release to the environment of such organisms.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Transport

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he has taken to ensure that subsection (6)(a) of the Road Traffic, Transport and Roads (N.I.) Order has been fully complied with when making the Road and Railway Transport 1989 Statutory Rule No. 400 in respect of the Level Crossing (Coleraine Bushmills Road) Revocation Order (Northern Ireland) 1989.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The provisions of that subsection did not apply to the making of the order.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Benefits Take-up

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his latest estimate of the number of *(a)* elderly people, *(b)* sick and disabled people, *(c)* unemployed people, *(d)* one-parent families, *(e)* others and *(f)* total who are not claiming benefit to which they are entitled, giving the date to which his estimates apply.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Our latest estimates show that 90 per cent. of income-related benefit to which people are entitled is claimed.

The detailed information requested is as follows:

Numbers of eligible non-recipients for income related benefits

Thousands

	Supplementary benefit 1985	*Housing benefit 1985 (1)(2)*	*Family income supplement 1985-86 (2)(3)*
Pensioners	380	760	[1](4)
Sick and disabled	50	[2]—	[1](4)
Unemployed	330	[2]—	[1](4)
One-parent families	20	[2]—	[2](5)
Others	60	[2]—	[2](5)
Total	840	1,610	190(6)

[1]—not applicable.

[2]—not available.

Notes:

1. Figures refer to those eligible for standard HB only as non recipients of certificated Housing benefit will already be included as non recipients of supplementary benefit. In total, approximately 1·8 million households are eligible and not receiving standard or certificated HB.
2. Figures exclude families where the head or spouse is in full-time self-employment.
3. Based on pooled FES data for reasons of sample size.
4. FIS was paid to working families with children whose gross weekly income was less than a 'prescribed amount' determined by the number of children.
5. Although two years' survey data are pooled the number of sample cases are still small and insufficient to provide reliable estimates of these figures.
6. This figure will include some families who are also shown in column two as non recipients of HB.
7. Estimates are based on the Family Expenditure Survey.

Source: Technical notes on take-up of benefits. Copies are available in the House of Commons Library or on request from DSS.

Family Credit

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will review the working of the family credit regulations to ensure that low-income self-employed families do not lose their entitlement to assistance because of the interpretation of the authorities that they must abide by cash movement rules, rather than normal accountancy treatment of overhead costs and stock fluctuations.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We believe that a trading profit arrived at by normal accountancy practices is not an appropriate basis for arriving at the income to be taken into account in calculating family credit. The cash-flow basis was introduced when family credit replaced family income supplement in 1988 as being more appropriate for this purpose, and we have no plans to review it at this stage.

Income Support

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to reform the income support transitional provisions as they relate to families with children in care who return on home leave; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We intend, shortly, to bring forward amending regulations so that transitional additions are not reduced when children in local authority care return home temporarily on leave. Until they are in place, extra-statutory payments will be available.

Child Support

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will update to April 1990 the information provided in the reply of 28 November 1988 to the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), *Official Report*, columns *93-94*, relating to child support, giving figures in columns *(g)* and *(h)* in September 1989 prices.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Although upratings of benefit are calculated by reference to the movement in the index of retail prices to September, comparisons in the value of benefits are more meaningful if made at general uprating dates. The figures requested as at April 1989 were given in the reply of 6 November 1989 to the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) at columns *459-60*.

Community Care Grant

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, further to his reply of 27 November, *Official Report*, column 154, who is responsible for setting his priority of community care grant clients' needs.

Mr. Scott: The Secretary of State's general guidance on priorities and priority groups is in the social fund manual, a copy of which is in the Library. As I explained in my previous reply, local office managers give social fund officers further guidance on priorities taking account of local circumstances. Guidance is not binding on social fund officers. Each case must be considered on its merits. A social fund officer may decide, for example, that an item normally classed as of low priority should, in the light of the applicant's circumstances, be treated as high priority.

Dietary Requirements

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what guidance is issued to social fund officers about the dietary requirements of *(a)* adult men, *(b)* adult women, *(c)* children and *(d)* those persons aged 16 and 17 years when considering a claim for a crisis loan or income support under severe hardship rules.

Mr. Scott: Social fund officers are not provided with guidance on the dietary requirements of different categories of people. We expect social fund officers to use their experience and judgment in deciding how much an applicant needs in a crisis to avoid serious risk to the health and safety of the individual or his family. This will depend on the circumstances of each case including any particular health problems.

Nuclear Test Veterans

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many British nuclear test veterans are in receipt of *(a)* attendance allowance, *(b)* mobility allowance and *(c)* invalidity allowance.

Mr. Scott: I regret that this information is not available.

Relocation

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list all office relocations of his Department's staff since May 1979, stating in each case the location of origin and the location of transfer, together with the numbers of staff transferred.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I regret that the information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what relocations of his Department's staff, or agencies relating thereto, are currently being considered; and what are the numbers of staff affected.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 14 November 1989 that 150 posts from the office of the chief adjudication officer in Southampton, and 650 London-based posts are to be relocated to Leeds starting in late 1991. The latter posts include those required for the headquarters of the forthcoming benefits agency, the chief medical adviser's divisions and some other administrative functions, such as liaison with agencies, pay and records, staff training and estate management.

I should emphasise that these movements are of posts rather than of staff as such. All London-based staff will be asked whether they are prepared to move whether their particular post is affected or not. The Department hopes that sufficient staff will move voluntarily to avoid the need for any compulsory transfers.

Vibration White Finger

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the number of applications made by applicants claiming to suffer from vibration white finger, under regulation 13 of the Social Security (Industrial Injuries and Diseases) Miscellaneous Provisions Regulations 1986, at local offices of his Department in *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Glasgow, *(c)* Dundee, *(d)* Sunderland, *(e)* Newcastle and *(f)* Liverpool in each of the the past two years and in the current year up to the most recent date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I regret that this information is not available.

Family Credit

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many additional families would qualify for family credit if the £6,000 capital limit were increased to £8,000 or abolished; and what would be the cost of each of these changes.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The estimates are as follows:

	Increase in FC caseload	*Full year cost at current rate*
Capital limit increased to £8,000	Less than 500	Less than £100,000
Capital limit abolished	Approx. 1,500	Around £1 million

Pensions

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will publish a table showing, for men and women aged 16, 20, 30, and 40 years in April 1988, the ages at which it would pay the person concerned to cease contributing to a personal pension or other money purchase scheme, assuming rates of return of 0·5 per cent. and 2·5 per cent. above the annual increase in average earnings and, in other respects, making the same assumptions as were made in calculating the similar figures given in the letter dated 10 October from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security to the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett).

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The table provides the first age at which the projected pension from the invested rebate is less than the corresponding GMP. These estimates are critically dependent on a number of illustrative assumptions which should not be taken as predictions of what future policy might be. These are:

(i) the contracted-out rebate for illustrative purposes only is assumed to be 5·8 per cent. of earnings between the lower and upper limits for NI contributions, declining to 3·75 per cent. by 2018;

(ii) the lower and upper earnings limits are assumed to increase in future in line with prices;

(iii) the contracted-out rebate is boosted by a 2 per cent. incentive addition for personal pensions and newly contracted-out occupational schemes up to 1992-93;

(iv) men are assumed to take their pension at 65, women at 60.

First age at which the projected pension from the invested rebate is less than the corresponding GMP

	Personal pension rate of return[1]		*Money purchase rate of return*[1]	
Age at April 1988	*½ per cent.*	*2½ per cent.*	*½ per cent.*	*2½ per cent.*
Male				
16	31	49	36	54
20	34	50	36	54
30	35	50	40	53
40	45	48	45	50
Female				
16	21	38	24	42
20	25	40	25	43
30	35	41	35	45
40	40	45	40	45

[1] Rates of return are in excess of increase in earnings.

Source: Government Actuary's Department.

BAT Factory (Liverpool)

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the estimated additional cost in benefit payments for the people who will lose their jobs in the British American Tobacco factory, Liverpool; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: No such estimate has been made.

Benefit Payments (Liverpool and Merseyside)

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the estimated cost of benefit payments to his Department for the unemployed in *(a)* Liverpool and *(b)* Merseyside for the latest available date.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: No such estimate can be made.

Attendance and Mobility Allowances

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to unify the application procedure, medical examination and appeals system for attendance allowance and mobility allowance for claimants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: We will announce our proposals to improve the balance and structure of disability benefits within the next few months. Any changes in benefit administration will need to be considered in the light of those proposals.

Benefits (Residence Conditions)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what changes will be made to the residence conditions for social security benefits in respect of periods spent in other member states of the European Community following the completion of the internal market in 1992; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what changes will be made to the residence conditions for social security benefits in respect of citizens of other member states of the European Community following the completion of the internal market in 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Community citizens who are employed or self-employed may be able to take advantage of the co-ordination arrangements which already cover social security for migrant workers throughout the Community. In the case of those social security benefits where residence conditions apply, there are at present no plans to make any changes as a result of the completion of the internal market in 1992.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Public Appointments

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons above the age of *(a)* 60, *(b)* 65 and *(c)* 70 years he has appointed to public bodies in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Waddington: This information is not collected and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Magistrates Courts Clerks

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to improve magistrates courts clerk shortages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: In the course of 1989, we have authorised the creation of 82 additional court clerk trainee posts; and we have made provision in public expenditure for a further increase next financial year. I have also approved for grant purposes the pay agreement from 1 July 1989 reached in the joint negotiating committee for magistrates courts staff which recognises the recruitment and retention requirements for court clerks. We are additionally seeking to raise the recruitment profile of the service by publishing two new careers booklets and by funding stands at two major careers fairs in collaboration with the Association of Magistrates Courts, whose work in co-ordinating the efforts of magistrates courts committees to recruit court clerks we fully endorse.

Abortion Clinics (Picketing)

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been arrested in the last six months as a result of picketing outside abortion clinics; and how many people have been charged with an offence as a result of these arrests.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is not available.

Drugs

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to set up a fund to counter the use and supply of illicit drugs.

Mr. Mellor: Subject to detailed scrutiny of estimates and parliamentary approval, we are to set up a new central fund of £1 million in 1990-91 to enable the Government to meet some of the additional costs of international drugs efforts, including investigations by the police and rewards to major informants.

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures police forces are taking in conjunction with local education authorities to warn pupils of the dangers of drug taking.

Mr. Mellor: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) On 5 December.

Racing

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will place in the Library the findings of the Lloyds merchant bank inquiry into the feasibility of privatising the Tote;

(2) if he will publish the findings of the Lloyds merchant bank inquiry in to the feasibility of privatising the Tote.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. The advice in the report by Lloyds merchant bank on the feasibility of privatising the Tote will not be made public because it was given in confidence to my right hon. and learned Friend, and contains commercially and managerially sensitive information.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will make a statement on the independent inquiry into the feasibility of privatising the Tote.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The advice from Lloyds merchant bank on the feasibility of privatising the Tote is at present still under consideration, and the Government's conclusions will be made known in due course.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make a statement about the initiation of an inquiry into the financing of horse and greyhound racing.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend is considering whether or not to establish such an inquiry.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make a statement on the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the Grand Metropolitan/William Hill merger, published by it on 23 August; and whether the Director of Fair Trading is continuing to keep concerns mentioned in the report under review;

(2) what steps he has taken in relation to the explicit concerns highlighted within the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report of 23 August into the merger of the Grand Metropolitan and William Hill organisations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 23 August that he had accepted the recommendations of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report on the acquistion by Grand Metropolitan plc of William Hill. Action is being taken to implement those recommendations, including action by the Director General of Fair Trading. The Director General will also continue to monitor developments in the betting industry under those parts of the competition legislation for which he is responsible.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on *(a)* the current position of Satellite Information Service and *(b)* the future powers of horse and dog racecourses and stadia to enter into commercial deals.

Mr. Forth: I have been asked to reply.

I understand that the Director General of Fair Trading is continuing to monitor developments in the betting and racing industries in accordance with the provisions of United Kingdom competition legislation. In general we take the view that commercial deals are matters for the parties concerned, subject to the provisions of the competition legislation (the Fair Trading Act 1973, the Restrictive Trade Practices Act 1976, and the Competition Act 1980).

Probation Service

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his estimate of the current extent of delays in the probation service in worst and best cases in dealing with *(a)* conciliation cases and *(b)* child welfare reports, both in divorce cases.

Mr. John Patten: The figures on which such an estimate would have to be based are not collected locally or centrally.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has for the work of the probation service in conciliation and child welfare reports in civil divorce cases; what studies he has commissioned on this work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: There are no proposals at present to alter the arrangements under which this work is done. Her Majesty's inspectorate of probation, as part of their continuing programme of inquiries into specific themes of probation service work, will shortly be starting on an investigation of the civil work of the probation service.

Passports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to withdraw passports issued to British subjects or restrict their use; and how many have been withdrawn or restricted in each of the last five years and 1989 to date.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Withdrawal of a passport would be considered on the same basis as would refusal of an application, that is in the case of:

(a) a minor whose journey was known to be contrary to a court order, to the wishes of a parent or other person or authority to whom a court had awarded custody, care and control or to the provisions of section 25(1) of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933, as amended, or section 56 of the Adoption Act 1976;

(b) a person for whose arrest a warrant had been issued in the United Kingdom or who was wanted by the police on suspicion of a serious crime;

(c) in very rare cases, a person whose past or proposed activities were so demonstrably undesirable that the grant or continued enjoyment of passport facilities would be contrary to the public interest;

(d) a person repatriated at public expense until the debt has been repaid.

Records of withdrawals are maintained only for category (c). These are extremely rare and there were none in the period specified.

United Kingdom passports are valid for travel to all countries in the world, and there are no plans to restrict their use.

Prison Management (Complaints)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what changes he has made in the application of the prior ventilation rule in respect of writing to a solicitor complaining about a member of prison management; when each change was made; and by what means each change was announced;

(2) whether the prior ventilation rule in respect of writing to a solicitor complaining about a member of prison management has been abolished.

Mr. Mellor: The prior ventilation rule, under which all complaints by prisoners had to be pursued through internal channels before a prisoner could take his complaint outside, was replaced in 1981 by the simultaneous ventilation rule, which required complaints to be raised internally at the same time as they were raised with an outside body. Notice of this change was given to prison establishments in circular instruction 34/1981, which took effect in December 1981.

In December 1983, the Divisional court ruled in the case of Anderson that the simultaneous ventilation rule should not apply to a complaint made by a prisoner to his legal adviser. The implications of this judgment were explained in a letter from the prison department to all establishments on 22 December 1983. Circular instruction 48/1984 formally confirmed that correspondence with legal advisers which referred to unventilated complaints or allegations against staff should no longer be stopped unless it was clear from the content that the inmate was writing for some purpose other than obtaining legal advice about possible proceedings.

On 24 January 1989, my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), announced in a written reply at column *516* that it had been decided to abolish the simultaneous ventilation rule in respect of all correspondence. Details of the change, and of accompanying amendments to the prison rules governing adjudications, were set out in circular instruction 9/1989, which took effect on 1 April 1989.

Commission for Racial Equality

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much public money was spent by the Commission for Racial Equality in each year since its conception.

Mr. John Patten: The information is provided in the following table:

Financial year	*Expenditure (£)*
1977-78	3,672,701
1978-79	4,903,175
1979-80	5,939,083
1980-81	6,931,731
1981-82	7,526,822
1982-83	8,306,586
1983-84	8,718,454
1984-85	9,280,549
1985-86	9,444,957
1986-87	10,530,039
1987-88	10,946,831
1988-89	11,273,825

Visas

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any proposals for charging fees for *(a)* indefinite leave to remain, *(b)* extension of visitors' visas, *(c)* extension of student visas or *(d)* extension of business persons' visas.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Section 9 of the Immigration Act 1988 makes provision for the charging of fees in connection with applications for, or the grant of, indefinite leave to remain. The Government are considering how and when that provision might be implemented and an announcement will be made at the apropriate time. There are no plans for the introduction of fees in connection with any category of limited leave to remain.

Police Conduct

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the use of police officers as agents provocateur.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Guidance has been issued to all chief police officers which states that no member of a police force should counsel, incite or procure the commission of a crime. Furthermore, all police forces are aware of the need for care to avoid plain clothes officers placing themselves in situations where accusations could be made that they have acted as agents provocateur. I understand that briefing is normally given to all police officers taking part in such operations to ensure they avoid behaviour which could be so construed.

Cabinet (Police Protection)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the cost to the Exchequer of police protection for members of the Cabinet for the years 1970 to 1989 inclusive.

Mr. Waddington: The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Safer Cities Campaign

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the objectives of the safer cities campaign; what were the results in 1988; and whether the programme will be continued.

Mr. John Patten: The objectives of the safer cities programme are to reduce crime, lessen the fear of crime, and to create safer cities within which economic enterprise and community life can flourish. In 1988, the programme was announced, nine areas agreed to take part and project development began in all of them. Twelve projects are now operational, with four more due to become so shortly. We plan to establish four further projects during 1990.

Charities

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to review the law on charities.

Mr. John Patten: The Government's proposals for the reform of the law on charities are set out in the White Paper, "Charities: A Framework for the Future" (Cm 694) which was published in May.

Prisoners (Visits)

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the arrangements for relatives to visit people held in custody.

Mr. Mellor: Convicted adult prisoners and convicted young offenders are entitled to a minimum of one half-hour visit every 28 days and 14 days respectively. More, and longer, visits are allowed wherever practicable.

Unconvicted prisoners are normally allowed a 5-minute vsit every day excluding Sunday (in some establishments), Christmas day, Boxing day and Good Friday. Longer visits are allowed wherever possible. In the event of particular difficulties at an establishment the regional director may authorise a reduction in the frequency of visits as long as the aggregated entitlement of one and a half hours per week is maintained.

Relatives on income support or on low incomes are able to claim travelling expenses for one prison visit every 28 days.

Police Manpower

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what response he has made to the latest request from Nottingham county council on the provision of more police in Nottingham.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend announced on 23 November at column 12 that he had approved an increase of 26 police posts for the Nottinghamshire constabulary with effect from 1 April 1990.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many probationary policemen are currently operating in the Metropolitan police force; what percentage of the force they represent; what the situation is in other parts of the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on police forces in England and Wales, for which my right hon. and learned Friend has responsibility, is as follows:

	Probationer constables	*Percentage of strength*
Metropolitan Police[1]	3,582	12·7
Provincial forces[2]	9,249	9·7

[1] As at 27 November 1989.

[2] As at 31 December 1988.

Shops Act 1950

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to seek to amend the Shops Act 1950 in the light of the recent conclusion of the European Court; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The Government have made it clear that they favour reform of the law but that legislation depends on agreement being reached on proposals that would command widespread support. This is not the case at present.

Neighbourhood Watch

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of neighbourhood watch schemes in the Easington constituency in the years 1986, 1987 and 1988; and what steps he is taking to promote and extend the scheme.

Mr. John Patten: There were seven neighbourhood watch schemes in Easington in 1986, 17 schemes in 1987 and 30 schemes in 1988.

The national crime prevention organisation Crime Concern was set up in 1988, to stimulate local crime prevention activity, including neighbourhood watch: its recent work has included a conference on the management of neighbourhood watch schemes held on 30 November and attended by over 70 representatives of police forces. The launch in October of phase 3 of the Home Office's crime prevention publicity campaign saw the publication of the third edition of the handbook "Practical Ways to Crack Crime", which contains a wealth of advice on neighbourhood watch.

Street Lighting

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received regarding inadequate street lighting from *(a)* women and *(b)* pensioners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We have received six representations in the last 18 months from women and pensioners, including one from the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbot) and one from the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody). We have also received representations from members of the Parliament lighting group. We recognise that there is considerable public concern about the possible link between street lighting and crime. This is why we are undertaking research, most notably in the London borough of Wandsworth, to examine that link. Interim results from this research should be available during the first half of next year.

Lighting is only one factor to be considered in preventing crime and reducing the fear of crime. The Government have made available advice on the personal safety of women and the elderly in the publication "Practical Ways to Crack Crime", of which nearly 3 million copies have been distributed.

Birmingham Six

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his reasons for advising against the decision of the European Parliament to launch an investigation into circumstances surrounding the conviction of the Birmingham Six.

Mr. John Patten: As my right hon. and learned Friend said in reply to another question from my hon. Friend on 29 November, we believe that it would be wholly inappropriate for the European Parliament to inquire into the convictions of the Birmingham Six, which are within national competence.

Life Sentences

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many inmates at present in prisons in England and Wales and serving a life sentence have been in prison for more than *(a)* 15 years, *(b)* 20 years, *(c)* 25 years and *(d)* 30 years.

Mr. Mellor: The information is published annually in "Prison Statistics England and Wales" (table 8.3 of the latest issue, for 1988, Cm 825). The latest available information is given in the table.

Life sentence prisoners held under their original sentence[1] in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales on 30 September 1989: by time spent under sentence in such establishments

Years spent under sentence[2]	*Number of prisoners[3]*
Up to 15 years	2,463
Over 15 up to 20 years	154
Over 20 up to 25 years	45
Over 25 up to 30 years	7
Over 30 years	4
Total	2,673

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[1] Excluding 104 prisoners recalled following an earlier release on licence.

[2] Excluding any time spent on remand in custody or in Non-Prison Service establishments.

[3] The figures are those recorded centrally and are approximate: detailed checking of individual cases would involve disproportionate cost.

Relocation

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list all office relocations of his Department's staff since May 1979, stating in each case the location of origin and the location of transfer, together with the numbers of staff transferred.

Mr. Waddington: Since 1979, four main units of the Home Office have been relocated in part or in whole. The computing and pay services division (301 posts) was relocated from London to Bootle in 1982-83; the prison service south-east regional office (74 posts) from Tolworth to Woking in 1987; 88 posts were transferred from the London passport office to Glasgow in 1988-89; and 108 posts in the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board from London to Glasgow in 1989.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what relocations of his Department's staff, or agencies relating thereto, are currently being considered; and what are the numbers of staff affected.

Mr. Waddington: As I said in my reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) on 10 November 1989 at column 802, I am considering the possible relocation from the London area of a number of Home Office functions. No firm indication can be given at present as to the number of staff who would be affected.

Law of Evidence (Confessions)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will propose legislation to reform the criminal law of England so that evidence as to a confession by an accused person cannot, of itself, be sufficient to found a finding of guilt.

Mr. John Patten: We shall consider what changes in law or practice may be needed as regards confession evidence and other matters in the light of the findings of the judicial inquiry which is being conducted by Sir John May into the convictions of the Guildford Four and the Maguire family.

Prison Meals

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many prison meals are served on a daily basis; and what percentage are special diet meals;

(2) what consultation takes place where prisons provide special meals for ethnic minorities, vegetarians and vegans to ensure that such foodstuffs are palatable, nutritious, balanced and that menus are not repetitive and unsustaining;

(3) what percentage of prisons accommodate special diets for ethnic minorities; and how many meals are served on a daily basis;

(4) what percentage of prisons provide meals for vegans; and how many such meals are prepared daily;

(5) what percentage of prisons provide meals for vegetarians; and how many such meals are prepared daily.

Mr. Mellor: Details of inmates in minority groups and their location are not recorded centrally. In total about 146,000 meals are served daily to inmates in prison service establishments in England and Wales, of which about 26,000 (18 per cent.) are estimated to be variations from the normal dietary.

All meals are prepared according to centrally determined dietary scales designed to meet published nutritional standards which accommodate recognised food preferences.

Each establishment prepares special meals to meet the needs of its current population, and also varies its standard menus to take into account known preferences. The number of meals served to certain minority groups is estimated as follows:

8,500 for a variety of ethnic minorities.
1,200 for vegans.
15,000 for vegetarians.
1,500 for inmates requiring a modified diet under prescription from a medical officer.

Animal Experiments

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps are being taken to reduce the incidence of the LD50 test on animals in research laboratories; and if he will make it his policy that no further licences be issued.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We welcome the initiative by British scientists in the European Community and the OECD to reduce the need for this test for the classification of substances. We have no plans to refuse licences where my right hon. and learned Friend is satisfied that the work is justified under section 5 of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

Victim Support Schemes

Mr. Hague: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many victim support schemes now operate in England and Wales.

Mr. John Patten: Three hundred and fifty four.

Byelaws

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many personnel are assigned to work relating to byelaws; and at what cost.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The equivalent of 5·25 full-time staff work on applications for byelaws. The cost (salaries, accommodation and office services) is £115,000 a year.

Departmental Archives

Mr. James Lamond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the documents and archives confiscated by the Home Office following raids on the printers Kommunistischer Arbeiter Bildungverein in 1917 or 1918 at their premises in Charlotte street, London W1, and on the International Socialist Club, 28 City road, London EC1 in 1920, are still in the possession of his Department.

Mr. Waddington: I have set inquiries in hand to locate any papers relating to these incidents and will write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

DEFENCE

Red Arrows

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the figures for 1988-89 for *(a)* recruits attracted and *(b)* the cost of the programme (i) per machine or pilot and (ii) per show after displays by the Red Arrows display team.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I regret that the information on recruits is not available. The operating costs of the Red Arrows' flying programme are approximately £13·5 million per annum at 1988-89 prices.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list for each of the last 15 years the venues at which the Red Arrows have displayed their skills; and if he will make a statement regarding the preliminary list for consideration in December of next year's programme.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I regret that the list of venues could be provided only at disproportionate cost and effort. However, the Red Arrows have given some 1,600 displays since 1975. As regards the 1990 programme, I have nothing to add to my reply to the hon. Member on 3 November at column *379*.

UK-US Liaison

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will identify and date the United States-United Kingdom bilateral agreements made within the framework of United Kingdom-United States wartime host nation support lines of communication arrangement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United States-United Kingdom lines of communication arrangement has been in existence since 1973 and permits the United States to establish, operate and maintain lines of communication and ancililary facilties in the United Kingdom for use under emergency conditions as part of their NATO obligations. Joint contingency plans in support of this arrangement have been drawn up. The arrangement and the details of the plans are classified.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will identify the posts, ranks and responsibilities of United Kingdom military personnel designated to liaise with the United States European command logistics co-ordinator in the United Kingdom *(a)* in peacetime, *(b)* in crisis and *(c)* in war.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Liaison with the United States European command logistics co-ordination centre is co-ordinated through the Ministry of Defence central staffs. Regular contacts are maintained at Major/Colonel level involving those sections within the central staffs with responsibility for wartime contingency planning.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will identify the United Kingdom civil agencies and Government Departments which liaise with the headquarters United States European command logistics co-ordinator in the United Kingdom *(a)* in peacetime, *(b)* in crisis and *(c)* in war;

(2) if he will identify the United Kingdom military and civilian bodies and agencies designated to develop and maintain the United States-United Kingdom wartime host nation support/lines of communication programme *(a)* in peacetime, *(b)* in crisis and *(c)* in war;

(3) if he will identify the United Kingdom military and Government Departments represented on the United States-United Kingdom lines of communication joint planning group.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Government Departments which would be involved in the provision of host nation support to United States forces and from civil resources in time of crisis are as follows:

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Her Majesty's Customs and Excise
Ministry of Defence
Department of Employment
Department of Energy
Department of the Environment

Department of Health
Home Office
Department of Transport
Scottish Office
Welsh Office

Each of these Departments is represented on the United States-United Kingdom lines of communication joint planning group or its sub-committees. They also liaise direct with the headquarters, United States European command logistics co-ordination centre in the United Kingdom as necessary, although co-ordination is maintained by the Ministry of Defence central staffs.

A number of civil agencies are also consulted, as necessary, in drawing up the joint contingency plans. This is invariably managed through, or on their behalf by, the relevant Government Department.

Nuclear Test Veterans

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will order a medical study of all surviving British nuclear test veterans to compare results with the statistical mortality study carried out by the National Radiological Protection Board.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As the hon. Member is aware, the Government rely on the independent and expert advice of the National Radiological Protection Board on matters concerning the overall health of the British nuclear test participant group with respect to their involvement in the British nuclear test programme. It is not for the Government to dictate the methodology or conduct of the NRPB studies, but I am advised by the NRPB that it is not practicable to carry out a health study of living test veterans to produce meaningful, unbiased results.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his Department had discussions with the Australian Government prior to the announcement by their Minister for Primary Industry that compensation for Australian nuclear test veterans was warranted following a recent British Government decision to compensate its veterans.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There were no discussions with the Australian Federal Government prior to their announcement. The reference to a recent British Government decision to compensate its veterans is not understood. However, the Government would be ready to pay appropriate compensation wherever the Crown's legal liability was established and where there was firm evidence to show that, on a balance of probabilities, ex-service men had suffered ill health as a result of exposure to radiation during the course of their duties as members of the armed forces.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what action he is taking to investigate the extent to which British nuclear test veterans, who suffered extensive violent skin rashes immediately following nuclear tests, are today suffering from damage to their immune systems associated with radiation contamination.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The procedures and very stringent precautions adopted during the test programme were such that no significant level of surface radioactivity arose, and the consequential radiation doses to surface tissues were negligible. There were no reported, observed or treated superficial tissue disorders related to radioactivity or radiation exposures at the time of the tests or subsequently.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to compensate Pacific islanders, in line with United States proposals, for conditions arising after British nuclear tests there.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces will write to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many service personnel were present on Christmas Island during the detonation of nuclear materials, at the exact time of each test.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A total of some 11,000 members of Her Majesty's forces were present during one or more of the British nuclear tests carried out at Malden and Christmas islands in the period 1957 to 1962, and the total resource provided by these members amounts to 16,000 man-trials. Details of the numbers present at the exact time of each test can be obtained from service records only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will undertake a survey of the tropical diseases from which British nuclear test veterans may still be suffering.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are no grounds for carrying out a special survey of the tropical diseases being suffered by participants in the British nuclear test programme.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why it was decided that the Medical Research Council should not continue to monitor British nuclear test veterans after their tour of duty associated with nuclear testing.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Government remain confident that the precautions taken during the British nuclear test programme were adequate to ensure that participants suffered no harm as a result of their participation. When the United Kingdom undertook the programme, the Medical Research Council did not advise that comprehensive monitoring of United Kingdom test participants should be carried out either during or after the tests, and from the evidence accumulated since there are no grounds for changing that policy.

Relocation

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all office relocations of his Department's staff since May 1979, stating in each case the location of origin and the location of transfer, together with the numbers of staff transferred.

Mr. Neubert: It is not possible to provide the detail requested without disproportionate effort and cost. However, the following table sets out some of the larger moves either completed or approved:

Original location	*Number of posts*	*Destination*
London/South East	1,400	Glasgow
London	54	Yeovilton
London	164	Bath

Original location	*Number of posts*	*Destination*
London	50	Harrogate
Portsmouth	60	Cheadle Hulme
London	156	Bath (1990-91)
London /Devizes	240	Swindon (1990-91)
Woolwich/Donnington/ Portsmouth	250	Llangennech (1989-91)
New Unit	250	Sutton Coldfield (1989-91)
Woolwich/Bromley	1,500	Teesside (1993-95)
Total	4,124	

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what relocations of his Department's staff or agencies relating thereto are currently being considered; and what are the numbers of staff affected.

Mr. Neubert: The most significant element of MOD relocation planning involves major groups within the Procurement Executive. The land and air systems controllerates (3,800 posts in London) are evaluating various site options. The sea systems controllerate (3,500 posts in Bath, Portland and Portsdown) are examining the collocation of its organisation. In addition, there are a number of studies in train which may yield further relocation possibilities, provided that the economic and operational aspects of a move are positive.

Manpower

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the manpower estimates for Her Majesty's armed forces for the years from 1990 to 1992; and what will be the effect of the recent announcement that more categories will be open to women.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Manpower estimates for the armed forces as at 1 April 1990 were published in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1989". The manpower estimates for 1 April 1991 will be published in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1990" in due course. It is not our practice to publish manpower estimates for future years as these are produced for our own management purposes only.

Following recent announcements by the Army and the RAF on the wider employment of women, female recruiting targets have been increased. A recent study offers the prospects of up to 6,000 posts in the Regular Army being made available to women. The RAF's female recruiting targets have been increased by 400 ground air women per annum between 1 April 1989 and 1 April 1994 and by 35 female pilots and navigators per annum from 1989-90.

ENERGY

Gas Imports

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how much gas was imported during the last year for which he has figures.

Mr. Peter Morrison: In 1988 the United Kingdom imported 15·5 million tonnes coal-equivalent of natural gas.

Source: Customs and Excise, overseas trade statistics as published in the Department of Energy, Digest of Energy Statistics.

Opencast Mining

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list, by year for the last 10 years, the tonnages of opencast coal that have been mined.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The information requested, which includes production from licensed mines, is as follows:

	Million tonnes
1979	12·9
1980	15·8
1981	14·8
1982	15·3
1983	14·7
1984	14·3
1985	15·6
1986	14·3
1987	15·8
1988	17·9

Source: Digest of United Kingdom Energy Statistics, Table 14.

Low-energy Light Bulbs

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will take steps to reduce the cost of low-energy light bulbs to the general public; and what plans he has to make the public more aware of them.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The high cost of low-energy lamps reflects their considerably greater complexity and consequent difficulty of manufacture compared with ordinary tungsten filament lamps. However, their extra initial cost is more than offset by their much longer lifetimes and lower electricity consumption. My energy efficiency office will continue to promote energy efficient lighting along with other energy efficiency measures.

Mr. Walter Patterson

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if his Department has sought the views of the author Mr. Walter Patterson on energy policies and conservation.

Mr. John Wakeham: On various occasions members of my Department have met Mr. Walter Patterson. On no occasion were his views on energy policies and conservation sought.

Uranium

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he collects on the price of internationally traded uranium and on internationally traded reactor fuel grade low-enriched uranium.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My Department collects no such information but is aware of studies produced by a number of organisations.

Colliery Costs, North-East

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will list, colliery by colliery, costs borne by British Coal north-east area to the North East electricity board for power consumed at Munton, Easington, Vane Tempest, Dawdon, Ellington, Westo and Wearmouth collieries in the years 1986, 1987 and 1988;

(2) if he will list, colliery by colliery, the costs borne by British Coal north-east area of mining machinery supplies

to Munton, Easington, Vane Tempest, Dawdon, Ellington, Westo and Wearmouth collieries in the years 1986, 1987 and 1988;

(3) if he will list, colliery by colliery, the various costings borne by British Coal north-east *(a)* to British Rail for the transportation of minerals from Munton, Easington, Vane Tempest, Dawdon, Ellington, Westo and Wearmouth collieries in the years 1986, 1987 and 1988 and *(b)* to road haulage contractors for the transportation of minerals from the same collieries over the same period.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for the British Coal Corporation. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what percentage of the weight, and what percentage of the volume of waste sent to Drigg, for each of the years 1980-88 inclusive, originated from *(a)* British Nuclear Fuels Ltd., *(b)* the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, *(c)* the Central Electricity Generating Board and *(d)* the South of Scotland Electricity Board; and if he will make a statement.

(2) what was the weight and volume of waste sent to Drigg for each of the years from 1980 to 1988 inclusive; and what are his estimates for 1989 to 1999 inclusive;

(3) what is the cost of disposal of waste at Drigg per cubic metre; what plans there are for upgrading the disposal practice of low-level waste at Drigg; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for British Nuclear Fuels plc. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the progress of the borehole drilling programme at *(a)* Sellafield and *(b)* Dounreay.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Drilling of the first borehole at Sellafield finished on 8 November. Acting on behalf of Nirex, British Nuclear Fuels has now made an application to the local planning authority for permission to drill a second borehole. Also acting on behalf of Nirex, the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority submitted an application for permission to drill two boreholes at Dounreay, which was rejected by the local planning authority in July. The authority's appeal against this decision was submitted on 24 August, and is currently with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the expected tonnage which will be deposited in the Nirex deep repository for *(a)* intermediate waste and *(b)* low-level waste.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Nirex expects to handle about 1 million cu m of low-level waste and one third of a million cu m of intermediate level waste by 2030.

Reprocessing

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the future of spent fuel reprocessing within the United Kingdom.

Mr Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) on 26 June 1989 at column *356*.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the progress of the research into the extraction of plutonium from intermediate level waste.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I am advised that the nuclear industry has concluded a programme of research on this topic which indicates that while it is technically possible to remove a proportion of the plutonium from plutonium contaminated material, it is not economic to do so, taking account of dose rates to operatives and the effects of such reductions in terms of storage costs and long-term risks from disposal. The nuclear industry is not proposing further work in this area at present.

Power Station Costs

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what are the latest estimates for the cost per unit per kilowatt hour for generation from the following sources stating maximum and minimum estimates *(a)* coal-fired power stations, *(b)* nuclear Magnox stations, *(c)* nuclear advanced gas-cooled reactor stations, *(d)* Sizewell B, *(e)* tidal power, *(f)* onshore wind generation, *(g)* offshore wind generation, *(h)* geothermal power and *(i)* wave power.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Parts *(a)* to *(d)* are a matter for the Central Electricity Generating Board. I shall ask the chairman of the CEGB to write to the hon. Member.

On parts *(e)* to *(i)* I refer the hon. Member to Energy Paper 55 "Renewable Energy in the United Kingdom: The Way Forward" a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Decommissioning

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will indicate the latest estimates for the decommissioning costs of *(a)* Magnox reactors, *(b)* advanced gas-cooled reactors and *(c)* Sizewell B.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Decommissioning costs are a matter for the CEGB. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

British Coal

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will take steps to require British Coal to offer outside interests the opportunity to take over the running of pits which British Coal has decided to cease operating.

Mr. Michael Spicer: It is for British Coal to determine in each case whether to license the recovery of remnant coal at collieries which it has decided to cease operating. The increase in the statutory limit on underground manpower at licensed mines proposed in the current Coal Industry Bill give British Coal the opportunity to license such operations on a larger scale than at present.

Relocation

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will list all office relocations of his Department's staff since May 1979, stating in each case the location of origin and the location of transfer, together with the numbers of staff transferred;

(2) what relocations of his Department's staff, or agencies relating thereto, are currently being considered; and what are the numbers of staff affected.

Mr. Wakeham: No sections of my Department have been relocated since May 1979. As I told the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 6 November 1989 at column *418*, the position will be reviewed in early 1991 when the Department will have had some 18 months' experience of working in its new headquarters building.

Research and Development

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he plans to review the level of research and development programmes devoted to nuclear power and sponsored by his Department.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My Department keeps its nuclear research and development programmes under regular review.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will increase substantially the research and development budget devoted to renewable energy sources; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My Department has published its strategy for research and development of renewable energy sources in energy paper 55. In line with that strategy, expenditure is set to increase steadily over the next three financial years. It remains our policy to ensure that all economic and environmentally acceptable energy sources should be exploited fully.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what percentage of his Department's research and development budget is devoted to *(a)* gas-fired generation, *(b)* renewable energy sources and *(c)* energy conservation and efficiency in 1979 and each succeeding year.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Technological development in the field of gas-fired power generation has been taken forward by the power generation industry and equipment manufacturers without a need for Government intervention. Hence, in this field my Department has no separate budget for R and D. The other information requested is as follows:

	Percentage of Department's R and D expenditure	
Year	*Renewables*	*Energy efficiency*
1979-80	5·5	[1]0·6
1980-81	6·5	[1]0·9
1981-82	6·4	1·0
1982-83	5·2	1·8
1983-84	5·0	2·9
1984-85	6·4	2·7
1985-86	6·1	1·5
1986-87	7·0	2·0
1987-88	9·1	2·3
1988-89	8·9	1·7

Source: Annual Review of Government funded R and D. except [1] where breakdown not shown in source, and Departmental figures used. Figures used for total Departmental expenditure include throughout the period nuclear expenditure by the UKAEA in support of the Department's programmes.

Coal

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has discussed, or will discuss, with the chairman of British Coal the implementation of measures to protect the reserves of low-sulphur coal in this country; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: It is for British Coal to assess the market demand for particular qualities of coal, including low-sulphur coal, that it can profitably supply. This assessment forms part of its business plan which we review regularly with the chairman of British Coal.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will raise the closure of Betteshanger colliery with the chairman of British Coal as a matter of urgency.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Colliery closures are the responsibility of British Coal. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the tonnage of workable reserves of low-sulphur coal in the United Kingdom for *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1983 and *(c)* 1989.

Mr. Michael Spicer: United Kingdom coal resources are vested in the British Coal Corporation. The amount of those resources which constitute workable reserves can be determined by the corporation only in the light of local mining conditions and market opportunities.

HEALTH

Child Migrants Trust

Mr. Ashdown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions he has had with the Child Migrants Trust in response to its request for funding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have been in correspondence with members of the Child Migrants Trust concerning individuals' efforts to trace their roots and the possibility of Government support for the trust. My officials have met and are in contact with representatives of the Child Migrants Trust to discuss how my Department might assist them. However, I am unable to make a decision about the trust's grant application until it provides the extra information we have requested.

Pesticides

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the research projects he is funding, including the location and amount spent on each project, into the effects of pesticides on human health.

Mr. Freeman: The Department is not funding any research on this subject but I understand some proposals relating to improved monitoring and investigation of alleged pesticide poisoning are under consideration at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Under the

Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986, applicants seeking approval of pesticide products are required to submit a full breakdown package in support of their application for the approval of pesticides. They are also required to undertake extensive research into, among other things, the potential toxicological effects of pesticides on operators and consumers. This research can often take several years to complete to the satisfaction of the regulatory authorities and is carried out at considerable cost to the companies. It makes an important contribution towards increasing knowledge of pesticides and raising contemporary scientific standards.

Ambulance Dispute

Mr. Franks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received regarding the ambulancemen's dispute; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Representations have been received by the Department from trade unions on the staff side of the ambulance Whitley Councils and from the Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel which claims to have within its membership over 20 per cent. of all ambulance personnel but is not represented on the staff side of the Whitley Councils. Representations have come also from members of the public writing direct or through their Members of Parliament.

Liquid Crystal Thermography

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in which locations within the National Health Service liquid crystal thermography is available; and what advice his Department has given to health authorities on the use of this screening procedure.

Mr. Freeman: We do not keep records of the locations at which liquid crystal thermography is available and have not advised health authorities on its use. I understand that very few hospitals use this technique as a diagnostic tool.

Evidence has emerged from a long-term trial carried out by the Department at Bath to measure skin temperature patterns that liquid crystal thermography is not suitable for screening, although it may be of use as an adjunct to other diagnostic routines.

Child Abuse

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the amount of funding allocated by his Department towards the Great Ormond Street project.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: £56,347 in 1987-88, £62,110 in 1988-89 and £56,223 in 1989-90 has been allocated by the Department of Health for the postgraduate training programme in child sexual abuse. The level of funding for the forthcoming financial year has not yet been decided.

Ambulance Service

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to put out to competitive tender the management and operation of non-emergency ambulance services.

Mr. Freeman: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) on 30 November at column *411*.

Royal College of Nursing

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the main issue discussed at his first meeting with the new General Secretary of the Royal College of Nursing.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has had one formal meeting with the recently appointed general secretary of the Royal College of Nursing. It was in June, shortly before she took up her new duties. The establishment and membership of the NHS policy board was the main issue discussed.

Community Care

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to increase the participation of disabled people in the planning of their own community care services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Our White Paper "Caring for People" (Cmnd. 849) sets out our detailed proposals for the future organisation of community care, including arrangements designed to widen room for choice by those who require such care and provide more appropriate services closer to their wishes and needs. In particular our proposals for multidisciplinary assessment of need, whether for residential care or support at home (paragraph 3.2) lay particular stress on the need to take account of the wishes of the individual and his or her carer, and as far as possible to include their active participation in the assessment.

Helicopter Emergency Ambulance Services

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the review being conducted by the regional ambulance officers working party into helicopter emergency ambulance services will be complete; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The review is well advanced but has had to be suspended during the industrial action taking place within the ambulance service.

Lancashire Ambulance Service

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations he has received regarding the quota system operated by Lancashire ambulance service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have received no recent representation regarding the system of quotas introduced in 1986 by the Lancashire health authority for non-urgent patient journeys.

Contraception

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what expenditure has been undertaken by his Department to encourage safe and effective contraception in the Nottingham area, in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Regional health authorities are responsible for allocating funds to individual districts who are in turn responsible for determining the need for and level of local services and providing them in the most efficient way. Family planning services are no exception to this.

Mental Health Act

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if it is his intention to review the operation of the guardianship provisions of the Mental Health Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: We have no present plans for such a review, but will of course reconsider the need in the light of evidence to suggest that either the provisions, or the way they are put into operation, are inadequate.

National Assistance Act

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he is taking to ensure that the provisions of section 47 of the National Assistance Act 1948 are fully understood by practitioners within the medical and social work professions.

Mr. Freeman: At present we have no plans to take action, but we are keeping the situation under review.

Relocation

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list all office relocations of his Department's staff since May 1979, stating in each case the location of origin and the location of transfer, together with the numbers of staff transferred.

Mr. Freeman: The Department of Health was formed in 1988. Between 1979 and 1988 a number of posts in the former DHSS were relocated, but the available information does not distinguish between health and social security posts. We have recently announced that the work of the National Health Service management executive, involving some 1,000 posts, is to be relocated from London to Leeds.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what relocations of his Department's staff, or agencies relating thereto, are currently being considered; and what are the numbers of staff affected.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has announced that the work of the whole of the National Health Service management executive, involving some 1,000 posts, is to be relocated from London to Leeds.

Hospices

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to give financial support to hospices.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Arrangements for financial support for hospices in England have been under careful consideration for some time. We hope to announce proposals shortly.

Babies (Intensive Care)

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total number of intensive care baby cots available in the Yorkshire regional health authority; and what is the number in each district health authority.

Mr. Freeman: The information is given in the table.

Neonatal cots, Yorkshire Regional Health Authority, 1988-89

District Health Authority	*Number of cots*
Hull	24
East Yorkshire	10
Grimsby	19
Scunthorpe	10
Northallerton	24
York	10
Scarborough	10
Harrogate	14
Bradford	32
Airedale	14
Calderdale	18
Huddersfield	18
Dewsbury	17
Leeds Western	36
Leeds Eastern	31
Wakefield	14
Pontefract	15
Regional total	316

[1] Average daily available cots not in maternity units.

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to increase the number of intensive care baby cots available in the Yorkshire regional health authority.

Mr. Freeman: Responsibility for the local provision of services is a matter for the health authority concerned. The hon. Member may like to approach the chairman of the Yorkshire regional health authority, Sir Bryan Askew.

Dental Services

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the number of community dental clinics operating in Britain for each year since 1979.

Mr. Freeman: The number of operational community dental clinics, both fixed and mobile, in England in each of the years since 1979 is as follows:

Caldendar/ Financial year[1]	*Number of clinics*[2]
1979	1,861
1980	1,865
1981	1,864
1982	1,876
1983	1,909
1984	1,881
1985	1,907
1986-87	1,838
1987-88	1,810
1988-89	1,747

[1] Figures up to 1985 relate to calendar years. Information thereafter is based on financial years.

[2] These figures relate to the total number of clinics available, though some may not have been in use for part or all of the year in question.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the dental attendance figures for the Wakefield district health authority for each year since 1979.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is not available centrally for the period before 1982. From 1982 the figures for Wakefield DHA are shown in the table. The information relates to the community dental service.

Last day of calendar/ Financial year	*Number of attendances*
1982	12,456
1983	13,167
1984	12,652
1985	11,265
1986-87	9,881
1987-88	10,720
1988-89	8,730

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is his policy with regard to the future of the community dental service; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what plans there are to improve the dental care of those children whose parents fail to arrange regular dental checks.

Mr. Freeman: Following proposals made in their White Paper "Promoting Better Health", the Government took powers in the Health and Medicines Act 1988 to enable changes to be made to the responsibilities of the community dental service.

In the Government's view, general dental practitioners should normally provide dental care to schoolchildren. Switching the emphasis of the community dental service away from children will enable it to commit a significant proportion of its resources to health education, to the treatment of priority groups such as handicapped adults and the elderly, to identify the dental needs of the population, and generally to act as a safety net for treatment for those whose needs cannot be met by general dental practitioners.

The community dental service continues to carry out dental screening of schoolchildren, and a patient who is identified as being in need of dental treatment is advised to seek it from a general dental practitioner. The changes will of course be monitored.

Vaccination

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will itemise the take-up of the combined measles, mumps and rubella vaccination for children in South Yorkshire.

Mr. Freeman: The estimated number of children receiving the combined measles, mumps and rubella vaccination in South Yorkshire in 1988-89, broken down by age and district health authority are shown in the table. Accurate information about take-up rates is not available.

Vaccination and immunisation—South Yorkshire—1988-89
Measles, mumps and rubella (MMR)—number immunised by age

Districts	*Age under 1*	*Age 1*	*Age 2*	*Age 3*	*Age 4*	*Age 5*	*Age 6-7*	*Age 8-15*	*Age 16-19*	*20 or over*	*Total all ages*
Barnsley	5	1,396	292	251	994	133	25	3	0	0	3,099
Doncaster	0	2,097	586	435	1,392	724	546	250	0	0	6,030
Rotherham	10	1,784	289	263	1,216	145	111	19	0	0	3,837
Sheffield	18	2,406	593	357	1,268	719	562	257	29	0	6,209
Total ages	33	7,683	1,760	1,306	4,870	1,721	1,244	529	29	0	19,175

Source: Form KC50A.

Nurses

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what is the number of NHS staff, by grade, who have retired within the last five years under the female nurse provisions of the NHS superannuation regulations, indicating the ages of the staff concerned in year bands.

Mr. Freeman: The specific information requested is not available. The NHS superannuation scheme does not maintain either records by grade or statistics relating to retirements under the special class provisions. An attempt to extract even some of the required information from manual and computer records would be a very time-consuming exercise, which would incur disproportionate expense.

Basingstoke and North Hampshire Health Authority

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the level of funding of the Basingstoke and North Hampshire health authority.

Mr. Freeman: From 1 April 1990 allocations to regions will be based upon a basis of weighted capitation of residents. Regions will in turn begin the process of allocating to districts next year on the same basis but taking into account additional local factors. This basis will provide a fairer basis of revenue funding to all districts. The details are set out more fully in "Working for Patients".

General Practitioners (Contract)

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many representations he has received on the provision in the general practitioner's contract for annual contact with pensioner patients by general practitioners.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have received a number of representations on the GPs' new contract which have made some reference to the requirement to offer an annual check-up to patients aged 75 and over. Due to the general nature of the majority of such representations, it is not possible to give a precise figure.

Waiting List Fund

Sir Neil Macfarlane: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much money will be made available to the National Health Service through the waiting list fund in 1990-91; and what are the allocations to regional health authorities.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The National Health Service is treating more patients than ever before, but waiting times in some places and for some specialties are still too long. Next year the waiting list fund will be £33 million. Of this, £20 million will be allocated direct to regional and special health authorities. The allocations to authorities are as follows:

Region	Allocation (£ million)
Northern	1·45
Yorkshire	1·65
Trent	2·00
East Anglian	0·45
North West Thames	1·45
North East Thames	1·60
South East Thames	1·50
South West Thames	0·70
Wessex	1·10
Oxford	0·60
South Western	1·10
West Midlands	2·85
Mersey	1·45
North Western	1·90
Special Health Authorities for the London Postgraduate Teaching Hospitals	0·20
Total	20·00

The remainder of the fund is being earmarked for a special targeted attack on the 100 longest specialty waiting lists in the country. Key data for these lists will be examined by inter-authority comparisons and consultancy, a team of management consultants who are currently investigating the causes of long waiting lists in 22 districts. They will advise whether waiting list fund money should be allocated to regions to help districts tackle these 100 long lists, and will visit selected districts to investigate the problems at first hand.

This £33 million brings the Government's investment in the drive to tackle waiting times to £119 million over four years. In the first three years, the fund has enabled well over 300,000 in-patients and day cases, and over 200,000 out-patients, to be treated.

Consultants

Sir Neil Macfarlane: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he will be in a position to make an announcement on the proposed allocation of public funds and on management training for consultants.

Mr. Freeman: I have today announced the allocation of £1 million to the successful regions. The programmes of training are due to commence in April 1990. Residential training courses will be brief (about four weeks) and will teach basic principles of management for consultants who wish to play a part in the management of the NHS.

There was an extremely enthusiastic response to the invitation to put forward bids for this scheme and the general quality of submissions received was most impressive. Seven regions, in all, will benefit from central funding. A national evaluation process will be an important part of this initiative.

Health Authority Members

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what he estimates the annual remuneration of non-officer members of health authorities and family practitioner services authorities under the National Health Service and Community Care Bill will be.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This is still under consideration.

Community Health Councils

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the annual budget allocation for community health councils.

Mr. Freeman: The expenses of community health councils are met by and form part of the total expenditure of the health authorities concerned. It is for health authorities to decide on the level of funding that they provide to community health councils. The summarised accounts of regional and district health authorities for 1988-89 record revenue expenditure on community health councils totalling £8,004,257. This is a provisional figure, subject to audit.

Abortion

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will update the following tables of statistics printed in the special report and report of the Select Committee on the Infant Life (Preservation) Bill, H.L. Paper 153 of 1986-87 and H.L. Paper 50 of 1987-88, to cover 1987, 1988 and 1989 *(a)* the number of notifications of abortions carried out under the Abortion Act 1967, gestation by completed weeks by statutory grounds and category of premises, residents and non-residents, England and Wales, in the special report on pages 22 to 26 and the report on pages 72 to 73; and *(b)* the number of notifications of abortions carried out under the Abortion Act 1967, gestation by completed weeks by statutory grounds and mother's age, England and Wales as in the special report on pages 28 to 37 and in the report on pages 74 to 77.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 24 November 1989]:* The information requested has been placed in the Library, and I have sent my hon. Friend a copy.

AIDS

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will outline the reasons for the closure of the Health Education Authority's AIDS unit;

(2) what discussions he had with the director of the Health Education Authority about the future of the AIDS unit prior to that unit's closure; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 4 December 1989]:* The planned internal reorganisation of the Health Education Authority is entirely a matter for the authority, and we played no part in the HEA's decisions on this issue. The HEA's chairman made it clear at the expert symposium on HIV and AIDS organised jointly by the Department and the HEA on 24 November that part of the reorganisation of the HEA's business will involve the management of its AIDS work with that of its six other major health topic programmes. The authority considers that this will increase effectiveness and reflect the AIDS programme's close links with many other aspects of the authority's work. These changes will involve no dilution of the HEA's HIV prevention effort.

Drug Overdoses

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many incidents have been recorded in each of the past 10 years of *(a)* suicide, *(b)* parasuicide and *(c)* accidental death as a result of overdoses of drugs containing paracetemol.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 4 December 1989]:* The information is not available in the exact form requested. The available information is shown in the table.

Number of deaths from poisoning by drugs containing paracetamol which were (a) suicides, (b) undetermined whether accidentally or purposely inflicted, and (c) accidenal, in England and Wales, 1977-87

Year	Deaths (a) Suicide	(b) Undetermined	(c) Accident
1977	92	41	32
1978	127	45	36
1979	126	33	30
1980	109	37	26
[1]1981	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1982	105	40	33
1983	117	40	27
1984	118	55	25
1985	138	54	32
1986	138	68	31
1987	116	87	35

[1] Not available due to industrial action by registration officers.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many incidents have been recorded in each of the past 10 years of *(a)* suicide, *(b)* parasuicide and *(c)* accidental death as a result of overdoses of drugs available (i) on prescription and (ii) over the counter to the general public.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 4 December 1989]:* The information is not available in the exact form requested. The available information is shown in the tables.

Deaths from drug[1] poisoning: suicidal, accidental and undetermined whether accidentally or purposely inflicted, England and Wales, 1979-88.

Table (a) E950[2]: Suicide and self-inflicted injury by solid or liquid substances.

Year	Deaths
1979	1,525
1980	1,479
1981	1,416
1982	1,286
1983	1,219
1984	1,099
1985	1,031
1986	1,011
1987	902
1988	913

E950.0 Analgesics, antipyretics and antirheumatics
E950.1 Barbiturates
E950.2 Other sedatives and hypnotics
E950.3 Tranquillizers and other psychotropic agents
E950.4 Other specified drugs and medicaments
E950.5 Other drug or medicament

Table (b) E850—E858[1]: Accidental poisoning by drugs, medicaments and biologicals

Year	Deaths
1979	436
1980	427
1981	423
1982	445
1983	376
1984	375
1985	309
1986	319
1987	342
1988	327

E850 Accidental poisoning by analgesics, antipyretics, antirheumatics
E851 Accidental poisoning by barbiturates
E850 Accidental poisoning by other sedatives and hypnotics
E853 Accidental poisoning by tranquillizers
E854 Accidental poisoning by other psychotropic agents
E855 Accidental poisoning by other drugs acting on central and autonomic nervous systems
E856 Accidental poisoning by antibiotics
E858 Accidental poisoning by other drugs

Table (c) Poisoning by solid or liquid substances, undertermined whether accidentally or purposely inflicted E980[2]

Year	Deaths
1979	566
1980	507
1981	435
1982	465
1983	418
1984	441
1985	444
1986	555
1987	564
1988	602

E980.0 Analgesics, antipyretics and antirheumatics.
E980.1 Barbiturates.
E980.2 Other sedatives and hypnotics.
E980.3 Tranquillizers and other pyschotropic agents.
E980.4 Other specified drugs and medicaments.
E980.5 Unspecified drug or medicament.

[1] International Classification of Diseases Ninth Revision.

[2] All categories (except that relating to barbiturates) include some drugs available only on prescription and others available over the counter to the general public.

Project 2000

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what effect the proposals in "Top Up Loans for Students", Cm. 520, with regard to benefit entitlement will have on students pursuing Project 2000 courses of nursing education.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 4 December 1989]:* The Government accepted the proposals of the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting that Project 2000 students should have student, rather than employee, status and receive bursaries rather than salaries. The Government remain committed to removing entitlement to income support, unemployment benefit and housing benefit from students with the exception of single parents and disabled people.

The basic level of bursary for Project 2000 students under 26 is currently £4,700 per annum in London, and £4,000 per annum elsewhere. These amounts will not be means-tested. Project 2000 students, like other students in full-time education, will pay only 20 per cent. of the community charge.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Monopolies and Mergers Commission

10. **Mr. Litherland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether there has been any change in the rôle of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in recent years.

Mr. Ridley: The principal role of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission has not changed, but its rôle has been extended over recent years by certain provisions in the Telecommunications Act, the Airports Act, the Gas Act, the Water Act and the Electricity Act.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the current referrals before the Monopolies and Mergers Commission with expected dates for receipt and publication of each report.

Mr. Redwood: The references currently before the Monopolies and Mergers Commission are as follows:

Type of reference	*Subject Matter*	*Referral*	*Due (in date order)*	*Extended to*
Monopoly	Wholesale Petrol Supply	9 November 1988	8 November 1989	20 December 1989
Merger	Atlas Copco/Desoutter Brothers	20 September 1989	19 December 1989	
Merger	Colne Valley/Lee Valley/Rickmansworth Water	7 September 1989	12 January 1990	
Merger	Michelin/National Tyre Services	31 October 1989	30 January 1990	
Monopoly	Electrical Contracting at London exhibition halls	10 May 1989	9 February 1990	
Merger	BUPA/HCA	21 November 1989	28 February 1990	
Monopoly	Cinema Advertising	28 June 1989	27 March 1990	
Monopoly	Plasterboard	28 November 1989	31 July 1990	

The publication schedule for each report is decided when a report is submitted to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. The date of publication remains confidential for reasons of market sensitivity. In all cases we aim to publish a report as soon after it has been submitted as is practicable.

Data Processing Equipment

22. **Mr. Randall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will estimate the percentage of the home market for electronic computers supplied by imports.

59. **Mr. Frank Cook:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will estimate the percentage of the home market of electronic computers supplied by imports.

Mr. McWilliam: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will estimate the percentage of the home market of electronic computers supplied by imports.

Mr. Forth: The information sought is not readily available, since imports include imports for re-export while exports include those for re-import. Such entrepot trade is an important feature of international trade in electronic data processing (EDP) equipment. However, information published by the Central Statistics Office in "Business Monitor PQ 3302 Electronic Data processing equipment" (HMSO) shows that in 1988 total imports of EDP equipment were at a level equivalent to 90 per cent. of the United Kingdom's home market, while total exports were at a level equivalent to 76 per cent. of the United Kingdom's home market.

18. **Mr. Leadbitter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will estimate the deficit in electronic data processing equipment with European Community countries.

32. **Mr. Bernie Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will estimate the deficit in electronic data processing equipment with European Community countries.

98. **Mr. McLeish:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will estimate the deficit in electronic data processing equipment with European Community countries.

Mr. Forth: Based on data compiled and published by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise, in 1988 the United Kingdom had an estimated net surplus of £785 million, not a deficit, with the European Community countries in respect of electronic data processing equipment.

66. **Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will estimate the deficit in electronic data processing equipment with West Germany.

81. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will estimate the deficit in electronic data processing equipment with West Germany.

Mr. Forth: Based on data compiled by and available from Her Majesty's Customs and Excise, in 1988 the United Kingdom had an estimated net surplus of £299 million, not a deficit, with West Germany in respect of electronic data processing equipment.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for 1979 and for each year since 1984 and the current year to date (i) estimated sales of United Kingdom manufactured computers in SITC 752 plus parts in SITC 759.97, together with imports and exports, (ii) the ratio of exports to sales and (iii) the ratio of imports to home demand; and if he will provide an estimate of the import content of industry sales, together with the percentage share of exports to total exports of manufactures to one place of decimals.

Mr. Forth: The latest available information is given in the following table. There are no official estimates of the import content of industry sales.

Electronic Data Processing Equipment

Year	*Sales* £ *million*	*Exports* £ *million*	*Imports* £ *million*	*Home Market* £ *million*	*Export Sales ratio percent.*	*Imports/Home Market ratio percent.*	*Exports share of manufactures percent.*
1979	980	834	1,024	1,170	85	88	2·7
1984	2,519	2,599	3,561	3,481	103	102	5·6
1985	3,459	3,314	3,919	4,064	96	96	6·3
1986	2,954	3,094	3,916	3,776	105	104	5·7
1987	4,282	3,900	4,774	5,156	91	93	6·4

Year	Sales £ million	Exports £ million	Imports £ million	Home Market £ million	Export Sales ratio percent.	Imports/Home Market ratio percent.	Exports share of manufactures percent.
1988¹	5,175	4,592	5,473	6,056	89	90	7·0
January-June 1989¹	2,565	2,382	3,191	3,374	93	95	6·5

¹ = Provisional.

Notes:

1. Electronic Data Processing Equipment is defined as 752 plus 759.97 of SITC (Rev. 3). The corresponding classification for sales data is Activity Heading 3302 of the Standard Industrial Classification (Revised 1980). 1979 sales data have been adjusted to correspond to current definitions.
2. Home Market = Sales less Exports plus Imports.
3. Imports include imports for re-export while exports incude exports for re-import. Where such entrepot trade is significant import: home market ratios and exports: sales ratios, as normally defined, can approach and even exceed 100 per cent.
4. Manufactures is defined as Sections 5 to 8 of the SITC.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for 1979 and for each year since 1984 and the current year to date sales of United Kingdom manufactured computers in SITC 752.3, plus imports and exports, together with (i) the ratio of exports to manufactured sales, (ii) the ratio of imports to home demand and (iii) his estimate of the value of imports for *(a)* re-export, *(b)* direct sales to the United Kingdom market and *(c)* the import content of United Kingdom manufactured exports;

(2) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the value, volume and average value of imports and exports of computers in SITC 752.3; what assessment he has made of the proportion of exports manufactured outside the United Kingdom and the change in United Kingdom content of those manufactured in the United Kingdom since 1986; and what assessment he has made of the reasons for the change in the levels of average value and volume in 1988.

Mr. Forth: The classification system used for the collection of sales statistics is different from that used for international trade. Consequently data on sales of computers corresponding to SITC 752.3 are not available. The ratio of exports to manufactured sales and the ratio of imports to home demand cannot, therefore, be calculated. Imports are not broken down into those for re-export or direct sale to the United Kingdom market. There are no official estimates of the import content of United Kingdom-manufactured exports of computers.

The table gives the available information on imports and exports relating to SITC 752.3. The introduction of a new classification system at the start of 1988 and changes in the reporting of some exports during that year may have affected the consistency and the quality of the detailed figures for computers. Therefore average values, which are in fact unit values for 1988 should be treated with caution.

United Kingdom Imports and Exports: SITC 752.3

Imports	Value £ million	Volume thousands	Unit value £ thousands
1979	81	10	8·4
1984	717	984	0·7
1985	795	941	0·8
1986	749	325	2·3
1987	934	363	2·6
1988	891	564	1·6
¹1989	829	816	1·0

¹ January-September (provisional).

Exports	Value £ million	Volume thousands	Unit value £ thousands
1979	22	5	4·4
1984	597	1,702	0·4
1985	600	1,191	0·5
1986	584	242	2·4
1987	693	205	3·4
1988	1,641	(2,772)	(0·6)
¹1989	1,577	680	2·3

¹ January-September (provisional).

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom, HMSO.

Trade Deficit (West Germany)

14. **Mr. David Young:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will estimate the manufacturing trade deficit with West Germany.

23. **Mr. Harry Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will estimate the manufacturing trade deficit with West Germany.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In the first nine months of 1989 imports of manufactures into the United Kingdom consigned from the Federal Republic of Germany exceeded United Kingdom exports to that country by £7·4 billion.

20. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give the growth in the manufacturing trade deficit with West Germany since 1979.

Mr. Ridley: The crude deficit with the Federal Republic of Germany in manufactured goods was £4·0 billion in 1979 and £8·7 billion in 1988, at 1988 constant prices.

68. **Mr. Radice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give the growth in the manufacturing trade deficit with West Germany since 1979.

93. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give the growth in the manufacturing trade deficit with West Germany since 1979.

Mr. Redwood: The crude deficit with the Federal Republic of Germany in manufactured goods was £2·5 billion in 1979 and £8·7 billion in 1988 at current prices, an increase of £6·2 billion.

EC Consumer Council

19. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the outcome of the recent European Economic Community consumer council meeting.

36. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the outcome of the recent EEC Consumer Council meeting.

Mr. Forth: A resolution identifying priorities for the relaunch of consumer policy was agreed. The draft directives on package travel and product safety were discussed without substantive conclusions and both dossiers were remitted to COREPER. The Commission outlined its plans for improved representation of consumers at Community level and indicated that new Commission proposals for the European home and leisure accident surveillance system would be forwarded to the Council soon.

Girobank

24. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the future of Girobank.

Mr. Forth: As I said in answer to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry) on 27 November, the then Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster announced on 20 April that the Post Office Board had accepted a conditional offer from the Alliance and Leicester Building Society for Girobank. The Post Office and the Alliance and Leicester are engaged in detailed negotiations with a view to completing the sale as soon as practicable.

The regulatory authorities will need to be satisfied and my consent will be required before the sale can take place.

48. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the future of the Girobank.

55. **Mr. Allan Roberts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the future of Girobank.

77. **Mr. Heffer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the future of Girobank.

85. **Mr. Ted Garrett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the future of the Girobank.

54. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the future of the Girobank.

Mr. Forth: I have nothing to add to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry) on 27 November.

Financial Services

21. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received on the regulation of financial services.

Mr. Ridley: I receive a considerable number of representations on a variety of topics relating to the regulation of financial services. We consider very carefully those which relate to the scope of the framework of the regulatory system, or the powers under the Financial Services Act which the Government retain. Those which relate to matters which are the responsibility of the SIB or another regulatory authority are passed to the appropriate body.

25. **Mr. Buckley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps have been taken to ensure that the Financial Services Act is being operated to the benefit of the investor.

106. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps have been taken to ensure that the Financial Services Act is being operated to the benefit of the investor.

Mr. Ridley: I am satisfied that the Financial Services Act is operating in accordance with its central aim, which is to protect investors.

64. **Mr. Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will review the operation of legislation affecting the regulation of insurance brokers and other independent financial advisers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Insurance brokers are regulated under the Insurance Brokers Registration Act 1977 (IBRA) and in addition, in respect of their business activities, under the Financial Services Act 1986 (FSA). I have no plans to review the operation of the IBRA. A number of changes to the FSA are included in the new Companies Act which may affect the regulation of independent financial advisers, including insurance brokers in respect of their investment business activities. I have no plans to review further the operation of the FSA.

88. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received on the regulation of financial services.

Mr. Redwood: I receive a considerable number of representations on a variety of topics relating to the regulation of financial services. We consider very carefully those which relate to the scope of the framework of the regulatory system, or the powers under the Financial Services Act which the Government retain. Those which relate to matters which are the responsibility of the SIB or another regulatory authority are passed to the appropriate body.

Trade Barriers

26. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make it his policy to ensure that the European Economic Community does not erect protectionist trade barriers.

Mr. Ridley: I am against protectionism. I will certainly ensure that all proposals for protectionist trade policy action are rigorously opposed by the United Kingdom.

30. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many of the measures designed to remove barriers to trade in connection with the creation of a single European market have now been adopted, agreed in principle or had common positions agreed.

Mr. Redwood: Of the measures in the European Commission's White Paper, "Completing the Internal Market", 152 have now been adopted, agreed in principle or had common positions agreed.

Car Production

27. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many cars were built in the United Kingdom in *(a)* 1978 and *(b)* 1988.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In 1978 1,222,949 cars were built in the United Kingdom as compared with 1,226,835 in 1988, making last year the best year for car production since 1977.

94. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement concerning the future of the production of cars and allied products in the United Kingdom.

110. **Mr. Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement concerning the future of the production of cars and allied products in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Car output has increased in recent years and, with the additional investments now being made by a number of companies, looks set to expand significantly in the 1990s.

Manufacturing Trade Balance

28. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects British manufacturing trade to be in balance with *(a)* West Germany and *(b)* the rest of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Government are committed to free trade as being in the best interests of the United Kingdom. We cannot expect this to produce a trade balance with every partner; nevertheless, the Government recognise the importance of continuing to encourage exports through the activities of the British Overseas Trade Board.

53. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects British manufacturing trade to be in balance with *(a)* West Germany and *(b)* the rest of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Redwood: The Government are committed to free trade as being in the best interests of the United Kingdom. We cannot expect this to produce a trade balance with every partner; nevertheless, the Government recognise the importance of continuing to encourage and support exports through inter alia the activities of the British Overseas Trade Board and ECGD.

62. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects British manufacturing trade to be in balance with *(a)* West Germany and *(b)* the rest of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Redwood: The Government are committed to free trade being in the best interests of the United Kingdom. The Government recognise the importance of continuing to encourage exports through the activities of the British Overseas Trade Board, including the recent successful Focus Germany Campaign. It is also pressing to open the financial services markets throughout the European Community which should help the British financial service sector and increase our invisible exports.

Manufacturing Trade Deficit

71. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will estimate the manufacturing trade deficit with European Community countries.

Mr. Redwood: In the first nine months of 1989, the United Kingdom had a deficit in trade in manufactures with other European Community countries of £11·5 billion.

89. **Mr. Maxton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give the growth in the manufacturing trade deficit with the European Community countries since 1979.

99. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give the growth in manufacturing trade deficit with European Community countries since 1979.

100. **Mr. Lambie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give the growth in the manufacturing trade deficit with the European Community countries since 1979.

Mr. Redwood: The deficit with the European Community in trade in manufactured goods at current prices has risen from £3·1 billion in 1979 to £13·4 billion in 1988, an increase of £10·3 billion.

EC Industry Council

29. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the outcome of the recent European Economic Community Council meeting.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Council of Industry Ministers, at which the Minister for Industry and Enterprise represented the United Kingdom, concentrated on discussion of steel issues. It agreed to an Italian request to extend agreed closure deadlines of certain Italian steel plants in exchange for delays in the payment of aid to the Italian steel industry.

Discussions also took place on textiles, footwear, shipbuilding and high definition television.

Product Safety

31. **Ms. Harman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he plans to meet his counterparts in the European Community to discuss product safety.

33. **Mr. Snape:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he plans to meet his counterparts in the European Community to discuss product safety.

52. **Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he plans to meet his counterparts in the European Community to discuss product safety.

96. **Mr. Soley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he plans to meet his counterparts in the European Community to discuss product safety.

Mr. Forth: I meet my counterparts in other member states regularly. In the past few weeks I have had a number of discussions with them on product safety, including a wide-ranging discussion on the proposed EC general product safety directive at the Consumer Council on 9 November. More recently I have had discussions on product safety with Ministers in Ireland prior to the Irish Presidency in the new year.

Japanese Companies

34. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many Japanese manufacturing companies are now operating in the United Kingdom; and what information he has on the figure for other member states of the European Community.

Mr. Redwood: The information is as follows:

European Community Member State	*Number of Japanese manufacturers*
United Kingdom	[1]114
France	85
West Germany	67
Netherlands	27
Belgium	15
Luxembourg	8
Ireland	[2]19
Spain	41
Italy	24
Denmark	2
Portugal	7
Greece	4

[1] as at 31 October 1989.

[2] as at 31 January 1989.

[1] For the United Kingdom these figures refer to individual Japanese manufacturing companies with one or more operating plants. For the rest of the European Community the figures refer to the number of plants known to be either currently operating in EC member states or having announced a formal intention to operate.

[2] Figures for EC investment other than United Kingdom obtained from Japan External Trade Organisation (JETRO) figures given are the latest available.

Toys

35. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps his Department is taking to monitor the safety of children's toys.

40. **Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps his Department is taking to monitor the safety of children's toys.

56. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps his Department is taking to monitor the safety of children's toys.

Mr. Forth: Local authority trading standards departments have a statutory duty to enforce the Consumer Protection Act 1987 and the toy safety regulations made thereunder. The Act provides the necessary powers for the discharge of this responsibility.

The new Toys (Safety) Regulations 1989, which implement the EC directive on the safety of toys with effect from 1 January, will provide more comprehensive safety measures to ensure that only safe toys are placed on the market. They will also require enforcement authorities to notify my Department of enforcement action taken under these regulations.

Trade Deficit (EC)

37. **Mr. Boateng:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the European Community countries with which the United Kingdom has a manufacturing trade deficit.

90. **Mr. Bidwell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the European Community countries with which the United Kingdom has a manufacturing trade deficit.

Mr. Redwood: In the first nine months of 1989 the United Kingdom had a manufacturing trade deficit with the following countries:

France, Belgium-Luxembourg, Netherlands, Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, Denmark and Portugal.

Internal Market

38. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what additional help is being given to businesses to help them to take advantage of the internal market in 1992.

76. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what additional help is being given to businesses to help them to take advantage of the internal market in 1992.

Mr. Redwood: We provide a comprehensive single market information service through our European Open for Business campaign, which is regularly updated and expanded. The practical assistance available through our Enterprise Initiative is also particularly relevant to firms preparing for the single market.

In the private sector there is an increasing level of information and advice being provided to help business adapt to the liberalised European trading conditions.

Imports

39. **Mr. James Lamond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give the growth in imports in manufactured goods from European Community countries since 1979.

46. **Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give the growth in imports in manufactured goods from European Community countries since 1979.

58. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give the growth in imports in manufactured goods from European Community countries since 1979.

Mr. Redwood: Imports of manufactured goods from the European Community have risen, at current prices, from £16·0 billion in 1979 to £45·7 billion in 1988, an increase of £29·7 billion.

47. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give the growth in imports in manufacturing goods from West Germany since 1979.

75. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give the growth in imports in manufacturing goods from West Germany since 1979.

78. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give the growth in imports in manufacturing goods from West Germany since 1979.

Mr. Redwood: Imports of manufactured goods from West Germany have risen, at current prices, from £5·3 billion in 1979 to £16·6 billion in 1988, an increase of £11·3 billion.

57. **Mr. Orme:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the increase in import penetration of manufactured goods from 1979 until the first quarter of the current year.

72. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the increase in import penetration of manufactured goods from 1979 until the first quarter of the current year.

83. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the increase in import penetration of manufactured goods from 1979 until the first quarter of the current year.

Mr. Redwood: Import penetration in manufacturing industry rose from 27 per cent. in 1979 to 36 per cent. in the year ending March 1989.

Competition Policy

41. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to review his policy on competition.

Mr. Redwood: We are in the process of implementing the conclusions of our review of competition policy, which were published last year and have no plans for a further review.

EC Ministerial Meetings

42. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he intends to meet his European Economic Community counterparts; and what matters will be discussed.

45. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he intends to meet his European Economic Community counterparts; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Redwood: I intend to maintain close contact with all my EC counterparts, and a whole range of matters will be discussed.

51. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he intends to meet his European Economic Community counterparts; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Ridley: I continue to maintain close contact with all my EC counterparts, to discuss a whole range of matters.

CBI

43. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next plans to meet representatives of the Confederation of British Industry to discuss the prospects for British business.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My Department maintains regular and frequent contacts with the Confederation of British Industry at all levels on a wide range of business matters.

101. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next plans to meet representatives of the Confederation of British Industry to discuss the prospects for British business.

109. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next expects to meet the president of the Confederation of British Industry to discuss manufacturing industry.

113. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next plans to meet representatives of the Confederation of British Industry to discuss the prospcts for British business.

Mr. Ridley: I maintain regular and frequent contacts with the Confederation of British Industry on a wide range of business matters.

Labelling

44. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has any plans to change the labelling requirements for consumer goods.

Mr. Forth: Additional labelling requirements will come into force over the next year for toys and all-terrain vehicles. The Government have made clear their support for the early introduction of a Community-wide voluntary eco-labelling scheme.

49. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met the European Commissioner, Sir Leon Brittan; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Ridley: I last met Sir Leon Brittan on 23 November at the Internal Market Council. A number of issues were discussed, in particular the draft merger control regulation.

Subsidies

50. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much direct subsidy was paid by his Department to British industry in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1988.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Department does not distinguish in its accounts between direct subsidies and other expenditure. However, the total expenditure of the Department, including support for nationalised industries, was £2·257 million in 1979-80 and £1·304 million in 1988-89.

Consumer Protection

60. **Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to introduce new legislation or regulations on consumer protection.

95. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to introduce new legislation or regulations on consumer protection.

97. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to introduce new legislation or regulations on consumer protection.

Mr. Forth: We intend to improve the protection given to consumers in a number of ways including the introduction of an order under the Prices Act 1974, as amended, on price indications and unit pricing about which we are currently engaging in public consultation, and changes to other legislation affecting consumers' interests.

Washing Machines

61. **Mr. Rowlands:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will estimate the level of imports of washing machines, and give this as a percentage of total United Kingdom sales.

Mr. Redwood: The information is as follows:

Washing machines

	1989	*January to June 1989*
Imports (£ million)	157·9	65·1
United Kingdom sales (£ million)	275·5	122·2
Imports (Percentage of United Kingdom sales)	57	53

Notes and definitions:

1. Figures relate to domestic-type electric washing machines only.
2. United Kingdom sales figures relate to sales by United Kingdom manufacturers with a minimum employment of 100. The possibly incomplete coverage of these figures implies that the percentage figures shown may be overstated.

Source: Business Monitor PQ3460.

British Shipbuilders

63. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met the chairman of British Shipbuilders; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I met the chairman of British Shipbuilders on 21 November 1989. A number of matters of current interest were discussed, including the disposal of the assets of North East Shipbuilders Ltd.

Electronic Consumer Goods

65. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will estimate the balance of payments deficit in electronic consumer goods.

108. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will estimate the balance of payments deficit in electronic consumer goods.

112. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will estimate the balance of payments deficit in electronic consumer goods.

Mr. Forth: The deficit, estimated as a crude trade balance on the overseas trade statistics basis, was £950 million in 1988. Corresponding figures available so far for 1989 indicate that the deficit was £700 million in the period January to September.

Textiles

67. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action he is taking to reduce imported textiles into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Redwood: Imports of a wide range of textiles and clothing products from major low-cost exporting countries have for some time been restricted under bilateral agreements concluded by the Community within the framework of the multi-fibre arrangements and associated agreements. Where a surge in imports of a particular product not currently restricted is causing serious injury to domestic industry I am prepared to consider whether there is a case for action to put to the Community under the terms of the appropriate agreement. Each case has to be considered on its merits and in the light of the implications for the United Kingdom economy as a whole. It is not as a general rule in our interest to increase barriers to trade; indeed the Community is committed in the Uruguay round to negotiate about phasing out the MFA on acceptable terms.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proportion of the current balance of payments deficit can be attributed to the importation of textile and clothing goods from outside the United Kingdom.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 5 December 1989]:* Information on the balance of trade in textiles and clothing is not available on the same basis as the current account of the balance of payments. The following table shows the relationship between these balances and that for total visible trade which is available on both bases.

United Kingdom Trade, 12 months ending October 1989

£ billion

	Overseas Trade Statistics basis[1]	*Balance of Payment basis*[2]
Balance of trade in:		
Textiles and clothing goods[3]	−3·6	n.a.
Total visible trade	−28·9	−24·2
Current account balance[4]	n.a.	−20·1

[1] Exports valued free on board (fob);
imports valued inclusive of insurance and freight (cif)

[2] Exports and imports both valued exclusive of insurance and freight charges

[3] Standard International Trade Classification, divisions 65 and 84

[4] Includes services, transfers and other invisible transactions

n.a. not available

Sources: Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom
United Kingdom Balances of Payments

82. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent representations he has received regarding the multi-fibre arrangement from the textile industry.

Mr. Redwood: We have received comments on Professor Silberston's recent report on the future of the multi-fibre arrangement from the Apparel, Knitting and Textiles Alliance as well as from particular sectors of the textile and clothing industry. These comments are being taken into account in our consideration of the United Kingdom and EC position as negotiations on the future of the multi-fibre arrangement continue in the GATT Uruguay round.

107. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the Silberston report on the multi-fibre arrangement for the textile industry.

Mr. Redwood: I announced publication of Professor Silberston's report on the future of the multi-fibre arrangement in my reply to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 19 October at column *176*. Comments on the report have been received from a variety of sources, including the United Kingdom textile and clothing industry, the Trades Union Congress and organisations representing consumers and retailers. The report and these responses will be of help to the Government as the Community prepares its position for the final stages of the GATT Uruguay round negotiations on textile trade policy next year.

British Investment Bank

69. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has any plans to create a British investment bank to invest in British industry.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. The Government's firm view is that British industry will itself make better investment decisions than a state institution using taxpayers' money.

Citizens Advice Bureaux

70. **Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions he has had with the citizens advice bureaux on the funding requirements in 1990-91 of their comprehensive advice service.

102. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions he has had with the citizens advice bureaux on the funding requirements in 1990-91 of their comprehensive advice service.

Mr. Forth: The funding of individual citizens advice bureaux is a matter for local decision, and my Department is not involved in those discussions. I have however met representatives of the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux and of Citizens Advice Scotland in recent months and among the topics discussed was their funding requirements.

Transport Policy (CBI)

73. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has received a copy of the Confederation of British Industry's policy document on transport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have seen a copy of the CBI's report, "Trade Routes to the Future", which my right hon. Friend and I are studying. The report will serve to increase our understanding of businesses' transport needs.

Golden Shares

74. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many companies presently have golden shares held by the Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: I hold special shares in six companies. Other colleagues hold special shares also.

Civil Research and Development

79. **Dr. Bray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much money was provided for the support of civil research and development by his Department in 1989-90 in the 1989 public expenditure review; and how much he now estimates will be spent.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The 1989 Public Expenditure White Paper (Cm 605) indicated that £243 million would be available through the DTI for civil industrial research and development support during 1989-90. Our latest estimates indicate that the take-up of this funding will be approximately £231 million.

Note: these figures apply to DTI support for industrial R and D under the innovation, civil aircraft and aeroengine, and space budgets.

Postal Services

80. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received about the quality of the postal services.

Mr. Forth: In the last year we have received some 150 representations from right hon. and hon. Members and others about the quality of the postal service, mainly the first-class service. Quality of the postal service is an operational matter for the Post Office: it has set itself a target of an average 3 per cent. improvement this year.

103. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the average volume of mail sent by first-class post on a working day during the past year; how many letters, in number and percentage, arrived within the target time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The Post Office tells me that the current average number of first-class letters sent each day is 25 million. Statistics on the proportion of letters delivered within the target time are now kept on a district rather than national basis, but I understand that between three quarters and four fifths of first-class letters are delivered on the working day after posting.

Renaval Programme

84. **Mr. Faulds:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the operation of the European Economic Community's Renaval programme in the United Kingdom.

105. **Mr. Sean Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the operation of the European Economic Community's Renaval programme in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Government have submitted applications for programmes of measures for Plymouth and Gibraltar and put cases for eligibility for Strathclyde and Fife. We are considering what further applications might be made. The European Commission has so far approved only the eligibility of Plymouth.

Nationalised Industries (European Community)

86. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received about the level of subsidies to other European Community countries' nationalised industries.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: From time to time we receive representations from industry about unfair competition from subsidised nationalised industries in other member states. Substantive complaints are pursued vigorously with the European Commission who are responsible for ensuring the proper application of the state aid rules of the European Economic Community treaty. We are concerned about the opportunities which other member states have to provide subsidies to their nationalised industries which may distort competition in the European Community.

Barlow Clowes

87. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on progress towards reimbursement of investors who lost money in the Barlow Clowes collapse and the help given by his Department in the process.

Mr. Ridley: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to him by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs on 1 November at column *257*. The latest information available to me on the progress of the liquidation of Barlow Clowes International Ltd is in my right hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary's letter of 27 November to all members, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

114. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent representations he has received about Barlow Clowes.

Mr. Ridley: I have received many representations from right hon. and hon. Members on behalf of their constituents, from the Barlow Clowes Investors Group and from investors themselves. My right hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs' letter of 27 November to all members, a copy of which has been placed in the Library, gives the latest information available on the matters about which most interest has been expressed.

Finishing Mills

91. **Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent discussions he has had with British Steel about finishing mill capacity and location; and if his discussions included the effect of Government guarantees to plant in Scotland.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has had no such discussions.

Machine Tools

92. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proportion of investment in machine tools over the last three years has been on imported equipment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Recent United Kingdom investment in the import of machine tools has been estimated as:

Year	*United Kingdom demand £ million*	*Imports*	
		£ million	*Percentage*
1986	1,011	500	49·5
1987	875	425	48·6
1988	1,155	557	48·2

No information is available about the re-export of imported machine tools. The above figures take no account of re-exports. I do not propose to make a statement.

Companies

104. **Mr. Hanley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many companies were registered at Companies house for each of the last five years.

Mr. Redwood: Ninety-eight thousand companies were incorporated in Great Britain in 1984. The number of registrations rose to 105,000 in 1985, 117,000 in 1986, 128,000 in 1987 and 129,000 in 1988. Further details can be found in the publication "Companies in 1988-89", a copy of which is in the Library.

North East Shipbuilders

111. **Mr. Clay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are his latest intentions concerning the future of North-East Shipbuilders; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: British Shipbuilders are currently in discussion with a number of parties interested in purchasing the assets of North East Shipbuilders Ltd. I hope these discussions will prove fruitful.

Bookmakers (Shareholders)

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he is taking to monitor the shareholders of major bookmakers in Satellite Information Services.

Mr. Forth: For the purposes of the Telecommunications Act 1984, the licence for the provision of satellite telecommunication services granted to Satellite Information Services Ltd. on 16 October 1989 requires it to notify the Secretary of State when shares representing more than 20 per cent. of the voting rights in the company are acquired by any person, and subsequently should further acquisitions bring this holding to more than 30 per cent. and more than 50 per cent. No such justification has been received.

The company is also required to provide information under the Companies Act 1985 in the usual manner.

Fata Babour

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what grants for research, development and investment in equipment were made to Fata Babour or related companies from 1984 to date.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My Department has not been able to trace any record of this company, nor of any related companies.

Fibre-optics (Trial)

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has to evaluate the results of his decision to grant a special licence to British Telecom to convey integrated voice telephony and entertainment television over a trial optical fibre network at Bishops Stortford, announced on 14 November; and what plans he has to transfer the technology to other parts of the economy.

Mr. Forth: It is primarily for British Telecom and the companies involved in the trial to evaluate the results. Similarly, the transfer of technology is a matter for the companies themselves.

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether the decision to grant a special licence to British Telecom to convey integrated voice telephony and entertainment television over a trial optical fibre network at Bishops Stortford, announced on 14 November, will involve any public expenditure.

Mr. Forth: No public expenditure will be involved.

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether the decision to grant a special licence to British Telecom to convey integrated voice telephony and entertain television over a trial optical fibre network at Bishop Stortford, announced on 14 November, reflects any change of policy on the creation of a national broadband network based on fibreoptic cable since the publication of the White Paper, "Information Technology," Cm 646.

Mr. Forth: No. The trial is consistent with the policy announced in the White Paper on information technology.

Private Hospitals

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are the terms of reference of the proposed Monopolies and Mergers Commission inquiry into private hospitals and private health insurance; if he will place the text of the Director General of Fair Trading's recommendations to him in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: I have arranged for a copy of the reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission of the acquisition by British United Provident Association Limited of HCA United Kingdom Limited to be placed in the Library. It is not our practice to publish the Director-General of Fair Trading's advice to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. In this case my right hon. Friend's decision to refer the acquisition to the Commission was in accordance with the Director-General's advice.

Relocation

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list all office relocations of his Department's staff since May 1979, stating in each case the location of origin and the location of transfer, together with the numbers of staff transferred.

Mr. Forth: Since 1979 we have relocated the following activities:

National Weights and Measures Laboratory

50 post moved in 1987 from Chapter street London SW1 to the National Physical Laboratory site at Teddington.

Personnel

30 post in the Pay Unit were transferred to Cardiff in 1986.

Laboratory of the Government Chemist

336 post moved in 1988 from Waterloo to the National Physical Laboratory site at Teddington.

DTI South-East

One hundred and fourteen posts in the regional office serving London and the South East have been transferred from Victoria to Cambridge, Reading, Reigate and other parts of the region. Ninety posts were transferred in 1988 and a further 24 in 1989.

Insolvency Service

One hundred and thirty four headquarter and other London based posts transferred in 1988-89 to Birmingham and a further 34 posts are planned for relocation to Birmingham and Edinburgh.

Patent Office

The relocation of 850 posts to south Wales began in 1988 and will finally be completed in 1991 when the new premises being built to house the office are ready for occupation.

We have recently announced that the Import Licensing Branch with 53 posts would be transferred to Billingham during 1990.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what relocations of his Department's staff, or agencies relating thereto, are currently being considered; and what are the numbers of staff affected.

Mr. Forth: The location of functions currently based in London and the south-east is being considered in a rolling programme of reviews covering altogether the work of approximately 4,000 staff. Reviews currently in hand affect about half this total.

The location review programme aims to identify those activities which could be relocated without significant loss of operational effectiveness and which would offer a positive cost benefit.

South Korea (Imports)

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list in the *Official Report* the total value of imports into the United Kingdom from South Korea, the main categories represented by these imports and the total deficit in United Kingdom trade with South Korea, for each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 4 December 1989]:* Total values of United Kingdom imports from the Republic of Korea and of the United Kingdom's trade deficit with the Republic of Korea, from 1986 to 1989 and for the first nine months of 1989, are set out in the table. The main categories represented by these imports are articles of apparel and clothing accessories (20 per cent. of 1988 total); office machinery and automatic data processing equipment (13 per cent.); telecommunications, sound recording and reproducing equipment (13 per cent.); and electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances (12 per cent.).

£ million

	United Kingdom imports from Republic of Korea	*United Kingdom trade deficit with Republic of Korea*
1986	662	374
1987	936	509
1988	1,135	684
1989[1]	892	550

[1] January to September.

Source: United Kingdom Overseas Trade Statistics.

Mortgages

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will consider introducing legislation to render it compulsory for all financial advisors to disclose to prospective clients, whether as part of quotations or otherwise, the total sum received as commission for arrangement of mortgages linked to policies of endowment assurance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 5 December 1989]:* An endowment policy, whether offered in conjunction with a mortgage or not, is a form of investment, and under the Financial Services Act 1986 it is the responsibility of the Securities and Investments Board and recognised self-regulating organisations and professional bodies to make rules on the disclosure of commissions on investments.

Regulations made under the Consumer Credit Act 1974 require credit brokers who charge a fee to prospective borrowers for arranging mortgages to show the amount in advertisements and quotations; it must also be included in the calculation of the charge for credit. There are no plans under the Consumer Credit Act to require the disclosure to prospective borrowers of commission received by credit brokers or lenders.

Footwear

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he is taking through the European Community to prevent the French Government from enforcing their own footwear labelling regulations.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 30 November 1989]:* The British Footwear Manufacturers Federation has raised with the DTI its concern about French Government decree 89-292 which introduces new labelling requirements for footwear. My officials are considering with the federation what action should be taken by the United Kingdom.

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will make a statement on his policy regarding the European Community Commission's report on imports of footwear from Taiwan and Korea.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 5 December 1989]:* We will need to be satisfied what restrictions if any are justified. The matter is at present under discussion in Brussels and I will wish to consider the views expressed by the industry and other member states before making a final decision.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 7 December 1989

EMPLOYMENT

Earnings

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table providing similar information for male and female self-employed workers, as that contained in his answer of 15 November, *Official Report*, column *279*.

Mr. Nicholls: Comparable information for the self-employed is not available.

Public Appointments

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many persons above the age of *(a)* 60, *(b)* 65 and *(c)* 70 years he has appointed to public bodies in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend is responsible for some 6,000 appointments to a range of executive, advisory, tribunals and other public bodies. The information requested is not readily available and could not be assembled without disproportionate cost. Public bodies sponsored by this Department are listed in the Cabinet Office publication "Public Bodies 1988" available in the House of Commons Library.

DEFENCE

Compensation

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what sums have been paid in compensation in each of the last three years to the families of soldiers killed in Northern Ireland; and how many cases were involved.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Claims for compensation from families of soldiers killed in Northern Ireland as a result of criminal acts, including terrorist activity, are considered by the criminal injuries compensation division of the Northern Ireland Office. My Department has made one payment of £15,000 to the family of a soldier killed in the Province, not as a result of a criminal act but on the basis of legal liability at common law.

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what sums have been paid in compensation in each of the last three years to farmers whose livestock or livelihood have been affected by low-flying aircraft; and how many cases were involved.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I regret that the information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost and effort.

Officers (Sexual Offences)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many officers of the armed forces have been dismissed from the services for sexual offences in each year since 1979.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information requested is readily available only for the years 1984 to 1988.

During that period two officers were convicted by court martial and dismissed from the services for sexual offences, the first in 1985 and the second in 1988.

Officers (Drugs)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many officers of the armed forces have been dismissed from the services for using drugs or drug-related offences in each year since 1979.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information is readily available only for the years 1984 to 1988.

During that period one officer was dismissed, in 1986, following a court martial for drug-related offences.

Combat Body Armour

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will ensure that combat body armour is introduced into general service in 1990; and when he expects to place contracts with manufacturers to supply it.

Mr. Alan Clark: It remains our intention to begin to introduce combat body armour into service in 1990. We expect to invite manufacturers to tender in early 1990.

Home Ownership

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the level of home ownership today among *(a)* married and *(b)* all personnel in (i) the Royal Navy, (ii) the Army and (iii) the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Neubert: We estimate that for married personnel the proportion of home owners is:

	per cent.
Royal Navy	75
Army	26
Royal Air Force	49

For all personnel the proportions are:

	per cent.
Royal Navy	48
Army	16
Royal Air Force	34

NATIONAL FINANCE

Charities

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about what the value added tax and corporation tax liability for charitable organisations receiving contributions from consumers using certain specified credit cards will be; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: None. Customs and Excise and the Inland Revenue have identified a value added tax and corporation tax liability in a number of affinity credit card schemes which they have examined. The two Revenue departments are considering each scheme on its own merits.

Interest and Exchange Rates

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the short-term and long-term interest rates in each available month of 1989 in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* West Germany, *(c)* the United States of America and *(d)* Japan.

Mr. Ryder: Short-term and long-term interest rates in each completed month of 1989 are given below. The short-term rates given are three-month money market rates and the long-term rates are for 10 year Government bonds.

Long and short-term nominal interest rates

	United Kingdom		*West Germany*		*United States*		*Japan*	
	three month	*10 year*	*three month*	*10 year*	*three month*	*10 year*	*three month*	*10 year*
January	13·1	10·0	5·7	6·7	9·3	9·3	4·6	4·9
February	13·0	9·8	6·5	6·9	9·6	9·4	4·7	4·9
March	13·0	9·9	6·6	6·9	10·1	9·6	4·8	5·1
April	13·2	10·2	6·4	6·9	10·0	9·4	4·7	5·2
May	13·1	10·1	7·0	7·0	9·7	9·0	5·0	5·3
June	14·1	10·6	7·0	6·8	9·2	8·5	5·4	5·3
July	13·9	10·2	7·1	6·7	8·8	8·2	5·5	5·2
August	13·9	9·9	7·1	6·7	8·8	8·3	5·5	5·1
September	14·0	10·2	7·4	6·9	8·8	8·4	5·6	5·3
October	15·0	10·5	8·1	7·0	8·7	8·2	6·1	5·3
November	15·1	10·6	8·3	7·4	8·4	8·0	6·8	5·6

Source: National sources.

Market Research

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many market research and sample surveys were carried out by or for his Department in the last 12 months; what was the cost of each; what was the total cost; how many were carried out in-house; how many were carried out for his Department by outside organisations; and what percentage of the total expenditure was paid to outside organisations.

Mr. Ryder: No market research or sample surveys have been undertaken for or by Her Majesty's Treasury.

Public Appointments

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many persons above the age of *(a)* 60, *(b)* 65 and *(c)* 70 years he has appointed to public bodies in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Ryder: The information sought could be obtained only at disproportionate costs.

Civil List

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total amount payable under the Civil Lists Acts to the royal family for each year since 1979 and for the present year.

Mr. Major: Following is the information:

Year	*Payments for the Civil List under the Civil List Acts 1937, 1952, 1972 and 1975* £	*Repaid by Her Majesty The Queen* £
1979	2,996,600	218,200
1980	3,791,350	263,800
1981	4,249,273	285,073
1982	4,616,683	304,700
1983	4,833,900	318,300
1984	5,017,000	331,000
1985	5,180,100	341,900
1986	5,400,600	355,600
1987	5,661,200	371,700
1988	5,922,300	386,600
1989	6,195,300	400,100

German Democratic Republic

Dr. Marek: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 28 November, if he will identify what figures are available to him for the gross national product per head of population for the German Democratic Republic and those aspects in which they are not fully comparable.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 4 December 1989]:* Figures describing the economy of the German Democratic Republic are available from the United Nations in "National Accounts: Main Aggregates and Detailed Tables, 1986". Data are also given in the "World Bank Atlas, 1987". Both publications are available in the Library of the House. As for many of the centrally planned economies, this information on economic activity is prepared in accordance with the United Nations system of material product balances (MPS), which differs from the United Nations system of national accounts (SNA) used to describe market economies.

Nationalised Industries

Mr. Hood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will name each of the chairmen of the nationalised industries; and if he will give details of salaries and other remunerations applicable to each.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 6 December 1989]:* The information requested is set out in the table:

Chairman	*Nationalised Industry*	[1]*Salary* £
Sir Robert Haslam	British Coal	160,000
Sir Robert Reid	British Railways Board	90,950
Mr. C. Campbell	British Shipbuilders	21,675
Mr. D. Ingham	British Waterways Board	33,700
Mr. C. Tugendhat	Civil Aviation Authority	60,000
Sir Philip Jones	Electricity Council	94,380
Lord Marshall	Central Electricity Generating Board	111,000
Mr. J. C. Smith	Eastern Electricity Board	57,390
Mr. J. F. Harris	East Midlands Electricity Board	57,390
Mr. J. J. Wilson	London Electricity Board	57,390
Mr. B. H. Weston	Merseyside and North Wales Electricity Board	57,390
Mr. B. S. Townsend	Midlands Electricity Board	57,390
Mr. D. Morris	North Eastern Electricity Board	80,000
Mr. K. Harvey	North Western Electricity Board	49,005
Mr. G. A. Squair	South Eastern Electricity Board	57,390
Mr. D. A. Ross	Southern Electricity Board	57,390
Mr. J. W. Evans	South Wales Electricity Board	57,390
Mr. A. W. Nichol	South Western Electricity Board	57,390
Mr. J. Porteous	Yorkshire Electricity Board	57,390
Mr. W. Newton	London Regional Transport	80,000
Mr. M. Joughin	North of Scotland Hydro Electric Board	39,750
Sir Bryan Nicholson	Post Office	102,000
Mr. I. S. Irwin	Scottish Transport Group	59,825
Mr. D. J. Miller	South of Scotland Electricity Board	66,900
Mr. B. Henderson	Anglian Water Authority	43,860
Sir Michael Straker	Northumbrian Water Authority	30,638
Mr. D. Grove	North West Water Authority	61,275
Mr. John Bellak	Severn Trent Water Authority	49,020
Mr. W. Courtney	Southern Water Authority	43,860
Mr. Court	South West Water Authority	51,063
Mr. R. Watts	Thames Water Authority	49,020
Mr. J. Elfed Jones	Welsh Water Authority	43,860
Mr. N. Hood	Wessex Water Authority	40,850
Mr. G. Jones	Yorkshire Water Authority	54,025

[1] Actual salaries. Some Chairmen are part-time.

Chairmen are also eligible for performance bonus schemes with a maximum limit of 25 per cent. of salary.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Teachers (Cheshire)

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has concerning the number of teaching vacancies in Cheshire at present and in each of the previous five years.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Numbers of full-time teacher vacancies in Cheshire are given in the table. Information on primary vacancies was not collected prior to 1988.

Full time teacher vacancies in maintained primary and secondary schools in Cheshire: January 1984-January 1989

	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*
Primary vacancies:						
—number	—	—	—	—	23	11
—as a percentage of full-time primary teachers in post	—	—	—	—	0·7	0·3
Secondary vacancies:						
—number	40	13	19	31	31	13
—as a percentage of full-time secondary teachers in post	0·9	0·3	0·4	0·7	0·7	0·3

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has concerning the number of teachers who have left posts in Cheshire during the last 12-month period for which figures are available; and what was the comparable figure in each of the previous five years.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The year to 31 March 1987 is the most recent for which figures are available. Detailed comparison with data from previous years is not possible prior to 1986. The figures are given in the table including more limited data for earlier years.

Numbers of teachers in Cheshire leaving full-time service in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools (MNPS): March 1982—March 1987

	Year ending 31 March							
	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*per cent*	*1987*	*per cent*
Left full-time service in MNPS in Cheshire of which:	—	—	—	—	615	(7·8)	580	(7·5)
—to full-time service in MNPS elsewhere in England and Wales	—	—	—	—	95	(1·2)	100	(1·3)
—to full-time service in other parts of the maintained sector in Cheshire and elsewhere	—	—	—	—	20	(0·3)	30	(0·4)
—no longer in full-time service in the maintained sector in England and Wales	586	511	626	556	500	(6·4)	450	(5·8)

Note: The figures in brackets for 1986 and 1987 express the numbers leaving as a percentage of all those in full-time service in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools in Cheshire at the beginning of the year.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received concerning morale in the teaching profession in Cheshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. Friend has received a number of letters recently from teachers in Cheshire about morale in the profession. He recognises the demands on teachers, and has on many occasions paid tribute to their hard work and professionalism.

Head Teachers (Yorkshire)

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what response he has made to the letter from head teachers at schools in Pontefract, Castleford and Knottingley.

Mrs. Rumbold: All letters to this Department will continue to receive appropriate replies which I hope the recipients find helpful.

National Curriculum (Technology)

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he intends to publish for consultation the draft order with attainment targets and programmes of study for technology in the national curriculum.

Mr. MacGregor: I have today published for consultation the draft order with an associated document setting out the attainment targets and programmes of study for technology in the national curriculum for pupils aged 5 to 16, as I am required to do by section 20(5) of the Education Reform Act 1988. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales is consulting on the draft order under the provisions of section 21(3) of the Act. Copies have been placed in the Library.

The draft order has been prepared in the light of advice from the National Curriculum Council, following its consultations on our proposals published last June. I have accepted the council's recommendations for attainment targets and programmes of study as a basis for further consultation. The consultation period ends on 19 January 1990. I intend to make the final order in March 1990, in good time for implementation from the following autumn term.

The development of practical capability is a major objective of the national curriculum. The proposals in this draft order provide a focus for a wide range of practical activity in schools. Our aim is to secure a significant improvement in the design and technological capability of young people which will be of benefit to them as individuals and to the economic future of the country.

Research Councils

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of the research grants of each of the research councils was spent on equipment by recipients in each of the last five years for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson *[holding answer 30 November 1989]:* Details of capital expenditure as a percentage of total research grant expenditure for each of the research councils, for the last five years for which outturn figures are available, are as follows:

	1984-85	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
AFRC	10·3	14·8	11·1	8·9	17·7
MRC	13·8	10·8	9·3	10·4	10·2
NERC	7·7	12·5	11·0	9·1	8·7
SERC	26·3	32·8	31·2	28·9	27·2
ESRC	1·0	1·4	0·9	1·2	3·3

Separate figures for equipment are not available.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Sentencing

84. **Mr. Gerald Howarth:** To ask the Attorney-General how many cases of alleged over-lenient sentencing have been referred to the Attorney-General under the provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 1988; and how many sentences have been revised upwards in consequence.

The Attorney-General: Sixty-one cases of alleged unduly lenient sentencing have been referred to me. I have applied for leave to refer the sentencing in nine cases to the Court of Appeal. Leave has been granted in five such cases and sentences have been increased in four of the cases. I have withdrawn two cases in the light of later information and the remaining two cases await consideration by the court.

Jurors

85. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Attorney-General what plans he has to review the procedures concerning the payment of compensation to jurors for loss of earnings.

The Attorney-General: There are no plans to review the procedures concerning the payment of compensation to jurors for loss of earnings.

Magistrates Courts

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list the names and numbers of magistrates courts in England and Wales stating *(a)* how many justices are at each court, *(b)* how many are women, *(c)* how many are black and *(d)* how many are Asian.

The Attorney-General: The question could be answered only at disproportionate cost.

Law Officers (Court Appearances)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Attorney-General in how many court cases he, his hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General, or any Law Officer have appeared as Law Officers from 1970 to 1989 inclusive.

The Attorney-General: The information sought by the hon. Member is not readily available and could be obtained only at a disproportionate cost. The Attorney-General and the Solicitor-General have each appeared in five court cases since assuming their present offices in June 1987.

County Courts

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Attorney-General what is the annual cost to the Exchequer of all the county courts.

The Attorney-General: The cost for the financial year 1988-89 was £134·3 million. This cost includes judicial salaries and fees, central overheads and superannuation costs.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Attorney-General how many cases were dealt with in the county court of all subject headings for the years 1980 to 1989 inclusive.

The Attorney-General: Figures on the number of cases dealt with in different categories within the county courts for the years 1980 to 1988 are to be found in the Lord Chancellor's Department's annual publication "Judicial Statistics". Figures for 1989 are not yet available.

High Court Judges

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list the numbers of High Court judges currently serving on the bench; and how many fall into the age groups *(a)* 40 to 45 years, *(b)* 46 to 50 years, *(c)* 51 to 55 years, *(d)* 56 to 60 years, *(e)* 61 to 65 years, *(f)* 66 to 70 years, *(g)* 71 to 75 years and *(h)* over 75 years.

The Attorney-General: There are currently 81 serving High Court judges. Their ages are as follows:

	Number
40 to 45 years	None
46 to 50 years	2
51 to 55 years	27
56 to 60 years	23
61 to 65 years	14
66 to 70 years	9
71 to 75 years	6
Over 75 years	None

Legal Aid

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Attorney-General how much public money has been expended under the green form scheme *(a)* by area and *(b)* under subject headings; and how many people have been assisted for each year since its inception.

The Attorney-General: Since the start of the green form scheme in 1972 the legal aid annual reports have included these statistics. The reports are laid before Parliament each year and are available in the Library.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Attorney-General how much public money has been expended by the legal aid fund for each year since its inception; and how many persons have benefited from the assistance of the legal aid fund for each year for *(a)* criminal legal aid and *(b)* civil legal aid.

The Attorney-General: All information available since the start of the scheme in 1949 is contained either in the legal aid annual report or in the judicial statistics of the Lord Chancellor's Department which are laid before Parliament and are available in the Library. Any other information can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Members of Parliament

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Attorney-General how many serving Crown court recorders or circuit judges are hon. and learned Members.

The Attorney-General: Seven hon. and learned Members hold appointment as Crown court recorders. Of that seven, two are Government Ministers, and do not sit judicially. No circuit judge is an hon. and learned Member.

Courts and Legal Services Bill

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Attorney-General (1) what is his estimate of the cost implications of the new Courts and Legal Services Bill, as outlined in the Gracious Speech;

(2) if he has costed the implications of his new Bill on legal services, as announced in the Gracious Speech.

The Attorney-General: The costs of all provisions in the Courts and Legal Services Bill, introduced yesterday, are estimated at £5·1 million in the first full year. Some £2·1 million of this relates to the provisions on legal services.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Attorney-General when he intends to publish the Courts and Legal Services Bill.

The Attorney-General: It has been published today.

Solicitors and Barristers

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Attorney-General what sums have been paid out in legal aid fees to *(a)* solicitors and *(b)* barristers in England and Wales in terms of (i) fees and (ii) disbursements for each year since 1969.

The Attorney-General: All information available about civil legal aid and legal aid in the magistrates courts is contained in the legal aid annual reports. Total expenditure on solicitors' and counsel's fees and disbursements for criminal legal aid in the higher courts in each year since 1985 is as follows:

	1985 £	*1986* £	*1987* £	*1988* £
Solicitors	33,722,547·76	36,360,110·42	42,601,012·57	47,591,306·36
Barristers	34,316,242·71	38,931,994·65	49,225,506·01	52,494,458·56
Total	68,038,790·47	75,292,105·07	91,826,518·58	100,085,764·92

No separate information on disbursements for criminal legal aid in higher courts is held at national level. Any other information can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Duty Solicitors Scheme

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Attorney-General if it remains the Government's intention to commit the resources required to secure full implementation of the duty solicitors scheme.

The Attorney-General: The Government will continue to provide the resources required.

Advice and Assistance Schemes

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Attorney-General what comparative research he has commissioned to consider the way in which other countries operate emergency advice and assistance schemes.

The Attorney-General: No such research has been commissioned into the provision of emergency advice and assistance overseas.

Legal Advice (Police Stations)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Attorney-General what steps he is taking in the light of the report on the duty solicitors scheme to ensure full implementation of the rights to access to legal advice at police stations.

The Attorney-General: The research report on the advice and assistance at police stations scheme has been made available to the Legal Aid Board which is reviewing the arrangements for providing duty solicitor advice. It expects to issue a consultation paper early next year.

The report has also been made available to the Home Office which is reviewing the codes of practice under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

NORTHERN IRELAND

House Purchase (Carrickfergus)

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action is being taken by Her Majesty's Government to assist tenants of houses in Unity street, Carrickfergus, to purchase these properties from the Charles Legg Trust.

Mr. Cope: The solicitor acting on behalf of some of the tenants of houses belonging to the Charles Legg Trust in Unity Street, Carrickfergus, has brought this matter to the attention of the Department of Finance and Personnel. There are apparently no effective trustees at present. The Department is therefore making inquiries with a view to the appointment of the new trustees, who will be in a position to deal with the tenants' application for the purchase of the properties in question.

Student Loans

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met representatives of the National Union of Students and the Union of Students in Northern Ireland to discuss top-up loans for students; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: No such meetings have taken place. However, I discussed top-up loans at a recent meeting with representatives of the university of Ulster which included members of the university's students union.

Social Fund

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the financial amount allocated to each social security office in South Down in the financial year 1 April 1988 to 31 March 1989 and from 1 April 1989 to 31 October in respect of the social fund by central Government; how much of this amount was actually spent in each office; and whether the Government will carry out a review of the social fund system in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Allocations are made for a full year. Information on the amounts allocated for 1988-89 and 1989-90 and on monthly expenditure is available in the Library. The Government continue to monitor the operation of the social fund, but there are no plans for a review of the scheme.

Police

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people claiming Irish nationality are currently employed as *(a)* full-time members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and *(b)* members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary reserve.

Mr. Cope: The Chief Constable of the RUC had advised me that the information is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total number of people whose applications for employment for the post of traffic warden were refused by the Northern Ireland police authority on the grounds that they did not hold British nationality since 1980.

Mr. Cope: The Police Authority for Northern Ireland has advised me that the total number is not known as records are not maintained in the form requested. However, the hon. Member will be aware that one recent application has been refused on nationality grounds.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total number of people who were refused employment as full-time members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary on the grounds that they did not hold British nationality since 1980.

Mr. Cope: This information is not available. People, including those who are not British citizens, are eligible for appointment to the Royal Ulster Constabulary or any other United Kingdom police force providing that they are able to fulfil the criteria set out in my answer to the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) in the *Official Report* on 16 November 1989, at column *401*.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people who have been in receipt of attendance allowance at either *(a)* the higher rate or *(b)* the lower rate have had their attendance allowance reduced in each year since 1983.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The number of people receiving either the higher or lower rate of attendance allowance who were not awarded any further allowance at the renewal stage of their claims was as follows:

	Higher rate	*Lower rate*	*Total*
1983	127	467	594
1984	128	524	652
1985	132	515	647

	Higher rate	Lower rate	Total
1986	171	412	583
1987	82	227	309
1988	77	231	308
[1]1989	41	141	182

[1] To date.

Information is not available about the number of people whose award at the renewal stage was reduced from the higher to the lower rate of attendance allowance.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on how many occasions the present general practitioner of an applicant for attendance allowance was present when their medical assessment for eligibility for the allowance was carried out in the last year.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: All applicants for attendance allowance are medically examined, but information is not recorded about whether or not their personal general practitioners are present at the examination. Neither the applicants nor their personal general practitioners are present when the reports of the medical examinations are considered by the attendance allowance board or its delegated medical officers.

Rivers and Lakes

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details of each river in *(a)* Newry and Mourne district council area, *(b)* Armagh district council area and *(c)* Fermanagh district council area which is maintained by the Department of Agriculture drainage division, as a designated watercourse.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I will write to the hon. Member.

Civil Service

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details of the procedures for appealing against decisions of the Department of the Environment's promotion selection boards.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Northern Ireland Civil Service pay and conditions of service code contains no provision for an appeal against the decision of a departmental promotion board.

A candidate who is dissatisfied by the results of a promotion board may refer the matter to the PCA, EOC or FEA where the grounds for dissatisfaction are maladministration, equal opportunities or fair employment.

Prison Officers

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether arrangements are being made to pay prison officers in the Northern Ireland prison service arrears of lodging allowance in the light of the negotiated settlement of a civil claim taken against his Department.

Mr. Cope: The civil claim in question related to the question of entitlement of lodging allowances under the Civil Service regulations for periods of detached duty, where prison officers were provided with official accommodation. The regulations provide for an abatement of certain detached duty allowances in these circumstances and until 1972 they provided for payment at half-rate in the case of lodging allowance. It has now been settled that from July 1972 the abatement to half-rate lodging allowance was not in accordance with the Civil Service code. Accordingly, following negotiations between the Prison Department and the POA(NI), agreement has been reached and arrangements are being made for paying arrears of the allowance due to those prison officers who had an entitlement covering the period July 1972 to March 1982.

Vibration White Finger

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the number of applications made by applicants claiming to suffer from vibration white finger, under regulation 13 of the Social Security (Industrial injuries and Diseases) Miscellaneous Provisions Regulations 1986, at local offices of his Department in *(a)* Belfast and *(b)* towns throughout Northern Ireland in each of the past two years and in the current year up to the most recent date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 6 December 1989]:* We are aware of no such applications in Northern Ireland to date.

ENVIRONMENT

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what finance is being planned by his Department for the next five years to assist householders in energy efficiency and saving.

Mr. Chope: Under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 we are introducing a new system of renovation grants which will enable local authorities to assist householders to carry out a range of measures to improve the energy efficiency of their properties. There will be no limit on the proportion of their housing resources that councils will be able to devote to these purposes.

Right to Buy

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council houses have been sold to former council tenants under the right-to-buy legislation; what percentage of the total council stock they represent; how many council houses were built by the local authority over the same period; and how many people are on council housing waiting lists for each local housing authority in the country.

Mr. Chope: A table showing each local authority's total sales under the right-to-buy legislation including the percentage of April 1979 stock sold was laid in the Library on 5 December 1989.

Reported annual housing completion figures for 1980 to 1987 appear in "Housebuilding in England by Local Authority Areas: 1980 to 1987". Figures for 1988 and the first quarter of 1989 are given in tables 1*(b)* and 1*(a)*, respectively, of issue 90 of "Local Housing Statistics". Copies of both publications are in the Library.

The numbers of households on waiting lists was reported by local authorities in their annual housing investment programme returns (HIP1) and appears in column B51 of "HIP1 All Items Print (1989)". A copy of this document is in the Library.

House Prices

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the ratio of house prices to median, quartile and decile incomes of full-time adult male manual and non-manual workers in April 1979, April 1988 and April 1989; what was the effect on prices of the increase in the incomes of highly paid non-manual workers; and what action he will take to ensure that houses are no less affordable to the median manual worker than in 1979.

Mr. Chope: The available information is as follows:

Ratio of average house prices to annual earnings[1]: Great Britain

April	Lowest decile	Lower quartile	Median	Upper quartile	Highest decile
Manual men					
1979	5·9	4·9	4·0	3·3	2·7
1988	7·5	6·0	4·7	3·8	3·0
1989	7·9	6·3	5·0	3·9	3·1
Non-manual men					
1979	5·4	4·4	3·4	2·7	2·1
1988	6·2	4·6	3·4	2·6	1·9
1989	6·5	4·8	3·5	2·7	2·0

Sources: New Earnings Survey—Department of Employment. Full-time men whose pay for the survey period was not affected by absence. Weekly averages have been converted to an annual amount (×52).

[1] 5 per cent. sample survey of building society mortgage completions—Department of the Environment.

House prices are determined between individual buyers and sellers. No Government have sought to dictate the price at which houses must be sold. We have no plan to do so.

Water Distribution, London

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the level of London's water table.

Mr. Howard: I have asked the National Rivers Authority to undertake the monitoring and predictive modelling of the water level (under London) and to publish the results; to examine the potential for increasing water abstractions from the aquifer below London; and to examine the feasibility and costs of a permanent dewatering scheme. They are proceeding with this work.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to ensure that local authority tenants do not subsidise housing benefit payments as a result of increases due to relaxed entitlement criteria not being met in full by central Government funding.

Mr. Chope: I assume the hon. Member is referring to the arrangements whereby rent officers determine, for housing benefit subsidy purposes, whether rents are at a reasonable market level. Where a rent is above this level, and the claimant is in a vulnerable group, the local authority is required to consider whether it is reasonable to expect him to move, before restricting housing benefit. If the local authority decides that benefit cannot be restricted, 50 per cent. subsidy is paid on that part of the rent which is above the rent officer's assessment. These arrangements apply only to deregulated private sector rents, not to council rents. Any costs not met by subsidy must be debited to an account other than the housing revenue account, and in consequence none of these costs will be a charge to the authority's own tenants.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will estimate *(a)* the number of extra staff and *(b)* the extra expenditure arising from the changes to the community charge announced in October.

Mr. Chope: An estimate of the administrative costs of the community charge transitional relief scheme will be made in the light of a study being undertaken for the Department by Peat Marwick McLintock and discussions with the local authority associations.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many English shire counties are anticipated, in his published calculations, to levy a higher community charge than Avon.

Mr. Chope: Counties will not levy community charges. If all English authorities spend the amount needed to provide a standard level of service, the community charge could be the same throughout England. Any spending above this standard level will increase the community charge.

The provisional figures placed in the Library on 6 November suggest that the community charge for standard spending in 1990-91 will be about £278. The assumed spending by Avon county council would add a further £18 to the community charge in each Avon district. On the same basis, six other counties would add a larger sum to the community charge for standard spending than Avon.

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much he plans to spend promoting community charge benefits and transitional relief; and if he will reimburse local authorities for any expenditure they incur in dealing with correspondence and contacts arising from Government advertising.

Mr. Chris Patten: The cost of the advertising campaign is commercial in confidence and will remain so until such time as the agency has completed negotiations with the media for advertising space.

The Department has commissioned a study by Peat Marwick McLintock into the administrative costs of the community charge transitional relief scheme. Decisions about the arrangements for meeting these costs will be made in light of the consultants' report and discussions with the local authority associations. I have made clear that authorities' reasonable costs will be reimbursed fully.

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library *(a)* his Department's briefing to those advertising agencies invited to tender for the work on his proposed advertising campaign to encourage take-up of community charge benefits and transititional relief, *(b)* the creative brief prepared by Ogilvie and Mather and *(c)* the media strategy and the media plan for the campaign showing in particular the timing and positioning of press and television advertisements and indicating the social and income groups of the target audiences.

Mr. Chris Patten: Agencies were invited to tender for a campaign intended to ensure that those eligible are aware of entitlement to community charge benefit and transitional relief. The campaign will be targeted primarily at the relevant socio-economic groups with an element aimed at those who advise or care for people who may be eligible. The campaign will make use of television, radio and the press. Appropriate bookings in the media are being made.

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what correspondence his Department has had with *(a)* the Independent Broadcasting Authority, *(b)* the Independent Television Authority and *(c)* the Advertising Standards Authority about his proposed community charge benefit and transitional relief advertising campaign; and if he will place copies of the correspondence in the Library.

Mr. Chris Patten: My Department has sought clearance from the Independent Television Authority and the Independent Broadcasting Authority for the proposed television advertisements, as all potential advertisers are required to do. There is no similar requirement in respect of the Advertising Standards Authority.

Palace of Westminster

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will arrange an immediate inspection of floor coverings in the Palace of Westminster and arrange for the replacement of those which would be unsafe within the terms of the health and safety legislation.

Mr. Chope: The parliamentary works office already carries out regular inspections of the floor coverings in the Palace of Westminster. It also undertakes an annual replacement programme, as well as dealing with particular problems as they arise. If there is any particular area which the Member thinks presents a hazard perhaps she would let me know.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will ensure that all electric light bulbs in the Palace of Westminster are in working order and replaced when they are not.

Mr. Chope: It is already the practice to ensure that electric light bulbs in the Palace of Westminster are in working order, but if the Member happens to know of any which are not perhaps she would let me know.

Public Appointments

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many persons above the age of *(a)* 60, *(b)* 65 and *(c)* 70 years he has appointed to public bodies in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Christopher Patten: This information is not held centrally in my Department, and the information required could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Oakland Developments Ltd (Report)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received a copy of the report "Racial Discrimination in Property Development," on Oakland Developments Ltd., Leicestershire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: My Department received a copy of the report when it was published. We support the work of the Commission for Racial Equality and have provided powers through legislation under which they can produce a code of practice on housing.

British Rail Subsidy

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had on the environmental implications of a reduction in the public subsidy to British Rail; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Decisions on the level of subsidy for British Rail are for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport whom I congratulate on his commitment to the highest investment levels in British Rail for a quarter of a century.

Carnwath Report

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received following publication of the Carnwath report.

Mr. Moynihan: Ninety-six, from organisations and individuals who responded to my Department's invitation to submit comments.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the Government propose to introduce legislation to implement the proposals in the Carnwath report.

Mr. Moynihan: As soon as parliamentary time permits.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which recommendations of the Carnwath report the Government are prepared to accept.

Mr. Moynihan: The Government generally welcome the report's recommendations as a means of strengthening the present enforcement provisions in the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, subject to further detailed examination of the practical implications of some of the recommendations.

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the expenditure by his Department in the last financial year on *(a)* heritage, *(b)* archaeology and *(c)* royal parks.

Mr. Trippier: In 1988-89 expenditure on heritage, including archaeology, the royal palaces, grant-in-aid to non-departmental public bodies such as English Heritage, and other heritage activities, was £122·2 million. This figure also includes the costs of departmental staff concerned with these areas of heritage. Government money for archaeology is channelled through English Heritage which, out of a total grant of £66·1 million in 1988-89, spent £7·1 million on this aspect of its work. Expenditure on royal parks was £14·1 million.

Groundwork Foundation

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much funding his Department has granted the Groundwork Foundation in each of the last three years; in which areas the Groundwork Foundation intends to establish environmental trusts next year, funded by his Department or local authorities; and what contact there has been between his officials, representatives of the Groundwork Foundation and elected members or officials of Bradford council about Bradford council making a grant available for 1990-91.

Mr. Trippier: The Department took over the core funding of the Groundwork Foundation and trusts from the Countryside Commission on 1 April 1988, through the commission continues to pay project grants to individual Trusts. We allocated £1,500,000 to Groundwork for core-funding in 1988-89 and £1,743,000 in 1989-90.

The foundation plans to establish five trusts in 1990-91, in Bolsover, Blackburn, Nottingham, Bradford and Islwyn. The core costs of these trusts will be funded by the Department, local authorities and the private sector.

I understand that an officer of the Groundwork Foundation has met the leader of Bradford city council, Councillor Eric Pickles, and council officials to discuss the council's request to the foundation to establish a trust in their area.

Local Authority Dwellings

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many local authority dwellings that were vacant on 1 April, for six months or less, were *(a)* available for letting, *(b)* to be let after minor repairs, *(c)* to be let after major works and were undergoing such works, *(d)* to be let after major works and were awaiting such works, *(e)* awaiting sale, *(f)* awaiting demolition and *(g)* empty for other reasons, and if he will give this information for (i) inner London, (ii) outer London, (iii) metropolitan areas outside London, (iv) the south-east outside London, (v) all non-metropolitan areas, and (vi) England as a whole;

(2) how many local authority dwellings that were vacant on 1 April, over six months and up to a year, were (1) available for letting, (2) to be let after minor repairs, (3) to be let after major works and were undergoing such works, (4) to be let after major works and were awaiting such works, (5) awaiting sale, (6) awaiting demolition and (7) empty for other reasons; and if he will give this information for *(a)* inner London, *(b)* outer London, *(c)* metropolitan areas outside London, *(d)* the south-east outside London, *(e)* all non-metropolitan areas, and *(f)* England as a whole;

(3) how many local authority dwellings that were vacant on 1 April, for over two years, were (1) available for letting, (2) to be let after minor repairs, (3) to be let after major works and were undergoing such works, (4) to be let after major works and were awaiting such works, (5) awaiting sale, (6) awaiting demolition and (7) empty for other reasons; and if he will give this information for *(a)* inner London, *(b)* outer London, *(c)* metropolitan areas outside London, *(d)* the south-east outside London, *(e)* all non-metropolitan areas, and *(f)* England as a whole;

(4) how many local authority dwellings that were vacant on 1 April, for over a year and under two years, were (1) available for letting, (2) to be let after minor repairs, (3) to be let after major works and were undergoing such works, (4) to be let after major works and were awaiting such works, (5) awaiting sale, (6) awaiting demolition and (7) empty for other reasons; and if he will give this information for *(a)* inner London, *(b)* outer London, *(c)* metropolitan areas outside London, *(d)* the south-east outside London, *(e)* all non-metropolitan areas, and *(f)* England as a whole;

(5) what was the number of local authority dwellings on 1 April, in *(a)* inner London, *(b)* outer London, *(c)* metropolitan areas outside London, *(d)* the south-east outside London, *(e)* all non-metropolitan areas, and *(f)* England as a whole.

Mr. Chope: The following are preliminary estimates derived from local authorities' annual housing investment programme returns (HIP1) for April 1989:

Local authority dwellings[1] at 1 April 1989

	Number
Inner London	455,900
Outer London	303,200
Metropolitan areas outside London	1,333,500
South East outside London	401,500
All non-metropolitan areas	2,084,300
England	4,177,000

[1] Including stock outside the local authority's own area.

	Available for letting	*To be let after minor repairs*	*To be let after major works*		*To be sold*	*Awaiting demolition*	*Empty for other reasons*
			Undergoing works	*Awaiting works*			
Local authority dwellings vacant for six months or less at 1 April 1989							
Inner London	1,700	1,900	500	500	400	0	700
Outer London	1,200	2,000	300	300	100	0	300
Metropolitan areas outside London	7,300	11,500	2,100	1,600	400	1,000	2,700
South East outside London	1,500	1,300	700	300	100	300	100
All non-metropolitan areas	8,000	9,700	3,500	1,400	500	1,000	700
England	18,300	25,000	6,400	3,800	1,400	2,100	4,600
Local authority dwellings vacant for over six months and up to one year at 1 April 1989							
Inner London	400	400	600	300	200	100	400
Outer London	200	200	200	100	0	0	100
Metropolitan areas outside London	1,000	900	1,100	600	300	1,300	1,500
South East outside London	100	0	300	100	100	200	0
All non-metropolitan areas	400	0	1,500	600	500	700	300
England	2,000	1,800	3,200	1,400	1,000	2,000	2,400
Local authority dwellings vacant for over one year and under two years at 1 April 1989							
Inner London	200	300	500	600	400	100	200
Outer London	100	100	100	100	0	0	100

	Available for letting	To be let after minor repairs	To be let after major works Undergoing works	Awaiting works	To be sold	Awaiting demolition	Empty for other reasons
Metropolitan areas outside London	500	800	1,000	700	500	1,800	1,700
South East outside London	0	0	200	100	100	100	0
All non-metropolitan areas	100	0	800	200	400	500	400
England	800	1,400	2,300	1,700	1,300	2,400	2,400
Local authority dwellings vacant for over two years at 1 April 1989							
Inner London	200	300	1,000	1,000	1,300	100	1,100
Outer London	0	0	100	100	0	100	100
Metropolitan areas outside London	300	700	600	800	600	2,300	1,000
South East outside London	0	0	100	0	0	0	0
All non-metropolitan areas	0	0	200	0	300	100	100
England	600	1,000	2,000	2,000	2,200	2,600	2,500

Enterprise Zones

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will give the amount of rates that has been forgone in each of the enterprise zones in England and Wales, year by year;

(2) what is the amount of rates that has been forgone by virtue of the Isle of Dogs enterprise zone.

Mr. Moynihan: The information requested to the latest date available is shown in the table.

Rate Revenue Foregone

£ thousands (outturn prices)

	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	[2]1987
ENGLAND							
1st Round Zones							
Corby	126	508	1,146	1,688	2,155	2,896	8,519
Dudley	702	1,201	1,231	1,545	2,014	3,076	9,769
Hartlepool	26	148	256	314	377	618	1,739
Isle of Dogs	—	1,254	1,486	2,430	2,324	2,997	10,491
Salford/Trafford	473	1,196	1,592	2,097	3,094	[1]4,938	13,390
Speke	516	1,174	936	1,484	1,853	1,838	7,801
Tyneside	1,416	2,582	2,942	3,260	4,036	6,931	21,167
Wakefield	250	393	481	532	845	1,171	3,672
2nd Round Zones							
Allerdale	—	—	59	127	200	402	788
Glanford	—	—	—	66	78	117	261
Middlesbrough	—	—	0	241	540	655	1,436
North East Lancashire	—	—	63	259	431	709	1,462
North West Kent	—	—	89	886	1,384	1,808	4,167
Rotherham	—	—	71	252	658	905	1,886
Scunthorpe	—	—	26	260	626	942	1,854
Telford	—	—	0	225	1,068	1,278	2,571
Wellingborough	—	—	14	74	240	1,081	1,409
WALES							
1st Round Zone							
Swansea	455	1,007	1,038	1,239	1,636	1,763	7,138
2nd Round Zones							
Delyn	—	—	220	367	401	506	1,494
Milford Haven	—	—	—	259	409	489	1,157

[1] Subject to audit.
[2] Designation to March.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is the total amount of capital allowances claimed in each of the enterprise zones in England and Wales, year by year;

(2) what is the total amount of capital allowances claimed so far in the Isle of Dogs enterprise zone.

Mr. Moynihan: Because of the extent of estimation involved the information requested is not available for individual enterprise zones.

"On the Record"

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to obtain for his departmental library a copy of the video and transcript of the BBC1 television programme "On The Record," broadcast on 26 November.

Mr. Trippier: My Department already has copies of the transcript. It is unnecessary to have a copy of the video.

Green Dowry

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much of the green dowry announced by the Minister for Water and Planning has been allocated to North West Water.

Mr. Chris Patten: It is expected that North West Water Group plc will receive £329·7 million in cash.

Mersey Basin

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for the financial years 1987-88 and 1988-89 any grant award made from the European regional development fund for sewers and sewerage works in the Mersey basin, showing also their value and application.

Mr. Chris Patten: North West Water Authority received £26·7 million in ERDF grants in 1987-88 and £8·9 million in 1988-89. Much of this was to finance schemes in the Mersey basin.

Customer Services Committees

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the name and organisation represented by each member of each customer services committee.

Mr. Chris Patten: No. Appointments to the customer service committees for the water industry are a matter for the Director General of Water Services. I understand that the director general is currently considering nominations received from a large number of interest groups and individuals and that he hopes to announce the membership of the committees in the near future.

Surface Water

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research is being done or has been commissioned by his Department in respect of surface water quality.

Mr. Chris Patten: We have let the following research contracts since 1 November 1988 concerning surface water quality:

Estimation of contaminant loads in rivers;
Strategic river eco-system studies;
Aerial inputs to the Severn Estuary;
Effects of the Kielder reservoir on the River North Tyne;
Health effects of sea bathing;
Analysis of technazene and its breakdown products;
Effect of sediment metals on estuarine benthic organisms;
Biological effects of contaminants workshop;
Fish farm chemicals in sea locks;
Diffuse pollution from land-use practices; and
Sediment water contaminant exchange.

Three Graces (Statue)

Mr. Neil Hamilton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will take enforcement action in respect of the statue of the Three Graces previously at Woburn abbey.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon Friend has considered the question of the Three Graces very carefully following a request from the Office of Arts and Libraries for a view as to whether the statue was included in the listing of Woburn abbey.

On the basis of the information before my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, and in the light of legal advice, it appears that the Three Graces should be considered as part of the listed buildings, as both the Temple—which is listed—in which the statue was originally situated, and the plinth on which the statue stood, had been specifically designed to house this statue for the purpose of permanent display. However, there is some evidence to show that the statue had previously been moved from its original position at least once, quite apart from being moved for the purposes of exhibition.

My right hon. Friend notes that the local planning authority has decided against taking listed building enforcement action. He has therefore considered whether he should use his own discretion to take such action. On the evidence at present before him, he has decided not to do so.

He is not satisfied that it is in general an appropriate use of listed building legislation to control what would widely be thought to be chattels. Nor is he satisfied in the present case that it would be appropriate to require the return of the statue to a sculpture gallery, of which the Temple is a part, which has effectively changed the character.

My right hon. Friend considers that the whole issue of controls over movable fixtures in listed buildings needs examination. He proposes to consult about what guidance should be given on this issue and whether there is a case for amending legislation. In this connection he welcomes the fact that the chairman of English Heritage has convened a meeting of expert and interested bodies to discuss the matter in the new year.

Air Pollution

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment at how many sites air pollution levels are monitored.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 24 November 1989]*: Air pollution levels are monitored on behalf of the Department of the Environment, at 390 sites as follows:

Pollutant	*Sites*
Ozone:	17
Carbon monoxide:	6
Nitrogen oxides:	12
Acid deposition:	32
Atmospheric hydrocarbons:	2
Trace gases:	1
Atmospheric chemistry:	2
Smoke/sulphur dioxide	
Directive sites:	287
Sulphur dioxide:	7
Lead:	19
Multi-element sites, including lead:	5
Total	390

There are also monitoring sites under the aegis of other bodies.

Pollution

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many industrial pollution incidents of rivers have been prosecuted in each of the last five years; and which companies have been involved;

(2) what percentage of reported industrial pollution incidents of rivers have not led to prosecution in each of the last five years;

(3) what percentage of reported pollution incidents have not resulted in prosecutions in each of the last five years.

Mr. Howard: Information on the number of reported water pollution incidents and the prosecutions brought by former water authorities up to 1987, has been published in the annual "Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics", copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

Information on the number of incidents attributable to industrial causes, and the number of resulting prosecutions is available only for 1986 and 1987.

Information on the companies that have been prosecuted is not held by the Department.

Enforcement of water pollution controls—including the compilation of relevant data—is now the responsibility of the National Rivers Authority.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many non-compliant sewage works there were in each of the water authority areas during 1988;

(2) what percentage of the total number of sewage works in England were non-compliant during each of the past five years;

(3) what progress has been made in reducing the number of non-compliant sewage works.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 4 December 1989]:* Information on non-compliant sewage treatment works was first collected by the Government for 1986. Numbers of sewage treatment works operated by each water authority with numerical discharge consent conditions, together with the numbers tested by each authority and found non-compliant in 1986, 1987 and 1988, are listed. The results show a steady reduction in the proportion of non-compliant works from 23 per cent. in 1986 to 17 per cent. in 1988.

Further improvements will result from the major capital programme to bring substandard sewage treatment works into compliance with their discharge consents.

Water Authority	*Number*			*Number tested*			*Works in breach of consent*					
							Number			*Percentage of works tested*		
	1986	*1987*	*1988*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Anglian	782	760	775	774	754	748	309	260	208	40	34	28
Northumbrian	196	182	178	196	182	178	37	27	26	19	15	15
North West	458	448	441	458	448	441	62	55	43	14	12	10
Severn Trent	773	753	808	762	742	751	179	160	112	23	22	15
Southern	282	274	273	282	274	271	54	39	41	19	14	15
South West	226	226	232	188	219	228	55	65	67	29	30	29
Thames	374	382	378	374	379	378	67	70	60	18	18	16
Welsh	803	764	710	668	611	650	112	108	107	17	18	17
Wessex	272	272	272	272	270	272	39	29	17	14	11	6
Yorkshire	380	360	360	380	351	354	88	74	61	23	21	17
England and Wales	4,546	4,421	4,427	4,354	4,230	4,271	1,002	887	742	216	195	168

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to increase the penalties for industrial pollution of the rivers.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 4 December 1989]:* The maximum penalties which may be imposed by magistrates for offences under section 107 of the Water Act 1989 are fines not exceeding £2,000 and terms of imprisonment of up to three months. However, on indictment in the Crown court there is no limit on the fine that may be imposed and terms of imprisonment can be up to two years. Penalties for pollution offences are kept under review although there are no immediate plans for increasing them.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to reform the system of deemed consents for discharges into rivers.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 4 December 1989]:* The arrangement for granting deemed consents was a transitional provision introduced under earlier legislation and, most recently, under part II of the Control of Pollution Act 1974, relating to those categories of discharges, chiefly into coastal and estuarial waters, which were brought under control for the first time. This arrangement applied only to applications received by 14 October 1987, on which basis deemed consents were granted with the expectation that they would be reviewed and substantively determined by October 1992. It now falls to the NRA to complete this process.

There are no plans to reintroduce the procedure.

Water Privatisation

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the accountancy firm which reported on the water privatisation prospectus has at any time since January 1979 been *(a)* criticised by the Department of Trade and Industry inspectors in any of the reports and *(b)* criticised by the disciplinary committee of the accountancy profession as lacking in professional conduct efficiency or competence; and whether either of these two points are mentioned in the prospectus.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 30 November 1989]:* One of the firms which reported on the water privatisation prospectus had been previously criticised in inspectors' reports published since 1979 and subsequently by the accountancy profession's joint disciplinary scheme. I understand that the cases related to audits conducted in the period 1972-75; the partners involved were not members of any of the reporting engagement teams for water privatisation. The Government and their advisers are satisfied that this is not material as far as the prospectus is concerned.

Caravan Sites

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list those local authorities which have responded to the application to designate permanent caravan sites in Bradford; and if he will summarise each response which has been submitted;

(2) whether he has received an application from Bradford council to designate permanent traveller sites in Bradford; if he will give details of the grounds on which the application is based; if he will place copies of the applications, including responses by local authorities to the application, in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 6 December 1989]:* An application under section 12 of the Caravan Sites Act 1968 for the designation of Bradford district was received from the City of Bradford metropolitan council by my Department on 27 November 1989.

The application is made on the grounds that in all the circumstances it is not necessary or expedient to make any further provision for the accommodation of gipsies residing in or resorting to the area of Bradford metropolitan district.

A list of the local authorities, and others, consulted by Bradford council about the application and the substance of their responses is as follows:

Consultee	*Response*
Metropolitan borough of Calderdale	No observations.
Leeds city council	No objection.
City of Wakefield metropolitan district council	No objection.
Lancashire county council	No objection subject to assurances that Bradford will not seek to transfer gypsy families from Bradford to Pendle.
Craven district council	Support application.
Borough of Pendle district council	No objection.
North Yorkshire county council	Object because it would increase gypsy problems particularly in Harrogate and Craven districts.
Kirklees metropolitan council	No response.
Bradford chamber of commerce	Support application because of nuisance of unauthorised encampments on unsuitable sites and the shortage of land available for industrial/commercial development.
Bradford Travellers' Action Support Campaign	Objects because of councils policy of evicting gypsies off unauthorised sites the poor quality of existing sites and the perceived lack of legal grounds for granting designation as a matter of expediency.
National Gypsy Council	Response awaited.

I will arrange for a copy of the City of Bradford metropolitan council's designation application to be placed in the Library of the House shortly.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Passes

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will give a breakdown by company of the numbers and categories of security passes giving access to the Palace of Westminster and its associated buildings which are currently allocated to the media.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee is currently examining the number of Palace of Westminster photo-identity passes held by the media organisations accredited to the House.

In the course of its inquiry, the Sub-Committee has asked for the same information as that requested by the hon. Member. It is currently being collated, and I will ensure that the hon. Member receives a copy as soon as it is available.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will give a breakdown of the numbers and categories of security passes giving access to the Palace of Westminster and its associated buildings which are currently allocated to individuals who are not in receipt of a regular monthly payment from the Fees Office; and if he will indicate the reasons for the allocation of these passes.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Without a detailed check of each photo-identity pass holder's name against the Fees Office salary list, which could be done only at disproportionate cost, it is not possible to provide a definitive answer to the hon. Member's question. However, it would be safe to assume that all or the vast majority of the following pass holders are not in receipt of a regular monthly payment from the Fees Office:

Category	*Detail*	*Quantity*
10	Members and Officers; Residents' families	511
11	Official Commonwealth and Overseas visitors	3
16	CPA and IPU Staffs	46
17 and 17A	Government Departmental Staff	1,443
18	Government Messengers	234
19 and 19A	PSA's staff	403

Category	Detail	Quantity
20 and 20A	Security Force (incl. RBLA)	473
21 and 21A	Post Office Staff	42
22 and 22A	British Telecom Staff	79
23 and 23A	Parliamentary Counsel and Agents	120
24 and 24A	Tannoy/Official Shorthand Writer/ Westminster Audio and Thomas Cook	71
25 and 25A	Central Office/PLP/Liberal Democrats SDP and SNP staffs	107
26	PSA's Contractors	543
27	Other Contractors and St. Stephens Secretarial Staff	136
28A	Lobby Correspondents	228
28B	Reporters	130
28C	Broadcasting Journalists	52
28D	Overseas Media Representatives	19
28E	Media Messengers and Engineers	183
28G and H	Television Experiment Staff	28
30	Specially Authorised Holders	56
31	Television Personnel (Norman Shaw Studios only)	29
31A	Gymnasium Members (Norman Shaw Buildings only)	126
32	Whips' Office Staff	49
33 and 33A	HMSO and COI Staff	155
E	MEPs	33

In addition to the above, those categories of pass issued to peers, peeresses and their staffs, staff of the House of Lords, and House of Lords sponsored media passes are, of course, not paid from the Fees Office—a total of 1,427 passes.

Finally, I should mention that some staff of Members, who hold category 9 photo-identity passes, may not be in receipt of a regular monthly payment from the Fees Office.

Food Hygiene Inspections

Ms. Walley: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will arrange for food hygiene inspections by a qualified environmental health officer of all kitchens and food preparation and refreshment areas serving food to hon. Members, staff and the general public in the House equivalent to the quality and regularity of standards applying to all other workplaces.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that she received on 10 November. Environmental health officers are invited to carry out food hygiene inspections of all areas for which the Refreshment Department is responsible either as part of a regular programme, or when a need is perceived. The next such inspection has been arranged to begin on 7 December. The regularity at which these inspections are carried out and the standards applied to them are understood to be more frequent and rigorous than applied by the authorities to commercial catering establishments.

Food Handling Training

Ms. Walley: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will reconsider his decision not to provide food handling training to all catering staff in the Palace of Westminster.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: No such decision has been taken. A total of six training courses on food hygiene involving some 260 staff have taken place over the past two years. Another is planned for early 1990 as part of a continuing programme.

Boxes and Rubbish

Ms. Walley: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will take immediate action to prevent the daily stacking in the Palace of Westminster of carton boxes and rubbish bags which block the corridors, provide a fire hazard and prevent access for people in wheelchairs.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Recognised procedures designed to keep the corridors free of waste and obstacles already exist. These arrangements are, however, under review.

Petitions

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will state how many petitions were presented in Session 1988-89 and what was the number of occasions when the responsible Department of State declined to make any observations.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Two hundred and twenty seven petitions were presented in Session 1988-89. The responsible Department declined to raise observations on 188 of these.

Palace of Westminster Telephone Bill

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Lord President of the Council what was the telephone bill for the Palace of Westminster for each year from 1979 to the present date.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Telephone call charges for the Palace of Westminster for the financial years 1979 to 1989 were as follows:

Financial year ending April	£
1979	306,300
1980	255,650
1981	368,400
1982	492,500
1983	470,302
1984	437,249
1985	499,497
1986	488,435
1987	481,989
1988	474,101
1989	559,397

The above charges are distributed proportionately between the House of Lords, the House of Commons and the Lord Chancellor's Department.

Party Chairmen

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Lord President of the Council whether he will introduce legislation to provide that the chairmen of parties represented in the Commons would need to be elected either by party members or by members of an elected executive.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: No. Each party is best left to decide its own arrangements.

PRIME MINISTER

Lancashire

Q13. **Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to visit Lancashire.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

EEC and EFTA

Q27. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Prime Minister what consideration she has given to the proposals made by President Mitterrand on Tuesday 5 December, on the future of the EEC and EFTA; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to him of 5 December. We naturally support the closest possible co-operation between the EC and EFTA.

Eastern Europe

Q55. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Prime Minister what recent representations she has received about measures to stimulate agricultural supplies in eastern Europe.

The Prime Minister: I have received representations from a number of people, including Lady Ryder of Warsaw, about agricultural supplies in Poland. We take their concerns seriously. We are active, both nationally and with our EC partners, to improve food supplies there. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs announced in the House on 29 November a £15 million agricultural project for Poland. In addition the EC has so far supplied some £70 million of food aid to Poland, the proceeds of which will be used to finance improvements in Poland's agricultural industry. The Community has also announced an aid budget for Poland and Hungary in 1990 of £210 million which will be used inter alia to finance agricultural restructuring.

Hungary

Q75. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans for a meeting with the Prime Minister of Hungary.

The Prime Minister: I shall be meeting the Hungarian Prime Minister on 13 December during his forthcoming visit to the United Kingdom. I look forward to discussing with him the latest developments in Hungary's progress towards democracy and a number of trade and other issues.

Water Act

Q99. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the implementation of the Water Act.

The Prime Minister: I am pleased to say that implementation of this Act is well advanced, and is the key to even higher standards of drinking water quality, and cleaner rivers and bathing waters.

West Yorkshire

Q108. **Mr. Waller:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will visit west Yorkshire.

The Prime Minister: I have no such plans at present.

United Nations

Q126. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next expects to pay an official visit to the United Nations.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

European Government

Q154. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the latest proposals of the President of the European Commission to create a European Government.

The Prime Minister: I understand that M. Delors was speculating on a personal basis about institutional arrangements if the Community were significantly expanded. These are not formal proposals.

Engagements

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 December.

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 December.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 December.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 December.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 December.

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 December.

Mr. Moate: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 December.

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 December.

Mr. Haynes: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 December.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 December.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 December.

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 December.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 December.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 December.

Mr. Jessel: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 December.

Dr. Reid: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 December.

Mr. Raffan: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 December.

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 December.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 December.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 December.

Ms. Mahon: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 December.

Mr. Favell: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 December.

Mr. Eastham: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 December.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 December.

Mr. French: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 December.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 December.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 December.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 December.

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 December.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. I shall depart for Strasbourg later today to attend the European Council

Public Appointments

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Prime Minister how many persons above the age of *(a)* 60, *(b)* 65 and *(c)* 70 years she has appointed to public bodies in each of the last 10 years.

The Prime Minister: We do not classify appointments in this way.

Cambodia

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Prime Minister how many letters and telephone calls she has received on the subject of Cambodia in the last month; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have received approximately 6,900 letters on Cambodia-related matters in the past month.

Factory Closures

Mr. Parry: To ask the Prime Minister if she will meet the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside to discuss the implications of the proposed closure of the BAT factory, Liverpool, following her promise in the House to meet any hon. Member in whose constituency a factory closure is about to occur, *Official Report*, 12 February 1981, column 981.

The Prime Minister: I will of course always make every effort to meet hon. Members in whose constituencies a main factory closure occurs. Delegations, however, should go to the Minister concerned.

Downing Street (Telephones)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Prime Minister how many direct telephone lines are in existence at No. 10 Downing street, London, connecting that address to the Head of Government of any other country; and which countries are so connnected.

The Prime Minister: None.

Berlin Wall

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to visit the Berlin wall.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so, but my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs visited Berlin on 16 November. I greatly welcome the freer movement which has eased the division of that city.

Official Duties

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Prime Minister what provision she has made for her official duties to be carried out in the event of *(a)* her absence abroad or *(b)* her incapacity through illness.

The Prime Minister: During my absences abroad I continue to exercise my official responsibilities. The provision to be made in the event of illness would depend upon the circumstances.

El Salvador

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister if she herself has made any representations to the United States authorities about the recent murder of six priests and others in El Salvador by death squads alleged to be connected with the El Salvadorian Government; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No. I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) on 30 November by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs at column 416 from which he will see that the Salvadorean authorities are aware of our views.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Family Incomes

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the value of total child care assistance, combining tax reliefs and benefits payments, for a man on average earnings with a wife and two children aged five and 11 years in each EEC country in £ sterling equivalents; and what are each of these totals as a percentage of the average earnings in that country.

Mr. Scott: Benefit rates for family benefits in each EC member state, converted into sterling using purchasing power parities to give a more accurate reflection of domestic purchasing power, are contained in the Department's "Tables of Social Benefit Systems in the European Communities" which is available in the Library.

Tax allowances for children in each EC member state are set out in the table.

It is not possible to calculate the combined effect of cash benefits and tax allowances for a family on average earnings since there are no available statistics on average annual earnings.

For a full picture one would also need to take account of the impact of social security contributions, which in most EC countries are much higher than in the United Kingdom, but again this is impossible for the family type in question without annual earnings data.

Tax allowances for children

Belgium

Child allowance deducted as percentage of tax amount due. For two children 20 per cent. is deducted.

Denmark

No tax deductions are given, but taxpayers with minor children are entitled to various tax-free child subsidies.

France

Income divided by co-efficient applicable to family circumstances, (eg three for married persons with two children). Tax tables then applied, and resulting tax is multiplied by same co-efficient to give tax due.

Federal Republic of Germany

Deduction of £623 per annum per child.

Greece

Allowance for first two children £623 each.

Ireland

Allowance of £472 given in respect of an invalid child under 16 years of age.

Italy

Each spouse may deduct from his or her tax amount £20 for each qualifying child (ie minor child, disabled child or child under 26 years of age who is studying or learning a trade).

Luxembourg

Where taxable income does not exceed £14,423, and if there are four or fewer children, relief is given by dividing income by appropriate co-efficient (eg 3·4 for two children), applying tax table and then multiplying tax due by the same co-efficient. In other cases, deductions for children are made from income tax due, according to family size and income.

Netherlands

Allowance of £203 for parents of one of more children under the age of 12. If both parents "work outside the household" they may each claim this amount.

Portugal

Deduction of £329 for each child up to 11 years of age, £461 for each child over 11 and up to 24 years of age.

Spain

Deduction of £161 from income tax amount for each qualifying child (unmarried, under 25 and supported by taxpayer).

These figures were valid on 1 January 1989 and national currency has been converted into sterling using purchasing power parities.

Tenants (Local Authority Reimbursement)

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much growth is to be allowed in the reimbursement to local authorities for *(a)* housing benefit in respect of local authority tenants and *(b)* rent allowances to private tenants for 1989-90 to 1991-92.

Mr. Scott: On the basis that subsidy for 1989-90 = 100, estimates of growth for the following two years are in the table.

	1989-90	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
(a) housing benefit	100	107·5	117·6
(b) rent allowances	100	110·1	116·2

Information incorporating the new housing revenue account subsidy will be available in the new year.

Rent Allowances

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the estimated increases in rent allowances for *(a)* private landlords and *(b)* housing associations over the next planning period.

Mr. Scott: Estimates for the next planning period will be published early in the new year in "The Government's Expenditure plans 1990-91 to 1992-93."

Public Appointments

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many persons above the age of *(a)* 60, *(b)* 65 and *(c)* 70 years he has appointed to public bodies in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Scott: As the Department is responsible for 14 public bodies with the present number of appointments totalling over 2,000 I regret that this information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Unclaimed Benefit

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the underpayment from the Consolidated Fund as a result of failure of potential beneficiaries to claim benefits to which they would have been entitled in each of the last five years.

Mr. Scott: The most recent available figures show that 90 per cent. of income-related benefit is taken up by those eligible. Available information is for 1983 and 1985 and is as follows:

	1983 unclaimed (£ million)	*1985 unclaimed (£ million)*
Supplementary Benefit	570	550
Housing Benefit		
Certificated HB[1]	[2]180	150
Standard HB[3]	[2]310	360
Family Income Supplement	55	[5]90
Totals	1,115	1,150

Source: Technical Notes.

Notes:

[1] Includes the unclaimed entitlements of Households not receiving HB plus the excess of certificated amount over standard receipt for those eligible to certificated HB but receiving a lesser amount of standard HB. All figures exclude families where the head or spouse is in full-time self employment.

[2] Figures refer to 1984 for HB.

[3] All figures exclude households receiving or eligible for certificated HB.

[4] 1983-84; based on pooled FES data for reasons of sample size. Figures exclude families where head or spouse is in full-time self employment.

[5] 1985-86; based on pooled FES data for reasons of sample size. Figures exclude families where head or spouse is in full-time self employment.

[6] Detailed analysis on both caseloads and expenditure take-up are contained in the Technical Notes, copies of which are in the Library.

Benefit Fraud

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will investigate the use of multiple identities by claimants; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Special investigation teams were set up in all this Department's regional offices earlier this year to combat fraudulent claims involving the use of multiple identities.

Social Fund

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish the proportion of social fund expenditure, on a month-by-month basis, which local offices are recommended to spend for each month in the current financial year and for the financial year 1990-91.

Mr. Scott: The national profile of anticipated expenditure for 1989-90 is set out in the table. It was devised from an analysis of previous levels of national expenditure, as a guide to assist managers of local offices in planning expenditure of their annual budgets. It is not intended to represent a recommended pattern of monthly expenditure, and managers are free to produce their own profiles to take account of local factors in the area.

A profile for 1990-91 has not yet been devised.

National social fund anticipated expenditure profile 1989-90
Percentage of annual gross budget profile

Month	*per cent.*
April	7·93
May	8·33
June	8·33
July	8·33
August	8·33
September	8·02
October	8·88
November	8·89
December	7·75
January	7·38
February	8·62
March	9·21

Family Credit

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many families with children with taxable incomes below the tax threshold are in receipt of family credit.

Mr. Scott: On the latest available information there are about 85,000 cases where income tax was not being deducted from the earnings of the main earner at the time of the claim for family credit.

Attendance Allowance

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what was the total number of applications for attendance allowance received in Scotland in each year since 1980;

(2) what was the total number of applications for attendance allowance in Scotland which were refused in each year since 1980;

(3) what was the total number of applications in Scotland for attendance allowance granted at (i) the higher rate and (ii) the lower rate in each year since 1980.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 27 November 1989]:* The information is in the table.

Attendance allowance: New claims received and decided in Scotland 1980 to 1989

Year	*Number of claims received*	*Number of claims decided*		
		Higher rate	*Lower rate*	*Rejections*
1980	14,694	3,137	5,206	[1]4,973
1981	15,200	3,358	4,564	[1]5,460
1982	18,118	4,038	4,888	6,561
1983	18,597	2,846	7,795	9,560
1984	22,044	4,531	9,348	9,421
1985	23,908	4,716	9,472	9,625
1986	25,623	4,441	9,232	10,304
1987	29,348	6,266	11,374	10,195
1988	34,817	7,825	11,816	13,047
[2]1989	26,826	5,830	7,740	9,485

[1] Estimated figures: data for 1980 and 1981 incomplete.

[2] To 30 September 1989.

CIVIL SERVICE

Health Checks

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what is Civil Service policy on ensuring regular health checks of all Civil Service personnel.

Mr. Luce: The health of successful applicants to the Civil Service is assessed on entry and some undergo medical examination. Civil servants in certain jobs are routinely examined at regular intervals because of statutory requirements or the nature of their employment.

Increasingly Departments are actively promoting positive health in their staff by information and education. Many have arranged routine smear tests for cervical cancer. Fifteen Departments have so far signed up as supporters of the "Look After Your Heart" campaign being run by the Health Education Authority. One component of this campaign is individual fitness testing and blood pressure screening.

The Civil Service Occupational Health Service is expanding its facilities to meet increased departmental demand for routine health checks, and can offer a range of services from comprehensive executive-type medical examinations to simple screening tests performed by a trained nurse.

Civil servants are also permitted to have time off work to attend their family practitioners who are being encouraged to offer regular preventive health checks to patients.

Secondment

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will give the numbers and names of *(a)* persons currently seconded to the Civil Service from private companies and *(b)* the companies from which they are seconded.

Mr. Luce: My Department's report on interchange in 1988 between the Civil Service and other organisations, a copy of which is in the Library, shows that there were 194 secondments (of three months or more) into the Civil Service from industrial or commercial organisations, and 311 outward secondments (of three months or more) to such organisations last year. The report lists the industrial or commercial organisations which were involved in the secondment. Data for 1989 will be included in the next report, which I hope will be available in the spring.

Secondments are arranged by agreement between the outside organisation and the Government Department concerned. It would not be appropriate to list the names of the employees of the outside organisations involved without their consent. This could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

THE ARTS

Public Appointments

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Minister for the Arts how many persons above the age of *(a)* 60, *(b)* 65 and *(c)* 70 years he has appointed to public bodies in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Luce: The information is not kept in the form requested, and could be given only at a disproportionate cost.

Science Museum

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what information he has on the admission figures for the Science museum in the period October 1988 to October 1989.

Mr. Luce: I understand that in the year October 1988 to September 1989 attendance at the Science museum, South Kensington, and its two principal outstations, the National Railway museum, York, and the National Museum of Photography, Film and Television, Bradford, totalled 2,387,600.

Office of Arts and Libraries

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what was the expenditure by the Office of Arts and Libraries in the last financial year on *(a)* the arts, *(b)* museums, *(c)* libraries and *(d)* others.

Mr. Luce: The expenditure of the Office of Arts and Libraries in 1989-90 was as follows:

	£000
Arts and the Heritage	178,548
Museums and Galleries	154,066
Libraries	79,835
Office of Arts and Libraries Administration	1,438

Details may be found in Volume 7 of the appropriation accounts for 1988-89, published today (HC 15-VII).

Arts Council (NAO Report)

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he has received the report of the National Audit Office into the Arts Council of Great Britain.

Mr. Luce: No.

Tate Gallery

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether it is his intention to assist the Tate gallery, financially, to acquire Johann Zoffany's portrait of Lord Willoughby de Broke and his family at breakfast.

Mr. Luce: The Tate gallery receives an annual grant from my Office specifically for purchases for the collection. The sum allocated to the gallery in the current year for such purposes is just over £1·8 million.

It is for the trustees of each institution, and not for Government, to decide how and when this grant is spent, and whether to apply to other sources of funds which may be available to them to help with this.

TRANSPORT

Motorways (Accidents)

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many road accidents have been reported involving stationary vehicles on motorway hard shoulders in each of the years 1980 to 1989; and how many people were *(a)* injured and *(b)* killed.

Mr. Atkins: The figures requested are in the following table; accident data for 1989 are currently unavailable.

Road accidents on motorways in which one or more vehicles were stationary on the hard shoulder, and casualties resulting from such accidents: by severity: Great Britain: 1980-88

	Accidents				*Casualties*			
	Fatal	*Serious*	*Slight*	*Total*	*Fatal*	*Serious*	*Slight*	*Total*
1980	17	39	40	96	18	54	87	159
1981	18	29	51	98	27	69	102	198
1982	13	32	53	98	19	66	103	188
1983	7	42	41	90	8	103	94	205
1984	14	40	40	94	17	60	104	181
1985	20	42	56	118	24	65	129	218
1986	18	40	70	128	26	74	169	269
1987	17	50	55	122	19	68	137	224
1988	22	31	56	109	31	46	160	237

Railways

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many miles of railways in *(a)* England and *(b)* Scotland have now been electrified.

Mr. Portillo: At 31 March 1989, BR had 2,443 route miles electrified in England and Wales, and 276 route miles electrified in Scotland.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the total proposed expenditure for the next three fiscal years on railways in *(a)* Greater London and *(b)* Scotland.

Mr. Portillo: Separate figures for railways investment in Greater London alone are not available. BR plans to invest some £65 million in its Scottish region infrastructure over the next three financial years, and the region will also benefit from wider programmes of investment in new rolling stock.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will make it his policy to encourage use of British Rail by increasing the public subsidy;

(2) if he will make it his policy to maintain the real value of the public subsidy to British Rail over the next five years;

(3) what assessment he has made of the environmental implications of a reduction in the public subsidy to British Rail; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: Our policy on subsidies for British Rail remains as set out in the Government's response (HC420) to the Transport Select Committee report on the financing of rail services (HC 383). My right hon. Friend plans to announce shortly new three-year objectives for British Rail.

Vehicle Emissions

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to discourage emissions of carbon dioxide from tranport sources.

Mr. Atkins: Congested road traffic emits more carbon dioxide than traffic moving smoothly. Congestion will be eased by my Department's £4 billion programme of new construction and improvement of motorways and other trunk roads over the next three years. In urban areas we encourage the development of traffic management measures to keep traffic moving. And we are committed to massive investment in railways—£3·7 billion in British Rail and at least £1·7 billion in London Underground over the next three years. However, motorists themselves can make a significant contribution to reducing carbon dioxide emissions by keeping their vehicles well tuned and by avoiding driving practices which waste fuel.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his oral reply to the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford of 4 December, *Official Report*, column 3, what mechanical means are to be introduced to limit emissions of carbon dioxide from cars; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: When new gaseous emission limits were agreed for small cars at last June's Environment Council the Commission undertook to examine the question of reducing carbon dioxide emissions. It is too early to say what they are likely to propose. Meanwhile, carbon dioxide emissions can be minimised by improving fuel consumption. We urge motorists to keep fuel economy in mind. Smooth careful driving and good regular vehicle maintenance are the key.

London Underground

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many complaints he has received concerning the operation of automatic ticket barriers at London Underground stations.

Mr. Portillo: Four in the last three months.

Marine Archaeology

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many civil servants in his Department work *(a)* full time and *(b)* part time on marine archaeology.

Mr. Atkins: The Department of Transport's only responsibility concerning marine archaeology is through its administration of the Protection of Wrecks Act 1973, on which five of the Department's civil servants work for a part of their time, amounting in total to about ½ man/year per annum.

Uranium Hexafluoride

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the quantity of uranium hexafluoride which has been imported through Newhaven for each of the last three years; whether East Sussex county council is notified in advance of shipments; if he expects the level of trade to increase; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: *[holding answer 6 December 1989]:* There are over half a million movements of radioactive material annually. The Department does not collect information on a routine basis on the ports or airports used for imports and exports of such material.

All movements of nuclear material are conducted in full compliance with the relevant regulations. In the particular case of uraniun hexafluoride through Newhaven there is no statutory requirement for East Sussex county council to be informed.

ENERGY

Public Appointments

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many persons above the age of *(a)* 60, *(b)* 65 and *(c)* 70 years he has appointed to public bodies in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Wakeham: The figures[1] [2] are as follows:

	Over 60	*Over 65*	*Over 70*
1980	2	—	—
1981	—	—	—
1982	3	—	—
1983	2	—	1
1984	—	—	—
1985	3	—	—
1986	3	—	—
1987	1	—	—
1988	—	—	—
1989	5	—	—

[1] In the case of the electricity supply industry data on appointments made prior to 1985 would be available only at disproportionate costs.

[2] The basis of the calculation is to take account of age at initial appointment only. The figures cover only those industries for which the Department has retained responsibility throughout the period.

Selby (Mineral Transportation)

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the various costings borne by British Coal North Yorkshire for the transportation of minerals from Selby coal field to the Drax power station.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for the British Coal Corporation. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Combined Heat and Power Schemes

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the Government's current policy on combined heat and power schemes.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Government fully recognise the environmental and fuel efficiency benefits of CHP and continue to promote and support the technology under the best practice programme of the Energy Efficiency Office.

The Government are committed to removing legal and institutional barriers which impede the further implementation of CHP. Under the provisions of the Electricity Act licensed CHP operators will have new powers to break streets to lay heat mains. The Act also enables the Director General of Electricity Supply to collect information to monitor the use and application of CHP. The output fom CHP schemes based on non-fossil fuels such as waste or landfill gas will count towards the non-fossil fuel obligation.

Investment in CHP is a commercial matter for the operators concerned.

Coal Industry Nationalisation Act 1946

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will review the terms of the Coal Industry Nationalisation Act 1946.

Mr. Michael Spicer: We plan to change the basic legislative framework of the coal industry after the next general election.

French Nuclear Reactors

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what analysis his Department has made of the safety of French nuclear reactors.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The safety of nuclear reactors in France is the responsibility of the French operators. The Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate maintains regular contact with the French regulatory authority, the Service Central de Surete des Installations Nucleaires.

Selby (Colliery Spoil)

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what information he has received from British Coal about sites in the north Yorkshire area for the disposal of waste from the Selby coalfield; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what information he has received from British Coal concerning the threatened closure of the Selby coalfield because of land disposal problems; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The disposal of colliery spoil is a matter for British Coal, and I am asking the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

SCOTLAND

Water

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the leakage levels from the Scottish water distribution system.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The level of leakage was estimated in 1984 to be around 40 per cent. of the total water put into supply for Scotland as a whole, but there were substantial regional variations. It is not practicable to eliminate leakage entirely and depending on local circumstances there will be a level which is acceptable in economic terms.

Guidance on leakage is given in standing technical committee report No. 26, "Leakage Control Policy and Practice", published by the Department of the Environment and the National Water Council in 1980, but policies are determined locally by the water authorities. A report on public water resources by the Scottish Development Department in 1985 proposed that authorities should aim to reduce leakage by a quarter over a period of 10 years. Progress towards this aim depends on the priority authorities give to the task.

Motorways (Accidents)

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many road accidents have been reported involving stationary vehicles on motorway hard shoulders in each of the years 1980 to 1989; and how many people were *(a)* injured and *(b)* killed.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The number of accidents and casualties in Scotland involving stationary vehicles on motorway hard shoulders for the period 1980-1989 (up to July) are as follows:

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	[1] *1989*
Number of Accidents	10	7	7	7	5	8	7	3	4	2
Number of Casualties	14	12	11	12	9	11	14	3	4	2
Number Killed	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1

[1] Up to July.

Road and Rail Accidents

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the total economic costs in Scotland of *(a)* road accidents and *(b)* railway accidents for each calendar year since 1978.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information on the economic cost of road accidents in Scotland for years 1979 to 1988 is as follows. Information is not available for 1978 nor on the cost of railway accidents.

Estimated costs of injury and non-injury road accidents in Scotland 1979-1988.

	[1] *£ million*
1979	757
1980	680
1981	666
1982	682
1983	602
1984	593
1985	601
1986	589
1987	544
1988	547

[1] 1988 prices.

Gaelic Language

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what delays have been experienced in meeting demands for Gaelic medium education in Scotland; what steps are being taken to deal with this; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The inter-authority standing group on gaelic education has pointed to teacher supply problems as a source of occasional delay for education authorities wishing to meet local demand for Gaelic medium education. The Northern college of education offers a module in bilingual education as part of its primary teaching degree course and is able to accommodate the small number of students who wish to take it. I understand that other colleges of education are considering the introduction of similar modules. As the total number of teachers being trained increases substantially over the next few years, it is hoped that a greater number will opt to study bilingual education.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what account he has taken of public feeling, as expressed in a recent referendum, when deciding his current and future policy on borehole drilling at Dounreay; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I set out the Government's position on radioactive waste disposal in my reply of 9 November to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) column *740*. Public concern locally is certainly one of the factors which my right hon. and learned Friend will take into account when making his decision on the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority's appeal against Highland regional council's refusal to grant planning permission for test boring at Dounreay.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Textile and Footwear Industries

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many *(a)* textile clothing and *(b)* footwear firms he and his predecessor have visited over the last 10 years; and if he will name them and the dates of such visits.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: This information is not available. However Ministers in my Department are fully aware of the concerns of both industries, and in recent months there have been a number of meetings with their representatives.

Rover

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much had been paid by British Aerospace for the purchase of Rover *(a)* on 1 January 1989, *(b)* on 1 June 1989 and *(c)* on the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No payment of the £150 million consideration for the Government shareholding in the Rover Group has yet been received. Payment is due by 31 March 1990 at the latest, following the clarification of certain tax matters.

New Companies and Liquidations

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the number of new companies established in *(a)* Yorkshire, *(b)* Humberside, *(c)* the Northern region and *(d)* the south-east region in 1981, 1987, 1988 and to date in 1989; and how many companies went into liquidation in each of these categories in each year.

Mr. Forth: On the basis of current registered office addresses, the information requested is as follows:

	Yorkshire		*Humberside*		*North*		*South East*	
	Inclusion	*Liquidation*	*Inclusion*	*Liquidation*	*Inclusion*	*Liquidation*	*Inclusion*	*Liquidation*
1981	1,800	120	310	30	800	110	20,000	1,600
1987	4,200	180	820	50	2,500	170	71,200	2,200
1988	3,800	140	680	60	2,000	170	62,300	1,980
1989 (Q1)	770	60	120	[1]—	300	20	22,000	600

[1]— nil or negligible.

Regional analysis of voluntary liquidations not available.

More information about companies is available in "Companies in 1988-89" published by HMSO.

Futures and Options Market

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has regarding the total volume traded in the futures and options market for each of the last three years; and what proportion of this was in foreign currency earnings.

Mr. Forth: A total of 20·1 million contracts were traded on the six London exchanges in 1986, 33 million in 1987, 38 million in 1988, and 38·7 million in the first nine months of 1989 (51·6 million at annual rate). These volumes refer to contracts cleared by the London clearing house and are the most comprehensive measure of turnover. It is not known what proportion of that volume is transacted in foreign currency.

WALES

Valleys Initiative

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will identify those developments in the Rhymney valley which he considers to be directly and exclusively the result of his valleys initiative.

Mr. Peter Walker: The following projects and activities, which formed part of the key programmes and initiatives identified in "The Valleys: A Programme for the People", have benefited Rhymney valley in 1988-89 and 1989-90.

Welsh Development Agency (WDA) programmes

Rhymney valley projects have been supported to date under the new valleys small loan scheme and the valleys enterprise loan scheme.

The advance factory and workshop programme includes the following projects which are recently completed or nearing completion:

Two × 3,000 sq ft factories and two 5,000 sq ft factories at the Heads of the Valleys industrial estate.

One × 10,000 sq ft factory at the Penallta industrial estate.

The Following bespoke factories have been recently completed or are nearing completion at the Heads of the Valleys industrial estate:

A 16,500 sq ft extension to the Massilly UK Ltd. factory.

A 10,000 sq ft extension to the Britcair Ltd. factory.

A 75,000 sq ft new factory for Klockner Pentapack Ltd.

Further developments are proposed at the Heads of the Valleys industrial estate, Penallta and New Tredegar. Work will commence on the provision of 20,000 sq ft of workshops at the Bowen industrial estate in the spring of 1990.

The land reclamation programme includes six schemes totalling 58 acres currently underway at:

Windsor colliery 1 and 2
Bedwas colliery surfaces
Berth Gron quarry
Bedwas colliery tips
Groesfaen remedial works
St. Cenydd school

A further 15 schemes involving over 500 acres are planned for future years.

The agency is supporting environmental improvement schemes at:

Dafydd Williams park, Caerphilly
Nelson square
Llanbradach

A further eight schemes are planned throughout the Rhymney valley in the coming years.

The Welsh Development Agency's urban renewal unit are currently undertaking the following projects:

Environmental improvements to:

New Tredegar
Caerphilly town centre
Ystrad Mynach
Rhymney town centre

Environmental action plans are being prepared for New Tredegar, Rhymney-Pontlottyn and the Aber valley.

Welsh Office Support for Industry

During 1988-89, 49 projects in the Rhymney valley received offers of RDG II and 13 projects received offers of regional selective assistance or regional enterprise grant with associated investment costs of £19·4 million and the prospect of some 1,000 jobs.

During 1989-90, to the end of October, two projects have received offers of RDG II and 11 projects received offers of regional selective assistance or regional enterprise grant with associated investment costs of £7·3 million and the prospect of some 200 jobs.

Urban Programme

Welsh Office urban programme allocations made in 1988-89 and for 1989-90 include the following projects in the Rhymney valley:

Redevelopment of Bargoed bus station
Provision of small workshops, Dyffryn industrial estate
Provision of small workshops, Lawn industrial estate
Provision of grants and loans within commercial and industrial improvements areas
Valley youth enterprise centre, Tredomen workshops
Provision of workshop units at Bowen industrial estate
Provision of headquarters for Pontlottyn boys club
Improvements to Bargoed citizens advice bureau
Rhymney valley environmental clean-up campaign
Rhymney valley enterprise agency
Tyr-y-Berth IT centre
Rhymney valley handicapped transport association
Rhymney valley home start
Restoration of Llancaiach Fawr
Construction of community centre at Phillipstown, New Tredegar
Refurbishment of Ystrad Mynach boys club
Dial-a-ride Rhymney valley
Grants and loans in Rhymney and Pontlottyn commercial improvement areas.

Urban Development Grant

Welsh Office gave final approval of one project for UDG support in 1988-89:

Development of 23 houses at Cambrian street/Hill street, Rhymney. Since the scheme's introduction in April 1989 urban investment grant has been awarded for the conversion of the former Whitbread brewery in Rhymney into 32,000 sq ft of office space.

Welsh Office Support for Housing

In 1988-89 the Welsh Office approved special allocations for the following enveloping schemes:

Brithdir (185 houses)
Various block schemes throughout county (342 houses)

In 1989-90, support has been given for block schemes at Pontlottyn involving 109 houses, and at various other locations throughout the county involving 181 houses.

Welsh Office Support for Health and Social Services

Support has been given to the community nursing in the valleys scheme, with two staff operational in the Rhymney valley, with the assistance of 50 per cent. Welsh Office funding.

This is not a comprehensive list of activities. Further projects are being considered under the headings listed above. In addition the area stands to benefit from initiatives which have a wider geographical coverage and from other ongoing main programmes.

National Rivers Authority

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 24 November to the hon. Member for Caerphilly, *Official Report*, column 119, if he will make it his policy to send copies of the National Rivers Authority report to the hon. Members for Caerphilly, Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) and Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) when it is available.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: It is for the National Rivers Authority to determine to whom it circulates such reports.

Homelessness

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average number of persons registered as homeless by each of the district councils in Wales for the latest available date.

Mr. Grist: The number of cases and persons in households accepted as homeless by local authorities during the second quarter of 1989 (April to June) are shown in the following table:

Number of cases and persons accepted as homeless; April-June 1989

Welsh districts	*Cases*	*Persons*
Aberconwy	18	48
Alyn and Deeside	53	130
Arfon	6	15
Blaenau Gwent	87	211
Brecknock	25	60
Cardiff	308	718

Welsh districts	*Cases*	*Persons*
Carmarthen	16	43
Ceredigion	20	56
Colwyn	12	42
Cynon Valley	41	119
Delyn	80	217
Dinefwr	12	23
Dwyfor	20	47
Glyndwr	8	17
Islwyn	32	78
Llanelli	39	89
Lliw Valley	16	45
Meirionnydd	21	51
Merthyr Tydfil	35	100
Monmouth	32	77
Montgomeryshire	11	22
Neath	77	142
Newport	274	725
Ogwr	148	389
Port Talbot	40	78
Preseli Pembrokeshire	13	31
Radnorshire	6	12
Rhondda	35	78
Rhuddlan	14	48
Rhymney Valley	76	168
South Pembrokeshire	14	41
Swansea	42	94
Taff Ely	33	95
Torfaen	112	221
Vale of Glamorgan	108	305
Wrexham Maelor	103	176
Ynys Mon	6	21
Wales total	1,993	4,832

Housing

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average number of persons registered on the housing waiting list by each of the district councils in Wales for the latest available date.

Mr. Grist: The information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the increase in real and cash terms in money given to Tai Cymru in the next financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: We are providing for an increase of over £27 million in the funds made available to Tai Cymru in the next financial year. This is a cash increase of almost 42 per cent. over the previous year and represents an increase in real terms of almost 35 per cent.

This significantly increased level of public sector investment increases the gross programme for Tai Cymru to over £102 million next financial year. This and the additional private finance levered in through the use of mixed funding arrangement will enable a record number of homes for people in housing need to be provided by the housing association movement in Wales.

Public Appointments

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many persons above the age of *(a)* 60, *(b)* 65 and *(c)* 70 years he has appointed to public bodies in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Peter Walker: It would be disproportionately costly to provide the information required. Wherever possible, however, it is my policy to appoint younger individuals to such bodies.

Bilingual Road Signs

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will take steps to require that all temporary roadwork signs must be comprehensively bilingual.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Traffic Signs (Welsh and English Language Provisions) Regulations and General Directions 1985 (S.I. 1985 No. 713) prescribe the bilingual signs which may be used in Wales, including temporary roadwork signs. These regulations are to be reviewed along with the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 1981 (S.I. 1981 No. 859).

Community Health Councils

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has for the financing and composition of the community health councils in Wales.

Mr. Grist: Arrangements for the financing and composition of community health councils in Wales are among the issues to be considered in the light of the current consultation exercise on the future structure of community health councils in Wales. A consultation paper outlining my right hon. Friend's proposals to reduce the number of community health councils in Wales was issued at the end of November and comments have been requested by 28 February 1990. A copy of the consultation paper has been sent to all hon. Members in Wales.

Full-time Education (Staying-on Rates)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will make a statement on staying-on rates in full-time education in each of the counties of Wales;

(2) what was the staying-on rate in full-time education by education authority, as a percentage of the population aged 16 years in 1987-88 and 1983-84.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is shown in the table:

Percentage of 16-year-olds staying on in full-time education

LEA	*Academic year* *Per cent. 1983-84*	*Per cent. 1987-88*
Clwyd	52	49
Dyfed	49	50
Gwent	48	49
Gwynedd	49	54
Mid Glamorgan	49	49
Powys	54	59
South Glamorgan	43	49
West Glamorgan	50	51

Low Birth Weight

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the number of low birth weight babies born; and what it was as a proportion of all births for each Welsh health district for 1983-84 and the latest available year.

Mr. Grist: Information derived from all registered births to residents of health districts in Wales is shown in the table:

Health district residence	*Births under 2,500 grams*			
	¹Number	*²Percentage*	*Number*	*²Percentage*
Clwyd	339	7·0	333	6·3
East Dyfed	142	5·8	162	5·9
Gwent	411	7·4	425	6·6
Gwynedd	171	6·2	197	6·5
Mid Glamorgan	535	7·1	520	6·6
Pembrokeshire	95	6·9	106	7·5
Powys	75	5·9	78	5·6
South Glamorgan	358	6·7	388	6·4
West Glamorgan	302	6·6	258	5·4

[1] Estimated.

[2] Percentage of all births.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his assessment of the real terms increase in cash and as a percentage in the Welsh Development Agency budget for 1990-91 as against 1989-90; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information is shown in the following table:

	Gross provision		*On-year increase*	
	1989-90 £m	*1990-91 £m*	*cash £m*	*per cent.*
Cash	130·4	150	19·6	15
1989-90 prices¹	130·4	142·9	12·5	9·6

Note:

[1] Derived using latest GDP deflator.

The WDA's gross budget for 1990-91 is 76 per cent. more than the 1987-88 budget, an increase of 46 per cent. in real terms.

Non-manual Workers

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the percentage of households whose head is a non-manual worker by education authority.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The latest available information comes from the 1986 Welsh inter-censal survey. The percentages classified to non-manual groups are shown in the following table:

Percentage of households headed by non-manual ¹ head, 1986

County	*Per cent.*
Clwyd	37·5
Dyfed	38·2
Gwent	34·2
Gwynnedd	43·1
Mid Glamorgan	29·9
Powys	41·5
South Glamorgan	47·3
West Glamorgan	35·0

[1] Professional, managers, employers, intermediate and junior non manual. Includes farmers working on own account. Includes retired heads of household whose former occupation was non-manual.

Third Dee Crossing

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what moneys he intends to make available to the Clwyd city council for the building of the third Dee crossing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The capital resources to be made available to local authorities in 1990-91 were announced on 29 November. They include 50 per cent. transport grant towards the £803,000 Clwyd county council plan to spend on the third Dee crossing. The non-grant element will be covered by supplementary credit approvals.

Babies (Intensive Care)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total number of intensive care baby cots available in Wales in 1983-84, or the nearest available year; and what is the number in each health authority and their locations within each health authority.

Mr. Grist: The available information, which relates to special care baby cots is shown in the table:

Average daily available cots 1983-84

DHA/Hospital	*Per cent.*
Clwyd	
H M Stanley	19·0
Ysbyty Maelor	24·0
East Dyfed	
Bronglais	2·0
West Wales General	8·0
Gwent	
Nevill Hall	15·0
Royal Gwent	25·0
Gwynedd	
St. Davids	21·0
Mid Glamorgan	
Bridgend General	15·0
East Glamorgan	10·0
Merthyr	8·0
Pembrokeshire	
Withybush	13·0
South Glamorgan	
University Hospital of Wales	24·38
St. Davids	16·05
West Glamorgan	
Morriston	14·67
Neath General	15·00

National Museum of Wales

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has on the admission figures for the National Museum of Wales in each of the past five years.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Reported attendance figures for all branches of the National Museum of Wales in each of the past five years to 1988 are shown in the following table.

Year	*Attendances*
1984	758,043
1985	765,249
1986	723,173

Year	*Attendances*
1987	1,036,535
1988	838,820

Teachers (First Aid Training)

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what proposals he has to ensure that every school has at least one teacher trained in first aid to statutory level;

(2) what proposals he has to increase the number of teachers trained in first aid both to statutory level and to a lower level.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Under common law, local authorities have a general responsibility to take reasonable care for the health and safety of pupils and students in their care. Their duties as an employer relating to first aid provision are defined in the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and regulations made thereunder.

By means of the guidance note "Arrangements for First Aid Provision in Schools and Colleges" prepared by the Department of Education and Science and the Welsh Office in consultation with interested bodies and issued, in September 1987, the Government encourage local education authorities to ensure that a proportion of the teaching staff of every school and college should have attended a course of training and have acquired a certificate in first aid, issued by an organisation approved by the Health and Safety Executive.

Food Poisoning

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the number of reported cases of food poisoning per 1,000 of the population for each district in Wales with the comparable figures for 1988.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 30 November 1989]:* Available data on recent food poisoning notifications are shown in the following table:

Notification of food poisoning[1]*: for the first 11 four-week periods 1988 and 1989*

County district	*Number of notifications 1988*	*Number of notifications 1989*	*Population 1988*	*Rates per 1,000*[2] *1988*	*Rates per 1,000*[2] *1989*
*Alyn and Deeside	35	156	72·6	0·5	2·1
*Colwyn	69	102	54·8	1·3	1·9
*Delyn	74	264	65·1	1·1	4·1
*Glyndwr	51	72	41·5	1·2	1·7
*Rhuddlan	53	80	56·1	0·9	1·4
*Wrexham Maelor	119	179	117	1	1·5
Carmarthen	29	30	55·8	0·5	0·5
Ceredigion	63	64	67	0·9	1
Dinefwr	7	15	38·9	0·2	0·4
Llanelli	23	34	74·1	0·3	0·5
Preseli Pembrokeshire	114	71	70·7	1·6	1
South Pembrokeshire	28	25	41·9	0·7	0·6
Blaenau Gwent	7	3	77·3	0·1	0
Islwyn	65	34	66·4	1	0·5
Monmouth	13	20	81·3	0·2	0·2
Newport	77	45	128·1	0·6	0·4
Torfaen	4	7	92·4	0	0·1
Aberconwy	28	22	54·1	0·5	0·4
Arfon	13	10	55·2	0·2	0·2
Dwyfor	3	18	27	0·1	0·7
Meirionnydd	2	12	31·6	0·1	0·4
Ynys Môn (Isle of Anglesey)	34	37	71	0·5	0·5
Cynon Valley	15	19	64·3	0·2	0·3
Merthyr Tydfil	5	10	58·1	0·1	0·2
Ogwr	20	35	137·5	0·1	0·3
Rhondda	9	27	76·6	0·1	0·4
Rhymney Valley	36	69	104·5	0·3	0·7
Taff-Ely	8	10	94·9	0·1	0·1
Brecknock	18	36	41·1	0·4	0·9
Montgomeryshire	18	17	51·2	0·4	0·3
Radnorshire	7	0	22·6	0·3	0
Cardiff	289	450	283·9	1	1·6
Vale of Glamorgan	78	132	119·5	0·7	1·1
Port Talbot	35	41	49	0·7	0·8
Lliw Valley	37	70	61·8	0·6	1·1
Neath	61	71	65·2	0·9	1·1
Swansea	219	328	186·9	1·2	1·8

Source: OPCS weekly return (WR series). Figures are provisional.

[1] Notifications formally made and cases ascertained by other means.

[2] OPCS mid-year estimates of population for 1989 not yet available, rates for 1989 based on mid-1988 population estimates.

Note: Just over half (444) of the 853 notifications of food poisoning in the districts of Clwyd in the first 11 four-week periods of 1989 were recorded in the four-week period up to 18 August 1989. It was during this latter period that the major north Wales salmonella outbreak occurred.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the number of reported cases of food poisoning for each district in Wales for each month in the current year, with the comparable figures for 1988.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 30 November 1989]:* Available data on food poisoning notifications on a four-weekly basis are shown in the tables:

Notfications of food poisoning[1]: for each of the thirteen 4-week periods 1988 and 1989

County Districts		*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*	*11*	*12*[2]	*13*[2]
Alyn and Deeside	1988	1	1	1	2	5	6	7	5	5	0	2	0	1
	1989	4	4	5	3	0	5	9	92	19	9	6	—	—
Colwyn	1988	11	1	2	4	4	14	4	8	7	5	9	11	2
	1989	4	1	2	1	2	19	8	26	25	5	9	—	—
Delyn	1988	13	2	1	1	4	16	8	5	13	4	7	0	3
	1989	6	1	3	5	1	8	3	181	32	11	13	—	—
Glyndwr	1988	2	2	3	1	3	6	14	5	4	3	8	2	0
	1989	0	2	3	3	7	7	7	28	8	0	7	—	—
Rhuddlan	1988	11	0	2	8	4	5	5	8	3	2	5	2	1
	1989	4	0	0	5	1	7	7	27	15	7	7	—	—
Wrexham Maelor	1988	5	5	7	5	9	13	18	22	16	8	11	12	2
	1989	4	15	6	6	11	25	17	38	21	20	16	—	—
Carmarthen	1988	1	1	0	4	1	4	3	2	2	5	6	16	5
	1989	0	4	0	6	1	3	1	2	1	10	2	—	—
Ceredigion	1988	3	2	0	2	5	10	8	6	13	7	7	3	3
	1989	2	1	6	1	4	10	14	8	12	5	1	—	—
Dinefwr	1988	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	1	1	2	0	1	0
	1989	2	2	1	1	1	0	4	0	4	0	—	—	—
Llanelli	1988	0	1	0	1	0	1	4	0	5	5	6	3	1
	1989	1	1	0	2	0	0	4	5	10	5	6	—	—
Preseli Pembrokeshire	1988	4	4	22	16	10	13	16	5	5	11	8	21	9
	1989	6	6	6	5	15	11	5	4	0	9	4	—	—
South Pembrokeshire	1988	2	2	2	1	2	4	4	4	4	3	0	4	0
	1989	2	2	2	1	7	1	1	3	1	3	2	—	—
Blaenau Gwent	1988	0	0	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	2	1	0	0
	1989	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	—	—
Islwyn	1988	3	3	5	13	8	9	9	5	7	1	2	2	1
	1989	1	1	4	7	2	1	2	10	3	3	0	—	—
Monmouth	1988	1	1	0	0	3	0	1	0	2	0	5	5	1
	1989	2	2	1	0	1	4	0	4	0	5	1	—	—
Newport	1988	4	7	1	3	9	6	7	14	4	12	10	3	2
	1989	0	6	9	1	0	2	10	6	4	3	4	—	—
Torfaen	1988	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	—	0	1	1	0
	1989	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	1	1	1	0	—	—
Aberconwy	1988	1	0	0	0	1	2	3	7	4	6	4	2	0
	1989	2	2	1	1	1	2	0	6	3	1	3	—	—
Arfon	1988	3	2	0	0	0	3	1	2	1	0	1	2	0
	1989	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	5	2	—	—
Dwyfor	1988	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
	1989	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	2	10	2	0	—	—
Meirionnydd	1988	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
	1989	0	1	0	0	1	2	2	3	1	0	2	—	—
Ynys Mon (Isle of Anglesey)	1988	4	2	0	6	6	3	1	2	6	3	1	1	3
	1989	1	4	0	2	6	2	2	7	4	4	5	—	—
Cynon Valley	1988	2	1	1	1	1	2	5	0	0	2	0	4	0
	1989	3	1	1	2	1	0	1	1	5	2	2	—	—
Merthyr Tydfil	1988	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	4	0	0	1
	1989	1	0	1	0	0	1	2	2	0	3	0	—	—
Ogwr	1988	0	1	0	0	2	3	9	4	1	0	0	0	0
	1989	0	0	7	0	1	1	7	10	2	2	5	—	—
Rhondda	1988	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	3	1	2	0	0	1
	1989	1	1	2	4	1	1	5	5	2	2	3	—	—
Rhymney Valley	1988	1	1	0	1	4	6	5	12	2	3	1	3	1
	1989	1	2	7	5	3	5	3	5	25	6	7	—	—
Taff-Ely	1988	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	2	0	3	1	0
	1989	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	4	1	1	—	—
Brecknock	1988	2	0	1	0	1	5	3	2	2	1	1	1	1
	1989	4	1	0	4	6	1	3	3	10	2	2	—	—
Montgomeryshire	1988	5	0	0	1	3	1	2	4	1	0	1	2	0
	1989	0	0	1	1	2	0	1	4	4	4	0	—	—
Radnorshire	1988	0	0	0	0	3	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

County Districts		*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*	*11*	*12*[2]	*13*[2]
	1989	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	—	—
Cardiff	1988	2	17	14	19	12	20	30	26	66	54	29	18	10
	1989	23	43	29	24	25	31	31	66	89	43	46	—	—
Vale of Glamorgan	1988	0	1	2	1	2	4	5	17	25	14	7	3	1
	1989	7	37	5	1	3	10	9	16	24	4	16	—	—
Port Talbot	1988	0	4	1	2	3	7	3	9	1	3	2	6	1
	1989	0	0	4	4	5	12	5	1	2	3	5	—	—
Lliw Valley	1988	2	3	1	1	2	5	1	9	2	8	3	4	1
	1989	1	2	4	1	5	13	7	9	11	12	5	—	—
Neath	1988	2	5	1	3	6	12	10	7	7	7	1	4	1
	1989	1	2	6	4	5	13	11	5	8	7	9	—	—
Swansea	1988	11	5	3	8	22	33	17	40	19	30	31	16	10
	1989	18	29	30	28	19	37	35	55	34	22	21	—	—

[1] Notifications formally made and cases ascertained by other means.

[2] Data for the last two 4-week periods of 1989 not yet available.

Source: OPCS Weekly Return (WR Series). Figures are provisional.

HEALTH

Mentally Ill Patients

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the National Health Service and Community Care Bill and services for mentally ill patients.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) on 14 November at column 193, following which the Government's White Paper on community care entitled "Caring for People" was published. I also refer my hon. Friend to the letter my right hon. and learned Friend sent to all members on 20 October 1989 about the implementation of the National Health Service review and its implications for, among other client groups, mentally ill patients.

Medical Equipment (Advice)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is his Department's normal practice with regard to consultation with interested parties and the seeking of external advice before taking a decision to contribute to the funding of the purchase of special medical equipment;

(2) what is his Department's working definition of external advice used in the context of consultation with interested parties before taking a decision to provide funds for the purchase of special medical equipment.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There is no set procedures. Each case would be considered on its merits.

Kidney Stone Patients

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he plans to take steps to expand treatment for kidney stone patients in the west midlands region.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The provision of treatment services in the west midlands is a matter for the regional health authority.

Funding (North Western RHA)

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which organisations in the north-west have made representations to him [illegible] his proposed funding arrangements for the North Western regional health authority for the financial year 1990-91

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have received a number of representations about the funding arrangements for the North Western regional health authority for 1990-91 and subsequent years from hon. Members and organisations in the north west including district health authorities and community health councils.

Nottingham DHA

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the effect of changes to the National Health Service during his tenure as Secretary of State in the Nottingham district health authority.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: In common with the rest of the NHS, Nottingham health authority has continued to strive to provide the best possible service for its population. The district received an initial revenue allocation of £180·7 million for 1989-90 from Trent regional health authority which is a real terms increase of 2·9 per cent. over the previous year and one of the highest increases in the region. The authority is planning to expand its patient services, both in-patient and day cases, during the year. Recent developments include improved facilities at Nottingham city hospital for renal and radiotherapy services and for the elderly mentally infirm. The district has also been working hard to improve its mental illness services and following the development of a range of modern, community-based services was able to close Saxondale hospital, a large institution for the mentally ill, at the end of last year.

Tower Hamlets DHA

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will specify the hospitals and services which are included in the bid from within Tower Hamlets district health authority for self-governing status.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The sponsors of the expression of interest in NHS trust status submitted for the

London Hospital Group propose to include the London hospitals at Whitechapel, Mile End, and St. Clements together with associated community services to provide the bulk of services currently provided by Tower Hamlets health authority.

Health Service Reform

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate he has made of the additional administrative computing and allied costs associated with his proposed changes in the National Health Service, including opting out of hospitals, over the next three years; and what is his estimate of the increases which will be required in numbers of staff in each tier of the National Health Service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State announced that an additional £82 million is being made available this year, and an additional £257 million next year, to the NHS in England, for initiatives arising from the White Paper "Working for Patients". It is not possible at this stage to estimate the full cost of the changes, because the White Paper builds on developments that have been taking place over a number of years. These include resource management and improvements in management information, including computerisation. In addition, the total cost will depend on such factors as the number of NHS trusts and GP practice fund holders which are approved.

The changes will increase the efficiency of the service, and create opportunities for achieving better value for money so that extra costs will be outweighed by savings.

The estimate of the increase in staff needed for the changes includes up to 3,000 at hospital level and up to 400 in regions and family practitioner committees. In the longer term, as regional and district health authorities reduce their own functions, total staffing levels are expected to fall. The number of extra staff needed by the prescription pricing authority, up to 300, is expected to reduce significantly in two or three years.

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has had any representations about the use of National Health Service staff and resources to prepare hospitals and other medical units to become self-governing medical trusts prior to the passing of the relevant legislation; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No.

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will detail in the *Official Report* any instructions or guidelines he has issued to health authorities, hospitals and any other relevant medical units about anticipating or taking account of possible changes, which may be made to the details of the National Health Service and Community Care Bill during its parliamentary progress; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is for Parliament to determine the final form of the National Health Service and Community Care Bill. It would not be sensible to issue instructions or guidance seeking to anticipate such changes (if any) as Parliament may approve. Health authorities are, of course, fully aware of the Government's proposals set out in "Working for Patients", Cm 555. It has frequently been pointed out to them that some of these plans will require primary legislation before they can be fully implemented.

Patient Records (Ownership)

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has obtained the views of the Committee on Safety of Medicines, the Medicines Commission or the Medicines Control Agency regarding the opinion offered by Mr. Mummery QC on the ownership of patient records regarding the effects of this advice on clinical research in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Yes.

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the implications of Mr. Mummery's opinion on the ownership of patient records for the conduct of fundamental clinical research, clinical trials and post-marketing surveillance studies which involve the collection and analysis of anonymised patient records.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This is still being considered.

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has received representations expressing contrary views to those of Mr. Mummery QC relating to the ownership of general practitioners' patient records held on computer; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Yes. The Government intend to consult interested parties on draft guidance to be issued in January 1990 regarding this and related subjects.

Prescriptions

Mr. Jim Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what would have been the cost to the Exchequer over the last 12-month period for which figures are available if all appliance prescriptions written by dispensing doctors in England and Wales had been dispensed *(a)* by pharmacy contractors and *(b)* by appliance contractors.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not available in the form requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Ambulance Service

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will estimate the average cost of non-emergency ambulance journeys.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information in the form requested is not available centrally. However, the average costs per patient carried and per mile in England for 1986-87, the latest figures currently available, are £13·78 and £1·90 respectively.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will estimate the numbers of patients transported by the ambulance service in the most recent year for which figures are available in *(a)* emergency situations and *(b)* non-emergency situations.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The number of emergency and non-emergency patient journeys for 1987-88, by ambulance authority, is given in the table. One patient journey is defined as a single trip to, or return from, a place where a patient receives medical care or treatment.

Total number of patients' journeys 1987-88
England

Ambulance authority	*Emergency cases*	*Non-emergency cases*
England	1,851,442	14,438,568
Cleveland	21,918	221,744
Cumbria	13,473	224,772
Durham	26,863	265,389
Northumbria Metropolitan	57,773	724,951
Humberside	39,703	461,285
North Yorkshire	17,620	236,918
West Yorkshire Metropolitan	106,659	876,540
Derbyshire	27,176	312,637
Leicestershire	23,480	350,151
Lincolnshire	14,465	185,363
Nottinghamshire	49,602	404,703
South Yorkshire Metropolitan	41,187	534,992
Cambridgeshire	13,977	91,312
Norfolk	21,667	202,229
Suffolk	9,955	211,567
Bedfordshire	16,274	127,987
Hertfordshire	31,023	275,063
Essex	52,543	286,745
East Sussex	34,520	279,208
Kent	48,925	458,392
Surrey	28,537	269,245
West Sussex	18,786	156,902
London Ambulance Service	383,301	1,531,179
Dorset	20,166	129,169
Hampshire	36,440	256,148
Wiltshire	11,043	58,274
Isle of Wight	3,244	22,419
Berkshire	20,943	143,561
Buckinghamshire	13,062	154,281
Northamptonshire	15,525	184,835
Oxfordshire	9,797	119,565
Avon	26,675	24,717
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	13,352	64,206
Devon	30,542	251,200
Gloucestershire	12,406	160,350
Somerset	9,037	113,989
Hereford and Worcester	15,591	184,042
Shropshire	11,096	111,383
Staffordshire	32,629	284,609
Warwickshire	10,880	110,325
West Midlands Metropolitan	109,789	874,514
Cheshire	33,033	431,748
Mersey Metropolitan	108,541	677,250
Lancashire	58,969	436,387
Greater Manchester Metropolitan	149,255	956,322

Source: KA32 Summary.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received in favour of opening to competitive tender the management and organisation of the routine transport ambulance service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have received no such representations. I refer my hon. Friend to the reply my hon. Friend gave to hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) on 30 November 1989, at column *411*.

Public Appointments

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many persons above the age of *(a)* 60, *(b)* 65 and *(c)* 70 years he has appointed to public bodies in each of the last 10 years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost, since the Department is responsible for 144 public bodies with the present number of appointments totalling almost 10,000.

NHS Reform

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how the cash allocation system to regions and family practitioner committees outlined in his letter to hon. Members of 20 October will calculate and weight the number and needs of chronically sick patients.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Allocations for the hospital and community health services will continue to be based on the size, age and health of regions' populations. This will ensure that regional health authority budgets take account of the presence of chronically sick patients, by the use of a proxy measure of morbidity and higher cost-weightings for elderly people living in the region.

Allocations to RHAs in respect of the indicative prescribing budget scheme will not be cash-limited. GPs will, as now, be able to prescribe any clinically necessary medication for their patients.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how the contracts district health authorities will make with providers of patient services will reflect given levels and quality of service as outlined in his letter to hon. Members of 20 October.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The level and quality of services to be provided will be agreed between the district health authority and the provider and specified in the contract. The degree of precision used will increase over time as health authorities become more expert at assessing their population's requirements, as information about hospital activity improves and as better-quality measures are developed. My Department will assist this process by providing guidance and disseminating examples of good practice. However, even the simplest contracts will make much clearer than now what services are to be provided in return for a particular level of funding. Patients can only benefit as a result.

Community Care

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy to undertake further research into the special needs of seriously mentally ill people before the implementation of the community care proposals.

Mr. Freeman: The proposals for services for people with a mental illness set out in "Caring for People" build on established good practice. They envisage that health and social services professional staff will assess the health and social care needs of individual patients and judge whether these can realistically be met in the community. We plan to commission research into the effectiveness of our care programme approach in due course.

Children Act

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of the numbers of people who will require training in *(a)* the Health Service and *(b)* the voluntary sector as the Children Act is implemented and what resources he will supply to assist with such training.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: From information held centrally is is not possible to identify the numbers of health services staff whose duties will be affected by the Children Act. Information on staff of voluntary organisations is not held centrally.

As part of the Department's phased programme of awareness and specialist training for local authority and other agency staff, the Department launched on 1 December 1989 "An Introduction to the Children Act". The guide will be of use to all social services staff and other practitioners who will be concerned with implementation of the Children Act. Copies of the guide have been sent to local authorities, and the National Council for Voluntary Child Care Organisations for them to distribute to their members, regional health authorities, district health authorities, royal colleges and other relevant agencies. A dissemination and training strategy for implementation of the Children Act is being developed in consultation with the statutory and voluntary agencies.

National Care Homes Association

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last met representatives from the National Care Homes Association; and if he will take steps to include unregistered homes in its inspection process.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State last met representatives from the National Care Homes Association at its annual conference on 19 October 1989.

Under part I of the Registered Homes Act 1984, local social services authorities are required to inspect private and voluntary residential care homes catering for four or more residents. There are no plans at present to extend this requirement to cover homes with fewer than four places. But, as our White Paper "Caring for People" makes clear, our intention is that the quality of all residential care provided and monitored for local authorities by the independent sector should be safeguarded by clearly defined contractual arrangements.

Crack

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much money has been spent by his Department on research on crack and its effects.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department will continue to keep abreast of research developments both here and abroad. Together with the Home Office, we are hoping to fund, at an estimated cost of £300,000, a three-year research project to study the prevalence and patterns of use of cocaine and crack.

Blood

Mr. Terry Fields: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what quantities of voluntarily donated blood have been sold to private medical organisations; what quantities have been sold abroad; what are the amounts of profit accrued from these sales over the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Since 1 April 1984 charges have been made to the private sector to recover the costs to the NHS of collection, processing, handling and transport of blood. No charge is made for the blood itself, and no profit is made on any blood or blood components supplied. The last 12-month period for which complete records are currently held is the 12 months ending 31 December 1988. During that year 75,961 units of blood were issued to non-NHS hospitals. No NHS blood was sent abroad during 1988. Blood collected by the NHS would be sent outside the United Kingdom only on humanitarian grounds, in cases of emergency. In such cases, again, no charge would be made for the blood itself.

Ambulance Staff

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current pay differential between ambulance staff who are non-emergency workers and those classified as emergency workers.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Under current pay rates, which have been effective since 1 April 1988, the comparison between the basic rate for non-emergency basic ambulance man/woman grade and the emergency staff grades of qualified and leading ambulance man/woman is as follows:

	£ per annum
Ambulanceman/woman	7,340
Qualified ambulanceman/woman	10,093
Leading ambulanceman/woman	10,888

Staff in the London ambulance service receive an additional payment of £981 per annum.

Under the new rates offered by the management side on 5 December and effective from 1 April 1989 the comparison is as follows:

	Outside London £ per annum	*London ambulance service £ per annum*
Ambulanceman/woman	8,001	9,232
Qualified ambulanceman/woman	11,001	12,384
Leading ambulanceman/woman	11,868	13,305

In addition, emergency staff groups required to use paramedical skills gained from extended training to NHS training authority standard will receive an additional £500 per annum. The management side has also undertaken to agree with the trade union side, by 28 February 1990, a national framework for the recognition of staff specially trained, either locally to standards other than of the NHS training authority, or partially to those standards, with payments backdated to 1 April 1989.

Residential Nursing Care

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list those companies, voluntary and other organisations, other than health authorities and local authorities, which are involved in providing residential nursing care.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not collected centrally.

North Tynemouth District Health Authority

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many additional staff will be provided in the North Tynemouth district health authority to support the new consultant post in trauma and orthopaedics which he recently approved.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 4 December 1989]:* The level of staffing in district health authorities is a matter for the DHA concerned. I understand that additional staff are being provided to support the new consultant post. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of North Tyneside health authority for details.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Schengen Agreement

86. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has considered the implications of the Schengen agreement and supplementary agreements; and if he will make a statement.

87. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has considered the implications of the Schengen agreement and supplementary agreements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: The Schengen agreement is an arrangement between France and the Federal Republic of Germany, Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg to abolish land frontier controls between their countries. Their work is separate from the discussions on free movement of people which are taking place among all member states of the European Community.

We will naturally be interested in the experience of the Schengen Partners in reducing frontier controls.

Rajiv Ghandi

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has written to Mr. Rajiv Ghandi since the general election in India.

Mr. Sainsbury: No, but my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister sent a personal message to Mr. Ghandhi on his departure from office.

India

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Britain's current relations with India.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have excellent relations with India. We look forward to continuing our close and friendly links with the new Indian Government.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to visit India.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs looks forward to visiting India, although he has no current plans to do so.

NATO (Institutional Links)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what institutional links exist between *(a)* the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the United Nations, *(b)* the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the North Atlantic Assembly and *(c)* the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the European Commission.

Mr. Maude: There are no institutional links between NATO and the United Nations or between NATO and the EC. NATO maintains a close working relationship with the North Atlantic Assembly.

Korea

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response he received from President Roh of Korea during his recent visit when he drew attention to the concern felt by many people in this country about the way in which dogs and cats are reared and slaughtered for food in Korea.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs did not raise this matter with President Roh.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to him on 30 November, at column *419*.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response he received from the Korean Foreign Minister when he drew his attention to the revulsion felt by many people in this country at the treatment of animals in Korea.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Korean Foreign Minister indicated that he was well aware of the strength of feeling in Britain on this issue. The Korean Government have assured us that they are making strenuous efforts to prevent cruelty to animals.

Visa Applications

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made regarding the visa applications by the Vietnamese film director, Mr. Tran Van Thuy, and his cameraman, Mr. Do Khanh Toan, who wish to visit the United Kingdom between 21 and 27 December.

Mr. Sainsbury: These applications are under active consideration and a decision will be made very shortly.

Strasbourg Summit

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to raise at the European summit meeting in Strasbourg with his French counterpart *(a)* the prospects of France joining the 1968 nuclear non-proliferation treaty, *(b)* the policy of the French Government regarding a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty and *(c)* the possibility of a joint Anglo-French officials working party to bilaterally discuss the non-proliferation treaty and test ban treaty.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs does not intend to raise these matters at the European Council meeting in Strasbourg.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to raise the issue of the fourth review conference of the non-proliferation treaty with his counterparts representing member states during the Strasbourg summit.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs does not intend to raise this subject at the European Council meeting in Strasbourg.

Semtex

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if further inquiries are to be made with the Czechoslovakian authorities arising from the more recent political development over its manufacture and exporting of Semtex.

Mr. Maude: We have been discussing this matter with the Czechoslovak Government for over a year. They have stated publicly that all exports of Semtex ceased in 1982.

Recent political developments in Czechoslavakia have not affected our exchanges which have resulted in a joint initiative for an international convention on the marking for detection of plastic and sheet explosives. This is under consideration in the International Civil Aviation Organisation.

El Salvador

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the ambassador of El Salvador has been called to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office over the murder of six priests and others in El Salvador; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) on 16 November, at column *416*.

Cambodia

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many letters and telephone calls he has received on the subject of Cambodia in the last month; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Department has received over 12,000 letters and approximately 50 telephone inquiries on Cambodia in the last month.

Overseas Aid

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he will set a timetable to honour the commitment to meet the United Nations target of providing overseas aid at the level of 0·7 per cent. of gross national product; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) on 6 June, at column *129*.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Veterinary Surgeons

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list in the *Official Report* for each of the last 10 years the number of veterinary surgeons permanently employed by his Department; and what is his estimate of the number of veterinary surgeons who will be required over each of the next four years.

Mr. Maclean: The number of veterinary surgeons permanently employed in the state veterinary service of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for each of the last 10 years is as follows:

Year	*Number*
1980	580·5
1981	563·5
1982	557·0
1983	549·0
1984	539·5
1985	527·5
1986	506·5
1987	464·5
1988	444·5
1989	422·0

We foresee a need for an increase in the number of veterinary surgeons in the state veterinary service over the next four years, particularly for food safety work including meat hygiene.

In April this year, Dr. Ewan Page was appointed to chair a committee to provide advice on this. Its report is awaited.

Suckler Cow Premia

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on what basis areas are selected for payment of suckler cow premia under the special provision of herd reduction due to natural circumstances.

Mr. Curry: In deciding which areas should be designated as being affected by drought account was taken of meteorological data on a county basis concerning rainfall levels and soil moisture deficits likely to result in serious depletion of natural fodder supplies.

Cyromazine

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has authorised the use of any products containing cyromazine; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Two products have been granted licences under the Medicines Act 1968 for use in preventing blow fly strike on sheep.

Salmonella

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what provision exists for the testing of flocks of broiler chicken for salmonella.

Mr. Maclean: There is no statutory requirement for testing broiler chickens for salmonella. However, the requirements for testing and for the compulsory slaughter of infected flocks apply to broiler breeding flocks in order to minimise the risk of producing infected progeny.

Bovine Offal

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what advice he has given concerning the disposal of bovine offal currently banned for human consumption.

Mr. Maclean: The offal must be dealt with in accordance with the Bovine Offal (Prohibition) Regulations 1989.

Bovine Somatotropin

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to the answer of 1 December to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr.

Clark), *Official Report*, column 480, which three bovine somatotropin products have been authorised to undergo field trials; and what is the location of the authorised field trials.

Mr. Maclean: The three recombinant BST products authorised for trials are those which have satisfied the safety and other requirements of the Medicines Act 1968. Further details, including the location of the trials, are notified by the companies concerned to my Department in confidence under the terms of section 118 of the Act.

Poultry (Slaughter)

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many *(a)* flocks and *(b)* birds, have been slaughtered as a result of Zoonoses Orders; and what is the estimated number and value of loss of eggs which will result.

Mr. Maclean: Up to 1 December, 1,005,290 birds from 83 flocks infected with salmonella have been compulsorily slaughtered. It is not possible to give the details of the estimated number and value of loss of eggs which will result except at disproportionate cost.

Milk Quota

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the criteria upon which he is allocating the 1 per cent. increase in Britain's milk quota.

Mr. Curry: I am currently considering the available options together with the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales.

Anthrax Vaccine

Mr. Hood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the current availability of an anthrax vaccine for cows.

Mr. Maclean: There is no commercial source of supply of anthrax vaccine in the United Kingdom at present, so in the event of an outbreak my Department has plans to make a vaccine available on an emergency basis.

Prosecutions

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many prosecutions his Department initiated in each of the last three years in respect of offences under *(a)* the Protection of Animals Act 1911, *(b)* the Agriculture (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1968, and *(c)* the Intensive Units Regulations; and what was the date of the last conviction obtained by his Department under each of these provisions.

Mr. Maclean: The prosecutions initiated were:

	[1]*1987*	[2]*1988-89*	[3]*1989*
1911 Act	6	8	3
1968 Act	3	3	0

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[1] 1 January to 31 December.

[2] 1 January 1988 to 31 March 1989.

[3] 1 April 1989 to present.

No prosecutions under the Welfare of Livestock (Intensive Units) Regulations 1978 have been instigated by my Department in any of the last three years.

The last convictions obtained were on 13 November 1989 under the 1911 Act, and on 26 May 1989 under the 1968 Act.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what advice he gives the veterinary service concerning the use of caesarian sections on cows suspected of bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. Maclean: Caesarian sections are not advised for preparturient cows. However, if a cow is unable to calve normally a caesarian section may be carried out at the discretion of the veterinary surgeon. Such animals must be isolated in approved accommodation whilst calving and for 72 hours afterwards. The placenta, uterine discharges and bedding must be burned or buried.

Farm Pollution Control

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much his Department has contributed in grant aid to farm pollution control under the Mersey basin campaign for every year since 1984.

Mr. Curry: This information is not available in the form requested. In the Crewe and Preston divisional offices, which cover the area including the Mersey basin and which spearheaded my Department's contribution to this important campaign, total expenditure on waste facilities under the agriculture improvement scheme, which ran from 1985 to 1988, was as follows:

1986-7	£367,819
1987-8	£238,317
1988-9	£97,362

In addition, prior notifications by farmers of intention to claim grant waste facilities under the farm and conservation grant scheme, which replaced the agriculture improvement scheme in February, were until the end of October:

Crewe

506 notifications covering grant expenditure of £4,002,139.

Preston

182 notifications covering grant expenditure of £209,164.

My Department has also supported this campaign through intensive publicity and advice to farmers including visits to farms identified by the water authority and, more recently, the National Rivers Authority.

Multi-annual Guidance Programme

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what date Her Majesty's Government became a signatory to the multi-annual guidance programme; and who were the signatories on behalf of Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Curry: The United Kingdom multi-annual guidance programme was approved by the Commission's Standing Committee for the Fishing Industry in accordance with the procedure laid down in article 47 of Regulation 4028/86 on 11 December 1987.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on what dates the multi-annual guidance programme was debated in the House prior to Her Majesty's Government signing the agreement.

Mr. Curry: The entire MAGP was not debated but one of its main components concerning vessel grants was discussed in the House on 26 October 1987.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consultations his Department held with representatives of the fishing industry prior to agreement to the multi-annual guidance programme as part of the common fisheries policy.

Mr. Curry: Full consultations were held with fishing industry representatives before the adoption of Council Regulation 4028/86, of which the multi-annual guidance programme forms a part.

Fishing (Hague Preference)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on what date and in which countries the 1978 Hague preference has been implemented by the European Community on behalf of coastal areas dependent on fishing.

Mr. Curry: The 1976 Hague preference has been implemented by the European Community once, in respect of the United Kingdom North sea haddock quota in 1989.

EC Fisheries Inspectorate

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals his Department intends to make to increase appointments to, and the responsibilities of, the Community fisheries inspectorate.

Mr. Curry: Under the common fisheries policy, enforcement is a matter for individual member states. The United Kingdom has, however, always been in the forefront in supporting the need for an effective Community inspectorate to ensure that member states meet their responsibilities. In recent years, the powers of the inspectorate have been strengthened, and it has become a real force throughout the Community. The inspectorate's complement has also been increased and currently stands at 18.

Captive Birds

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food why he has delayed publishing the report on computer study of mortality in quarantine of captive birds in 1988.

Mr. Maclean: The figures will be made available when the implications of the mortality study have been assessed. I hope to make an announcement shortly.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Parole

13. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the staff complement of the parole unit now; and what it was 12 months ago.

Mr. Mellor: The staff complement of the parole unit is 88, as against 79 in December 1988.

45. **Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average delay beyond parole eligibility date in each of the four prison department regions.

Mr. Mellor: Information is not maintained in the form requested. We estimate that in England and Wales as a whole about 30 per cent. of cases are delayed by an average of two and a half months.

Prison Population

14. **Mr. Cash:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the latest figures for the total prison population; and what those figures were one year ago.

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the latest figures for the total prison population; and what were those figures one year ago.

Mr. Waddington: On Friday 1 December, the total prison population stood at 48,245. This compares with 50,172 held on Friday 2 December last year.

40. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were in prison at the most recent count.

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total prison population in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Mellor: On Friday 1 December the total prison population in England and Wales stood at 48,245. The responsibility for prisons in Scotland and Northern Ireland rests with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland respectively.

60. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many mentally ill and mentally handicapped persons are at present in prisons in England and Wales.

Mr. Mellor: On 31 March 1989, the latest date for which information is available, 215 prisoners in England and Wales were considered by medical officers to meet the criteria for detention in hospital, as set out in the Mental Health Act 1983. 185 of those prisoners were considered to be mentally ill, within the meaning of the Act. The term "mentally handicapped" is not one of the 4 specific categories of mental disorder defined in part I of the Act.

Visas

15. **Mr. Caborn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he proposes to extend the number of countries whose nationals will require visas to enter the United Kingdom.

36. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he proposes to extend the number of countries whose nationals will require visas to enter the United Kingdom.

63. **Mr. Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he proposes to extend the number of countries whose nationals will require visas to enter the United Kingdom.

69. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he proposes to extend the number of countries whose nationals will require visas to enter the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Visa policy and practice are kept under constant review but it is long established practice not to comment on the possibility of extending visa requirements to any particular country.

Broadcasting

16. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with the broadcasting authorities in Wales on the future of television and radio services in Wales.

Mr. Mellor: I have regular contact with the Welsh Fourth Channel Authority (S4C), the IBA and the BBC. In particular, there have been a number of discussions with S4C about our proposals for Welsh broadcasting after 1992.

32. **Mr. Butcher:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next plans to meet the governors of the British Broadcasting Corporation to discuss their effectiveness in achieving political objectivity in news reporting.

Mr. Mellor: I meet the chairman and governors of the BBC from time to time to discuss a wide range of broadcasting matters. Responsibility for ensuring impartiality in the reporting of news rests with the BBC.

33. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met the chairman of the Independent Broadcasting Authority; and what matters were discussed.

41. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next plans to meet the chairman of the Independent Broadcasting Authority to discuss broadcasting.

57. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met the chairman of the Independent Broadcasting Authority to discuss broadcasting.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. and learned Friend keeps in regular touch with the chairman of the IBA on a wide range of broadcasting matters.

67. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will meet the chairman of the Independent Broadcasting Authority to discuss the future broadcasting of hospital radio.

Mr. Mellor: Following the hon. Member's meeting with my right hon. Friend the Member for Mid Sussex (Mr. Renton) in July and the subsequent meeting of the National Association of Hospital Broadcasting Organisations with the IBA, consideration is being given to their suggestion that a dedicated frequency be provided for hospital radio. The outcome will be made known to the proposed new radio authority, which it is intended will be responsible for licensing all non-BBC radio services, including hospital radio.

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library a copy of his letter of 4 December to the hon. Member for Westminster, North on the decriminalisation of television licence fee evasion as recommended in paragraph 152 of the Home Affairs Committee's Third Report of Session 1987-88.

Mr. Waddington: We have now done so.

Electronic Tagging

17. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made on electronic monitoring as both a condition of bail and as an alternative to remand in custody.

54. **Mr. Wood:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made on electronic monitoring as both a condition of bail and as an alternative to remand in custody.

Mr. John Patten: As at 26 November, 32 defendants have been granted bail subject to the condition that they are electronically monitored. Under the three experimental schemes now in progress the courts are asked to impose electronic monitoring as a condition of bail only in cases where a defendant would otherwise have been remanded in custody.

81. **Mr. Boateng:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will now consider abandoning plans to introduce the electronic tagging system.

Mr. John Patten: No. Decisions on the future of electronic monitoring will be taken when the experimental schemes now in progress have been evaluated.

Prison Management

18. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will reconsider plans to reorganise prison management in the light of concerns expressed by the Prison Governors Association.

Mr. Mellor: No decisions have been made on the recommendations of the team which reviewed the organisation and location of the prison service at above establishment level. I have met representatives of the Prison Governors Association to discuss the report and have received a written submission from them. Their views and all the other comments received are being carefully considered.

Violent Crimes

19. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he plans to take to curb the increase in violent crimes.

Mr. John Patten: Measures to prevent these offences include tougher maximum penalties for violent offences; increases in police manpower; targeting of high crime areas by police; measures to deal with alcohol-related disorder; education, research and crime prevention. Further measures, including new action to tackle domestic violence, are being taken forward by the ministerial groups on crime prevention and women's issues.

"Practical Ways to Crack Crime"

20. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many copies of the Home Office booklet, "Practical Ways to Crack Crime", have now been distributed.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many copies of the Home Office booklet, "Practical Ways to Crack Crime", have now been distributed.

Mr. John Patten: Two and a half million copies of the first two editions and nearly 300,000 of the recently published third edition of our handbook "Practical Ways to Crack Crime" have now been distributed in England and Wales. We have also produced a new, shorter version called the Family Guide, over one and a half million copies of which have been distributed.

Drugs

21. **Mr. Hannam:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many seizures of illicit drugs have been made by police and Customs in 1989 to date; and what is the estimated value of drugs seized.

Mr. Mellor: As I stated in my reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) on 5 December, in the period 1 January to 6 November 1989 Customs reported a provisional total of 6,830 seizures of controlled drugs. It is estimated that these would have had an equivalent street value of some £230 million. Comprehensive figures are not yet available for police seizures in 1989; the latest information is for 1988 when police made 32,947 seizures and customs 5,288 seizures of controlled drugs.

24. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the control of drug trafficking at frontiers by 1992.

Mr. Mellor: As we have said on previous occasions, the Government are determined to maintain the frontier checks necessary to control drug trafficking and to promote close co-operation at the operational level between law enforcement agencies. A European committee to combat drugs has been established and held its inaugural meeting in Brussels on 1 December. My right hon. and learned Friend has nominated me to serve on the committee as United Kingdom national drug co-ordinator. Among the priorities which the committee has been asked to address are those of strengthening of controls at external frontiers and development of closer international co-operation between law enforcement agencies, as well as the need for early ratification by all member states of the 1988 UN convention against illicit drug trafficking.

28. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the latest totals for assets confiscated from convicted drug traffickers and assets frozen pending trials for drug trafficking offences.

66. **Sir Michael Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the latest totals for assets confiscated from convicted drug traffickers and assets frozen pending trials for drug trafficking offences.

72. **Mr. Thorne:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the latest totals for assets confiscated from convicted drug traffickers and for assets frozen pending trials for drug trafficking offences.

Mr. John Patten: In 1988, £8·1 million was ordered to be confiscated by the courts under the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986. About £600,000 is known to have been recovered in confiscation orders during the financial year 1988-89; this mainly relates to orders made in 1987. The national drugs intelligence unit estimates that confiscation and restraint orders exceeding £13 million and £20 million respectively have been made since the Act came into force in January 1987.

46. **Mr. Donald Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers are now employed in regional crime squad drugs wings.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There were 228 officers on the strength of regional crime squads drugs wings on 27 November. In No. 9 region, which covers the Metropolitan police district, drugs investigation is not undertaken by the regional crime squad but by the Metropolitan police central drugs squad. Its strength on 27 November was 110.

My right hon. and learned Friend announced on 23 November at columns 12-13 that he is prepared to approve a further 51 police posts for regional crime squads specifically for their work in connection with drugs.

59. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the estimated revenue cost of the new anti-drugs network he recently announced.

Mr. Mellor: Subject to Parliament's approval of the Supply Estimates, up to £2·3 million is being made available in 1990-91 for the drug prevention initiative which was announced on 11 October 1989.

64. **Sir Fergus Montgomery:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many British drug liaison officers are now stationed overseas.

Mr. Mellor: There are at present 17 United Kingdom drug liaison officers based abroad.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many times and on what dates the ministerial group on drugs has met since its creation.

Mr. Mellor: The ministerial group on the misuse of drugs has met 39 times, on the following dates:

1984—23 July, 1 October, 1 November, 12 December

1985—29 January, 4 March, 27 March, 7 May, 5 June, 25 June, 30 September, 29 October, 10 December

1986—29 January, 26 February, 16 April, 20 May, 24 June, 6 October, 18 November, 17 December

1987—26 January, 4 March, 27 April, 6 July, 29 September, 18 November

1988—25 January, 16 March, 4 May, 27 June, 29 September, 21 November

1989—9 February, 11 April, 23 May, 26 July, 16 October, 6 December

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the street value of the drugs destroyed by the authorities over the past 10 years; and if he will state the figure in pounds sterling for each year.

Mr. David Mellor: Records are not kept centrally of drugs destroyed following seizures by police or customs. Information about seizures of controlled drugs over the past 10 years was published in Home Office Statistical Bulletin Issue 30/89 "Statistics of the Misuse of Drugs: Seizures and Offenders Dealt With, United Kingdom, 1988" a copy of which is in the Library.

Alcohol

22. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the deadline for the experimental ban on drinking in public places in Coventry and other areas; what representations he has received as to the success of the experiment; and what has been the reduction in prosecutions for offences involving drunkenness in those areas as a result of the experimental byelaws.

Mr. John Patten: Expiry dates for the experimental byelaw, which is in force in seven areas, range from 31 October 1990 to 16 July 1991. In each case we shall review the results some months before the date when the byelaw would lapse and reach conclusions on the benefits for these and other areas. We shall seek to determine how far a relationship can be established with changes in prosecutions for offences involving drunkeness, but this will not be straightforward because the byelaw is in force only in certain designated zones within the seven local authority areas, for which separate statistics for prosecutions have not been kept in the past.

We have received requests for the byelaw from 105 local authorities.

27. **Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he will be taking to implement the proposals contained in the Prison Reform Trust's report "Drink, Delinquency and Prison", for alcohol counselling and education for offenders with drink problems in young offender institutions.

Mr. Mellor: The recommendations contained in this report are being considered. Regime activities in young offender institutions seek to assist inmates to develop personal responsibility and self-discipline and a more positive lifestyle. Many institutions already tackle problems of alcohol abuse as part of their education and training programmes.

Passports

23. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average time taken between receiving a passport application and its issue at each passport office in 1989; and what he expects the position to be in 1990.

35. **Mr. Wall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average time taken between receiving a passport application and its issue at each passport office in 1989; and what he expects the position to be in 1990.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Passport applications are processed according to the applicant's travel requirements, with priority being given to urgent cases. As a result, processing times in a given period vary considerably, and averages are not recorded.

The maximum processing times in working days for straightforward non-urgent postal applications at the six United Kingdom passport offices during 1989 were as follows:

	Days
London	48
Liverpool	110
Peterborough	76
Newport	51
Glasgow	64
Belfast	10

Most applications were processed well within these maximum periods.

Processing times should be reduced next year, as a result of enhancements made to the computer systems at the Glasgow and Liverpool offices, the employment of additional permanent staff at all offices, and other measures.

Domestic Violence

25. **Mr. Tracey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many specialist units now exist within the Metropolitan police force coping with cases of domestic violence; and what were the comparable figures one and two years ago, respectively.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There are currently 28 such units. One year ago there were 10 and two years ago one.

Pub Bombings

26. **Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met Lord Denning to discuss the case of the Birmingham Six.

Mr. Waddington: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie) earlier today.

30. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the Surrey police officers investigating the Guildford pub bombings visited Queen's road police station in Birmingham during the course of their inquiries.

31. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the Surrey police officers investigating the Guildford pub bombings visited Queen's road police station in Birmingham during the course of their inquiries.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the Surrey police officers investigating the Guildford pub bombings visited Queen's road police station in Birmingham during the course of their inquiries.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Members to the written answers given on 30 October at column *40*, in which I explained in reply to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) that no Surrey officer visited Queen's road while those arrested in relation to the Birmingham pub bombings were detained there. No record now exists which will indicate whether any Surrey officer visited Queen's road at any other time.

42. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has copies of the alleged confessions of the men convicted of the Birmingham bombings.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has copies of the alleged confessions of the men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings.

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has copies of the alleged confessions of the men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Members to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) earlier today.

DPP

29. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next plans to meet the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Mr. John Patten: At the moment there are no plans for such a meeting.

Asylum Seekers

34. **Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has made of the number of people likely to seek asylum in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* the European Economic Community over the next five years; and if he intends to review procedures for processing such applications.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There is no basis for reliably estimating the numbers of asylum applications in future years. Figures for individual countries are liable to considerable fluctuation as a result of changing circumstances, but the overall upward trend seems likely to continue.

Procedures are kept under constant review and adjusted where necessary.

Drink Driving

37. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has recently held with representatives of the Magistrates Association about guidelines for consistency in sentencing persons convicted of driving after consuming excessive alcohol; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: None. Sentencing is a matter for the courts within their overall powers as laid down by legislation and in accordance with the guidance given by the Court of Appeal. I understand that the Magistrates Association is considering the issue of new guidelines on road traffic sentencing to its members.

Police

38. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many uniformed police officers have returned to beat duties in the last five years as a result of civilianisation and other initiatives, in the Metropolitan police district and in England and Wales.

Dr. Michael Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many uniformed police officers have returned to beat duties in the last five years as a result of civilianisation and other value-for-money initiatives in the Metropolitan police district and in England and Wales.

61. **Mr. Marland:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many uniformed police officers have returned to beat duties in the last five years as a result of civilianisation and other value-for-money initiatives, in the Metropolitan police district and in England and Wales.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We estimate that since the 1983-84 financial year up until December 1988, the latest period for which information is readily available, the Metropolitan police have returned 608 officers to operational duties, and provincial forces 3,343, through civilianisation. Estimates of police time saved through other value for money initiatives are not available.

62. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met the chief constable of the West Midlands police; and what was discussed.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to a question from the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall) on 5 December at column *181*.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has received any indication from Mr. Don Doreston, the assistant chief constable of Derbyshire, as to when his report into the allegations that members of the Leicestershire police force were involved in the leaking of information to Mr. Joseph Wambaugh will be completed.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand that the investigation into the allegations of improper disclosure of information by officers from the Leicestershire constabulary has now been completed. The report has been submitted to the Director of Public Prosecutions and to the Police Complaints Authority, who supervised the investigation, for their consideration.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police constables left their jobs in each police authority from 1978 to the present date *(a)* to retire or *(b)* to take other jobs outside the police force.

Mr. Lloyd: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

General information on police officers retiring or resigning from provisional forces is available at appendix 9 in reports of Her Majesty's chief inspector of constabulary, copies of which are available in the Library.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers of all ranks have been injured requiring hospitalisation by police authority for the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is not collected centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers of all ranks have been (i) suspended for seven days or more and (ii) dismissed by each police authority for each year from 1980 to the current year.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information relating to numbers of officers suspended from duty pending investigation of alleged misconduct is not held centrally.

The table shows numbers of officers punished in disciplinary proceedings by dismissal from their force. Figures for the current year are not yet available.

Force	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Avon and Somerset	1	—	—	2	—	2	3	1	2
Bedfordshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Cambridgeshire	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cheshire	2	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
City of London	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cleveland	1	—	1	2	1	—	—	—	1

Force	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Cumbria	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	—
Derbyshire	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	3	3
Devon and Cornwall	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Dorset	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Durham	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dyffd-Powys	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—
Essex	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	2	—
Gloucestershire	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Greater Manchester	1	3	3	5	5	1	5	2	2
Gwent	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Hampshire	—	—	1	3	—	—	—	1	—
Hertfordshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Humberside	—	1	—	1	1	—	—	—	—
Kent	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1
Lancashire	—	—	—	5	1	—	2	2	2
Leicestershire	1	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	—
Lincolnshire	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Merseyside	—	—	—	1	3	—	2	1	2
Metropolitan	16	27	8	10	14	9	12	15	19
Norfolk	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Northamptonshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
Northumbria	3	4	2	—	—	—	—	—	5
North Wales	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	1	1
North Yorkshire	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Nottinghamshire	—	2	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
South Wales	1	—	—	—	—	2	2	3	5
South Yorkshire	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Staffordshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Suffolk	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Surrey	—	—	—	—	1	2	1	1	
Sussex	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
Thames Valley	—	—	2	1	1	1	2	—	—
Warwickshire	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	1
West Mercia	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
West Midlands	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	1
West Yorkshire	1	1	—	—	2	2	3	1	1
Wiltshire	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will produce a series of tables showing, as a percentage of the population, for each police authority by *(a)* police constables, *(b)* sergeants, *(c)* inspectors, *(d)* chief inspectors, *(e)* superintendents, *(f)* chief superintendents and *(g)* higher ranking officers in descending order by the ratio of (i) police constables, (ii) sergeants, (iii) inspectors, including chief inspectors, (iv) superintendents, including chief superintendents and (v) ranks above chief superintendent to population.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will produce a table showing for each police authority the numbers of (i) police constables, (ii) sergeants, (iii) inspectors, including chief, (iv) superintendents, including chief and (v) ranks above chief superintendent for each year from 1978 to the present.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on numbers and ranks of police officers in each force is available for each year up until 31 December 1988 in the annual reports of Her Majesty's chief inspector of constabulary, copies of which are available in the Library.

Force establishments by rank as at December 1989 are shown in the table:

	Chief Constable	*Deputy Chief Constable*	*Assistant Chief Constable*	*Chief Super-intendent*	*Super-intendent*	*Chief Inspector*	*Inspector*	*Sergeant*	*Constable*	*Total*
Avon and Somerset	1	1	3	13	38	70	148	474	2,322	3,070
Bedfordshire	1	1	1	5	15	19	51	143	810	1,046
Cambridgeshire	1	1	1	5	13	26	56	192	903	1,198
Cheshire	1	1	2	8	22	29	105	290	1,410	1,868
Cleveland	1	1	2	7	20	28	94	238	1,098	1,489
Cumbria	1	1	1	7	17	25	70	187	847	1,156
Derbyshire	1	1	2	8	26	37	100	263	1,355	1,793
Devon and Cornwall	1	1	3	13	37	47	135	455	2,154	2,846
Dorset	1	1	1	6	17	22	68	195	946	1,257
Durham	1	1	2	6	17	27	78	216	1,027	1,375
Dyfed Powys	1	1	1	7	13	23	36	155	698	935
Essex	1	1	3	11	31	59	126	438	2,134	2,804
Gloucestershire	1	1	1	6	15	22	54	174	890	1,164
Greater Manchester	1	1	6	28	92	137	408	1,075	5,240	6,988
Gwent	1	1	1	5	15	17	48	154	765	1,007
Hampshire	1	1	3	10	32	55	127	478	2,441	3,148
Hertfordshire	1	1	2	9	24	31	89	262	1,232	1,651
Humberside	1	1	2	9	23	38	105	324	1,489	1,992

	Chief Constable	*Deputy Chief Constable*	*Assistant Chief Constable*	*Chief Super-intendent*	*Super-intendent*	*Chief Inspector*	*Inspector*	*Sergeant*	*Constable*	*Total*
Kent	1	1	3	11	36	48	169	443	2,256	2,968
Lancashire	1	1	3	13	42	69	159	522	2,363	3,173
Leicestershire	1	1	2	7	25	35	93	292	1,304	1,760
Lincolnshire	1	1	1	5	12	25	66	196	876	1,183
Merseyside	1	1	4	18	60	77	252	757	3,531	4,701
Norfolk	1	1	1	6	17	22	67	200	1,047	1,362
Northamptonshire	1	1	1	6	13	23	69	166	841	1,121
Northumbria	1	1	3	14	48	60	189	511	2,686	3,513
North Wales	1	1	1	7	23	27	65	212	993	1,330
North Yorkshire	1	1	2	7	17	27	77	216	1,035	1,383
Nottinghamshire	1	1	2	9	35	41	131	338	1,760	2,318
South Wales	1	1	3	14	43	63	185	539	2,288	3,137
South Yorkshire	1	1	3	11	38	46	159	453	2,266	2,978
Staffordshire	1	1	2	11	31	50	121	342	1,629	2,188
Suffolk	1	1	1	6	17	20	59	182	899	1,186
Surrey	1	1	2	7	23	22	93	259	1,241	1,649
Sussex	1	1	3	11	35	39	173	457	2,220	2,940
Thames Valley	1	1	3	13	42	51	169	502	2,838	3,620
Warwickshire	1	1	1	5	14	18	61	154	737	992
West Mercia	1	1	2	10	30	38	128	298	1,483	1,991
West Midlands	1	1	5	22	80	121	367	1,067	5,166	6,830
West Yorkshire	1	1	5	20	69	81	288	818	3,976	5,259
Wiltshire	1	1	1	6	16	21	56	172	811	1,085
City of London	[1]1	[2]1	[3]1	6	11	20	56	123	579	798
Metropolitan	[1]6	[2]15	[3]37	154	238	489	1,440	4,322	21,714	28,415
Total	48	57	129	562	1,482	2,245	6,590	19,254	94,300	124,667

[1] Includes ranks of assistant commissioner and above in Metropolitan police, and commissioner in the City of London police.

[2] Includes deputy assistant commissioner in Metropolitan police and assistant commissioner in the City of London police.

[3] Includes commanders in Metropolitan police and City of London police.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will produce a table showing the percentage increase/decrease in the number of *(a)* police constables, *(b)* sergeants, *(c)* inspectors, including chief inspectors, *(d)* superintendents, including chief superintendents, and *(e)* ranks above chief superintendent, by police authority, in ascending order, by police constables and population for each year from 1978 to the latest available date.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is not readily available and could be produced only at disproportionate cost.

Information on police numbers and ranks in each police force together with police/population ratios is given in the annual reports of Her Majesty's chief inspector of constabulary, copies of which are available in the Library.

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to issue guidance for professional purposes relating to formation of an anti-abortion guild of police officers.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: If such a guild were to be formed, it would be for chief officers of police to consider the possible relevance of paragraph 1 of schedule 2 to the Police Regulations 1987. This provides that a member of a police force shall at all times abstain from any activity which is likely to interfere with the impartial discharge of his duties or which is likely to give rise to the impression among members of the public that it may so interfere.

Mr. Haynes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he proposes to meet the Association of Chief Police Officers to discuss the presence of media personnel on police operations.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) on 5 December 1989 at column *180*.

Probation Officers

39. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average caseload of a probation officer in England and Wales; and what are the comparable statistics for recent years.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested up to 1987 is published in Probation Statistics England and Wales 1987 (table 11.1). In 1988 the average caseload, excluding community service, of full time maingrade probation officers on general duties was 29·3 compared with 31·6 in 1984 and 32·1 in 1985.

Assaults on Police

43. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has as to the number of assaults made on police officers during 1988; and what was the figure for 1987.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Arrangements have been made for information on assaults against police officers to be collected centrally for 1989 and subsequent years. We have no realistic estimate for earlier years, because forces recorded such information in a number of different ways and no central collation was made.

Crime Prevention Panels

44. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many crime prevention panels now exist in England and Wales.

Mr. John Patten: At the end of June 1989 there were 398 crime prevention panels and 209 junior panels in

England and Wales. More than 40 junior panels were formed in the first six months of this year, in addition to a continuing growth in the number of senior panels.

50. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he has taken to encourage crime prevention panels to be set up in secondary schools; and what level of success he has met.

Mr. John Patten: Crime Concern, the national crime prevention organisation established last year, is encouraging the setting up of youth crime prevention panels. In July 1989, Crime Concern organised a successful national youth crime prevention panels conference, opened by Her Royal Highness the Princess Royal and attended by Ministers from the Department of Education and Science and representatives from the Home Office. Crime Concern is now planning a programme of work to stimulate the growth of youth crime prevention panels. At the end of June 1989 there were 209 youth crime prevention panels in England and Wales, mostly based in schools, an increase of almost 40 in six months.

Industrial Security

47. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received about promoting industrial security schemes.

Mr. John Patten: No recent representations of this kind have been received although during a visit to Norfolk in October my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd) received an inquiry from a member of the Kings Lynn borough council about the possibility of reduced insurance premiums for firms in industrial watch schemes.

Private Security Industry

48. **Mr. John P. Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans the Government have to introduce legislation for the statutory control of the private security industry.

Mr. John Patten: While statutory control is an option, we are considering, in the light of the report of a Home Office working group, whether there is scope for further improvements in self-regulation of the private security industry.

Charities

49. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications to register new charities have been received in the latest year for which statistics are available by the Charity Commissioners.

Mr. John Patten: I understand that during the calendar year 1988 the Charity Commissioners received approximately 4,011 applications to register new charities.

74. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met the Charity Commissioner; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. and learned Friend has not yet met the Chief Charity Commissioner, but my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State with special responsibility for charities is frequently in touch with him on a wide range of matters concerning charities and the work of the commission.

Racially Motivated Attacks

51. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the figures for the number of racially motivated attacks for the last year that figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The only available information relates to the Metropolitan police district and is published in the Commissioner's annual report, a copy of which is available in the Library. The total number of racial incidents reported during 1988 was 2,214, an increase of less than 2 per cent. over 1987.

Victim Support Schemes

52. **Mr. Couchman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many victim support schemes now operate in England and Wales.

Mr. John Patten: Three hundred and fifty-four.

Neighbourhood Watch

53. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many neighbourhood watch schemes now exist in England and Wales.

78. **Dr. Woodcock:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many neighbourhood watch schemes now exist in England and Wales.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer my hon. Friends to the reply that I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin).

75. **Mr. Burt:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will assess the contribution being made to crime prevention in Greater Manchester by the neighbourhood watch scheme: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Although I am not aware of any specific research into the effects of neighbourhood watch in Greater Manchester as a whole, figures for recorded crime for the 12 months ending in June 1989 show a drop of over 5 per cent. in Greater Manchester. This decrease, coupled with a 8 per cent. decline in the number of recorded burglaries, must be encouraging to all those engaged in crime prevention work, especially members of neighbourhood watch schemes.

The Kirkholt burglary prevention project in Rochdale, which included a variant of neighbourhood watch, has resulted in a substantial drop in the level of residential burglary. A full report of the Kirkholt project is in Home Office crime prevention unit paper No. 13, a copy of which is in the Library.

76. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is aware of any local authorities whose policy it is to refuse to permit neighbourhood watch signs to be erected in highways within their jurisdiction.

Mr. John Patten: We are aware that some local authorities have refused to grant planning permission for the erection of neighbourhood watch signs and I deplore this. The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 1987 gave deemed consent for the erection of signs relating to properly approved neighbourhood watch schemes which were not to be placed on highway land. Where signs are required on highway land I hope that all highway authorities will follow the Department of Transport's lead in approving such signs unless they cause a hazard to traffic or pedestrians.

Television Licences

55. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will review the provision of reduced fee television licences to old age pensioners.

Mr. Mellor: We have no plans to do so.

Remand Prisoners

56. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the latest figures for numbers of remand prisoners held in police cells; and what were the comparable figures six months and one year ago.

Mr. Mellor: On Wednesday 6 December, there were no remand prisoners held in police cells in England and Wales. Comparable figures for 6 December 1988 and 5 May 1989 were 945 and 210 prisoners respectively, most of whom were on remand.

Phone Tapping

58. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about phone tapping; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: Between 1 January and 30 November this year, 102 letters were received covering a variety of matters relating to the interception of communications.

Bill of Rights

65. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has for the introduction of a Bill of Rights; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Government have no plans to introduce a Bill of Rights.

Harmondsworth Detention Centre

68. **Mr. Henderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last visited Harmondsworth detention centre; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: When I was Minister of State at the Home Office between 1983 and 1987. I hope to make a further visit in due course.

Safer Cities Initiative

70. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider increasing the amount of money which he provided for local crime prevention work in the safer cities initiative launched in March 1988.

Mr. John Patten: Subject to detailed scrutiny of estimates and to parliamentary approval, expenditure in excess of £6 million is planned for local crime prevention work under the safer cities programme in 1990-91. It is too early in the life of this new and innovative programme to seek significant increases above this level.

Channel Tunnel

71. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he has given to the conduct of immigration procedures and passport controls for persons travelling in the proposed Channel tunnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We intend to put in place procedures which, without unnecessarily impeding the flow of bona fide travellers, will serve to maintain effective immigration control. I hope to make an announcement on the detail of the procedures shortly.

Manual Records

73. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce further legislation allowing individuals access to manual records concerning themselves held by Government agencies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: There are no present plans to do so.

Prindus

77. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state *(a)* the finance and *(b)* the profit or loss of Prindus in the latest available year.

Mr. Mellor: Prindus was a trading name used by the directorate of industries and farms. The directorate has been superseded by Prison Service Industries and Farms and the trading name has not been used for some years. This House voted finance for prison service industries and farms for the year ending 31 March 1990 in the sum of £20,250,016. Provisional trading results for that year have been published in paragraphs 87 and 88 of the report on the work of the prison service April 1988-March 1989 which has been placed in the Library. The net operating cost of PSIF for 1988-89 was £18·1 million.

Police Complaints Authority

79. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he is giving to the composition and powers of, and access to, the Police Complaints Authority.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans at present for any changes in the composition of, or access to, the Police Complaints Authority. My right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd) announced on 27 June 1987 at column 396 our intention to make a number of changes in the arrangements for dealing with complaints against the police—including some changes in the powers of the Police Complaints Authority —in response to recommendations set out in the authority's triennial review 1985-88.

Young Offenders

80. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what initiatives he proposes to take to overcome the added problems facing those who seek to rehabilitate young offenders arising from recent changes in social security regulations.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) on 5 December 1989.

Animal Experiments

82. **Mr. Steve Norris:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any proposals to amend the licensing arrangements under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have no plans to change the legal framework. My right hon. and learned Friend hopes to make an order bringing into effect the designation of breeding and supplying establishments with effect from January 1990. Other detailed changes are made in the administrative arrangements from time to time.

Animal Welfare

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans for introducing further legislation on animal welfare.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have no plans at present for such legislation for England and Wales.

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. John Townend: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the main purposes for which grants under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 are paid to local authorities.

Mr. John Patten: Under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 grant may be paid for the employment of staff to local authorities who make special provision for ethnic minorities whose language or customs differ from those of the rest of the community. The grant is an important way in which barriers preventing people from the ethnic minorities from using fully the opportunities for economic, educational and social development can be broken down and to enable them to play a growing and effective part in the mainstream of British life.

Section 11 grant has been the subject of a scrutiny review. The review is currently being considered with a view to ensuring that the grant meets more effectively the needs of the ethnic minorities and we hope to be in a position to announce the results of that consideration in the not too distant future.

Immigration

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent investigations have been undertaken by officers of the immigration service into fraudulent marriages of convenience; and with what results.

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will investigate the extent to which fraudulent marriages are used as a means of evading the immigration rules; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Inquiries over the last 18 months have revealed evidence of possible wrongdoing in a number of cases involving applications for settlement on the basis of marriage. These inquiries are continuing.

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has had that the personal data of British citizens held at the general registry office are being misused in connection with fraudulent marriages of convenience; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Poole (Mr. Ward) on 31 October 1989 at column *114*.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many meetings Ministers in his Department have had on immigration cases with hon. and right hon. Members for each month of the current year.

Mr. Waddington: In addition to telephone conversations and other personal exchanges, Ministers have held formal meetings with right hon. and hon. Members as follows:

	Meetings
January	2
February	4
March	4
April	2
May	2
June	6
July	12
August	0
September	0
October	0
November	3
December	1

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the adequacy of staffing levels of the immigration service at Isis house, SE1 to deal with the volume of immigration offences; and whether he has any plans to increase staffing levels.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The allocation of staff within the immigration service is kept under regular review to ensure the most effective and efficient use of available resources. As far as staffing for future years is concerned, I invite the hon. Member to await the publication in the new year of the Government's public expenditure White Paper.

Judicial System (Appointments)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if any progress has been made concerning the research he has commissioned for an appointments system in *(a)* the magistrates courts and *(b)* juvenile courts.

Mr. John Patten: Since the publication last year of the results of research on ways of reducing waiting time on the day, the Home Office has held two seminars for justices' clerks and drawn the attention of all clerks to the reductions in waiting time which can be achieved by better listing practices. In addition, a new quality of service performance indicator is being developed within the magistrates courts management information system, which will, among other things, measure waiting times on the day. This will be introduced during 1990.

Gartree Prison

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has become of the £20 confiscated at Her Majesty's prison Gartree from Mr. Patrick Hill by the deputy governor, Mr. Bushell, on 15 November.

Mr. Mellor: The money, which was in Mr. Hill's unauthorised possession, has been paid into public funds in accordance with standing instructions.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will produce a table showing by police authority for the latest 12 months data available the number of reported *(a)* burglaries, *(b)* murders, *(c)* rapes, *(d)* cases of sexual abuse against individuals under 16 years, *(e)* suicide attempts and *(f)* robberies involving cash greater than £100,000.

Mr. John Patten: The readily available information by police force area is published in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales Supplementary Volume 3" table S3.1, a copy of which is available in the Library. No information is available centrally on attempted suicide.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the total number of crimes committed in England and Wales for each year from 1970 to 1989, inclusive, by police authorities.

Mr. John Patten: The information for 1974-79 and 1981-88 is published in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales"; in Table 2.5 of the latest issue, for 1988, Cm 847. Information for 1970-73 and 1980 is contained in the "Supplementary Tables" for those years. Copies of these publications are available in the Library.

Police National Computer

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what decision he has made regarding the privatisation of the police national computer and the passing of control of the police national computer into the hands of an executive agency.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given today to the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall).

Rating Reform

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans, following the introduction of the community charge, to amend the law to allow overseas residents who are not British citizens but who will have to pay the poll tax, the right to vote in local elections.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No.

Downing Street (Access)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the criteria laid down for admissions to Downing street of *(a)* delegations, *(b)* beggars anxious to elicit charity, *(c)* tourists and *(d)* the general public.

Mr. Waddington: The Metropolitan police restrict access to Downing street as necessary in pursuance of their common law duty to prevent crime and disorder.

European Community

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with his European Community counterparts regarding the decisions by West Germany, France and Benelux countries to abolish border checks on people on their common frontiers.

Mr. Waddington: The United Kingdom is not associated with the Schengen agreement, which is an agreement between five neighbouring countries sharing long land frontiers, and we have had no formal discussions about it. The questions of progress under the agreement and its relationship to developments across the Community have, however, arisen from time to time in informal discussions which my predecessor and I have had with Community colleagues, and also in collective meetings of Ministers of member states of the Community. I anticipate further discussions of that kind, and we shall certainly follow developments with close interest.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has considered the implications of the Schengen agreement and supplementary agreements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: I have been asked to reply.

The Schengen agreement is an arrangement between France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg to abolish land frontier controls between their countries. Their work is separate from the discussions on free movement of people which are taking place among all member states of the European Community.

We shall naturally be interested in the experience of the Schengen partners in reducing frontier controls.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 8 December 1989

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Student Loans

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has had about the effect acceptance of a top-up loan will have on students' further overdraft facilities.

Mr. Jackson: It will be for the lender to decide what account to take of a client's borrowing under the top-up loans scheme.

Public Appointments

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many persons above the age of *(a)* 60, *(b)* 65 and *(c)* 70 years he has appointed to public bodies in each of the last 10 years.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department's policy is to make the best appointment possible for the task in hand, irrespective of age. No consolidated record of the age of members of public bodies is maintained.

Head Teachers (Wakefield)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many letters he has received since the beginning of the autumn school term from head teachers of schools within the Wakefield metropolitan district; what were the concerns expressed in these letters; and what action is being taken to respond to these concerns.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend receives a number of letters from head teachers about various aspects of education provision. All letters to this Department will continue to receive appropriate replies which I hope the recipients find helpful.

Open University

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the contribution made by the Open university in environmental studies, research and education.

Mr. Jackson: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave him on 16 May 1989 at column *124*.

Teacher Appraisal

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he intends to publish a consultative document on teacher appraisal dealing with the mechanism of the process;

(2) when he intends to introduce a scheme of teacher appraisal in schools; and if he will make a statement;

(3) whether he intends all schools to take part in teacher appraisal; and whether there will be training for teachers to assist them in the process;

(4) whether he intends to introduce some independent professionals into the teacher appraisal process; and if he will make a statement;

(5) who will appraise head teachers when teacher appraisal is introduced.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend received in July this year the report of the national steering group (NSG) responsible for overseeing the school teacher appraisal pilot study which ended this summer. The report, which was published in October, sets out recommendations for a national framework within which teacher appraisal should be implemented across England and Wales.

My right hon. Friend has now initiated consultation on the national steering group's recommendations, which cover head teachers and teachers, and deal with both the process of appraisal and the question of who should appraise whom. Consultation ends at Easter next year and will be followed by the issue of guidance for local education authorities and schools. As part of this consultation, we have sought views on the appropriate date for bringing in, through regulations, a national framework which would require the appraisal of all members of the teaching profession.

When regulations are introduced a date will be set by which time appraisal must be extended to all teachers and head teachers. Training to assist teachers and head teachers in the operation of appraisal is important; guidance about this will be given to local education authorities. We are ready to support expenditure on appraisal training of up to £15 million through the Local Education Authority Training Grants Scheme in 1990-91.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Health and Social Services (Appointments)

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list all the executive posts in the Department of Health and Social Services for Northern Ireland which have been recruited in the last four years for which figures are available, together with the salaries and grades; and if he will give the length of contract for each post.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The recruitment of permanent staff to the Northern Ireland Civil Service is the responsibility of the Northern Ireland Civil Service Commission which allocates successful candidates to individual Departments in response to their needs. Details of executive recruits appointed to the Department of Health and Social Services over the last four years are as follows:

Year	*Number*	*Grade*	*Salary on Appointment*
1986	5	Executive officer grade II	£5,250-£8,730
1987	5	Executive officer grade II	£5,820-£9,330
	1	Administrative trainee	[1]£8,000-£10,150
1988	1	Executive officer grade II	£6,134-£9,935
	1	Staff officer (administrative)	[1]£11,600-£14,595
1989	3	Executive officer grade II	£6,715-£10,723 (current scale)
	1	Chief executive for health and personal social services	£37,600-£40,900 (current scale)

[1] The current salary scales for the grades mentioned are as follows:
Administrative trainee: £10,246-£12,074.
Staff officer (administrative) £13,022-£16,336.

Appointments to the grades of executive officer II and administrative trainee/staff officer (administrative) are permanent subject to the satisfactory completion of a probationary period. The chief executive appointment is for an initial period of five years with the possibility of renewal for a further period of conversion to a permanent post.

Irish Prime Minister (Talks)

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he next expects to meet the Irish Prime Minister; and what matters he proposes to discuss.

Mr. Brooke: I have no current plans to meet the Taoiseach. I paid him a courtesy call in Dublin before the last intergovernmental conference on 30 November.

Rivers and Lakes

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total amount of public expenditure by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries Division, on the stocking of rivers and lakes with fish, in each year since 1980; and if he will give details by district council area.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 7 December 1989]*: Spending by the Department of Agriculture on the stocking of the Department's public angling waters since 1980 has been:

Financial year	*Total expenditure on stocking £*
1980-81	60,630
1981-82	50,490
1982-83	53,034
1983-84	69,093
1984-85	90,199
1985-86	149,711
1986-87	156,294
1987-88	107,243
1988-89	124,437

It is not possible to allocate expenditure on stocking to individual district council areas as the information is not held in the form requested and it could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

TRANSPORT

British Rail Maintenance Ltd.

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with BR about the operation of British Rail Maintenance Ltd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: None. The operation of British Rail Maintenance Ltd. is a management matter for British Rail.

Railways

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those Welsh lines due to have a super sprinter train service by mid-1990.

Mr. Portillo: Decisions on the allocation of rolling stock to specific railway lines are for the British Railways Board.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on when British Rail plans to electrify the Crewe to Holyhead line.

Mr. Portillo: I am unaware of any plans by British Rail to electrify this line.

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what resources he intends to make available to British Rail to encourage the greater frequency of trains on the Cambrian coast line between Shrewsbury and Aberystwyth and Shrewsbury and Pwllheli.

Mr. Portillo: The Government have approved over £400 million (1989-90 prices) of investment in new rolling stock for the provincial sector since 1983. It is for British Rail to decide the detailed disposition of resources within the sector in the light of the public service obligation which requires the board to continue to provide a level of service generally comparable to that in April 1988. They are free to provide additional services where that does not lead to an increase in grant.

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with British Rail about its plans for direct passenger travel through the Channel tunnel from 1993 *(a)* from Cardiff and *(b)* from Holyhead in terms of year of commencement and proposed frequency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: British Rail will be setting out its proposals in the plan which it will shortly be publishing, in compliance with section 40 of the Channel Tunnel Act 1987. I have discussed progress on this work with British Rail from time to time.

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with British Rail about running passenger through trains on the central Wales line from Manchester to Milford Haven.

Mr. Portillo: Decisions on the routing and timetabling of rail services are for the management of British Rail.

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on when the Paddington to Swansea line will be electrified.

Mr. Portillo: It is for British Rail to come forward with any proposals.

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether British Rail has sought approval for investment in a Berne gauge freight line *(a)* from the Channel tunnel to south Wales and *(b)* from the Channel tunnel to north Wales.

Mr. Portillo: No.

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has received a request from British Rail for funding of a main line rail link to Cardiff Wales (Rhoose) Airport.

Mr. Portillo: No.

Roads

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to place a consultancy with the Energy and Environment Research Unit of the Open university on environmental effects of future road planning.

Mr. Atkins: No.

Mr. Terry Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the full roads report referred to in paragraph 32 of the White Paper "Roads for Prosperity" is to be published.

Mr. Atkins: In the new year.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Rented Farms

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has concerning the number of farms available for rent in the private sector for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Maclean: None.

Scrapie

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he proposes to take any action to prevent the sale of scrapie-infected sheep protein for use as feed for pigs.

Mr. Maclean: Scrapie is one of the oldest known animal diseases and has been the subject of extensive research. There is no scientific evidence to indicate that such action is necessary.

Walnut Trees

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if his Department has produced a planting, growing and husbandry manual for walnut trees.

Mr. Maclean: Guidance on growing walnut trees is given in Forestry Commission Bulletin 62, Silviculture of Broadleaved Woodland (ISBN 011 710 154 0), available in the Libary of the House.

Agro-forestry Development

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he has for innovative multi-culture agro-forestry development in the United Kingdom for commercial scale *(a)* flour, *(b)* dye and *(c)* biomass production.

Mr. Maclean: None. My Department is, however, separately funding research on both agro-forestry and novel crops.

Soil Temperature

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to introduce technologies to increase the mean soil temperature in the United Kingdom by 2°C, and what would be the implications for crop yield of such an increase in soil temperature.

Mr. Maclean: The Minister has no plans to introduce technologies to increase the mean soil temperatures in the United Kingdom by 2°C.

The effect of increased soil temperature on crop yield would be dependent on the extent of seasonal fluctuations in that increase and the effect of other associated climatic changes, for example, in the level and pattern of rainfall. If it is assumed that the temperature increase remains constant throughout the year and is a direct result of increased radiation, and that water supply remains adequate, then yields of cereals and other field crops are likely to increase. In many spring crops such as cereals, potatoes, sugar beet, peas and beans increased yield potential would be a result of warmer spring temperatures allowing earlier planting-sowing so as to avoid the worst effects of mid-summer drought.

THE ARTS

Libraries, Museums and Galleries

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Minister for the Arts in determining public expenditure plans for 1990-91 what provision was made for the cost of (i) libraries and (ii) museums and galleries.

Mr. Luce: In 1990-91 the central Government provision for libraries is £112 million and for museums and galleries £182 million. (These figures do not include local authority spending).

NATIONAL FINANCE

Government Telephone Network

Mr. Page: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest position in drawing up the specifications for the new Government telephone network; and whether public tenders will be sought from qualified suppliers.

Mr. Ryder: Decisions have not yet been made on whether, or how, to proceed with an integrated voice and data network for Government. The findings of the study announced by my right hon. Friend the then Paymaster General on 6 March 1989 are under consideration.

Value Added Tax

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on his policy on the charging of value added tax on goods which facilitate mobility of disabled people.

Mr. Ryder: Most specialised equipment designed for use by disabled people and the charities that serve them is relieved of value added tax, but zero-rating does not extend to general purpose goods or services which can equally well be used by the able-bodied as by the disabled.

European Monetary System

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out the rate of inflation in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland for each month since the Republic of Ireland became a full member of the European monetary system.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 7 December 1989]:* The information requested is as follows:

12-month consumer price inflation

	United Kingdom	*Ireland*
1979		
January	—	—
February	—	10·9
March	9·7	—
April	10·2	—
May	10·5	12·6
June	11·4	—
July	15·6	—
August	15·9	13·6
September	16·6	—
October	17·1	—
November	17·3	16·0
December	17·2	—
1980		
January	18·4	—
February	19·1	15·6
March	19·9	—
April	21·8	—
May	21·8	20·0
June	21·1	—
July	16·9	—
August	16·2	18·8
September	15·8	—
October	15·5	—
November	15·2	18·2
December	15·1	—
1981		
January	13·1	—
February	12·4	21·0
March	12·6	—
April	12·0	—
May	11·8	17·1
June	11·4	—
July	10·9	—
August	11·5	20·0
September	11·5	—
October	11·7	—
November	12·0	23·4
December	12·1	—
1982		
January	12·0	—
February	11·1	18·8
March	10·4	—
April	9·5	—
May	9·5	21·0
June	9·1	—
July	8·7	—
August	8·0	17·0
September	7·2	—
October	6·9	—
November	6·3	12·3
December	5·4	—
1983		
January	4·9	—
February	5·3	12·5
March	4·6	—
April	4·0	—
May	3·7	9·3
June	3·7	—
July	4·3	—
August	4·6	10·0
September	5·2	—
October	4·9	—
November	4·8	10·3
December	5·4	—
1984		
January	5·2	—
February	5·1	10·3
March	5·2	—
April	5·2	—
May	5·1	9·7
June	5·1	—
July	4·4	—
August	5·0	7·9
September	4·7	—
October	4·9	—
November	4·9	6·8
December	4·6	—
1985		
January	5·0	—
February	5·3	6·2
March	6·1	—
April	6·9	—
May	6·9	5·2
June	6·9	—
July	6·8	—
August	6·2	5·5
September	5·8	—
October	5·5	—
November	5·5	4·9
December	5·6	—
1986		
January	5·5	—
February	5·1	4·6
March	4·2	—
April	3·1	—
May	2·8	4·4
June	2·6	—
July	2·5	—
August	2·4	3·1
September	3·1	—
October	3·0	—
November	3·6	3·2
December	3·7	—
1987		
January	3·9	—
February	3·9	3·4
March	4·0	—
April	4·2	—
May	4·2	2·9
June	4·2	—
July	4·4	—
August	4·4	3·3
September	4·2	—
October	4·5	—
November	4·1	3·1
December	3·7	—
1988		
January	3·3	—
February	3·3	2·0
March	3·5	—
April	3·9	—
May	4·2	1·8
June	4·6	—
July	4·8	—
August	5·7	2·0
September	5·9	—
October	6·4	—
November	6·4	2·7
December	6·8	—
1989		
January	7·5	—
February	7·8	3·3
March	7·9	—
April	8·0	—
May	8·3	3·9
June	8·3	—
July	8·2	—
August	7·3	4·5
September	7·6	—
October	7·3	—
November	—	—

	United Kingdom	*Ireland*
December	—	—

Source: OECD.
Notes: Irish data are available only quarterly.
Ireland joined the european monetary system and exchange rate mechanism on 13 March 1979.

Household Income

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list in rank order for each region in Britain *(a)* the average household income by region and *(b)* social security benefits as a proportion of household income; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 7 December 1989]:* The latest regional estimates for average household income and social security benefits relate to households covered in the family expenditure survey for the calendar years 1986 and 1987 and are given in table 31 of the report of the family expenditure survey 1987, a copy of which is in the Library.

Relocation

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what relocations of his Department's staff, or agencies relating thereto, are currently being considered; and what are the numbers of staff affected.

Mr Ryder: A review of the location of the Treasury's activities is currently taking place under the policy that my right hon. Friend the then Paymaster General announced on 31 March 1988 at cols. *610-11*. No decisions have yet been taken.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Health Care Professions (Advertising)

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether it is his intention to implement the recommendations of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission obliging health care professions to allow their members to use unsolicited mailshots as a means of promoting their services.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: When the MMC report on the supply of services of registered medical practitioners in relation to restrictions on advertising was published in March 1989, the Director General of Fair Trading was asked to seek undertakings that rules on advertising would be changed in accordance with the findings and recommendations of the MMC in a form to be agreed with him. A number of changes have already been made and the Director General of Fair Trading informs me that negotiations continue on the remaining restrictions, including that of unsolicited distribution of leaflets by general practitioners.

Insider Dealing

Mr. Arbuthnot: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the implementation of the insider dealing directive.

Mr. Redwood: I am today publishing a consultative document on the Government's proposals for changes to the insider dealing law. The proposals reflect both our experience of the operation of our present law, and the insider dealing directive which was unanimously agreed by the Council of Ministers on 13 November.

The directive sets minimum requirements for member states to follow in prohibiting insider dealing. We have in a number of areas gone beyond these requirements. We are also suggesting a substantial change by relating the offence to transactions done by or through authorised persons under the Financial Services Act rather than to the current complex structure of deals done on or off a recognised stock exchange.

We are inviting comments by the end of February 1990. I am arranging for a copy of the paper to be placed in the Library of the House.

Cars and Vans

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many cars and vans were produced in *(a)* the Federal Republic of Germany, *(b)* France, *(c)* Italy and *(d)* Spain in 1988.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 4 December 1989]:* Figures for cars are:

(a) 4·3 million, *(b)* 3·2 million *(c)* 1·9 million, *(d)* 1·5 million.

Figures for vans are not readily available.

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many cars and vans were produced in the United Kingdom in 1988.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 4 December 1989]:* 1·2 million.

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has on the percentage of cars and vans which were produced in 1988 in *(a)* the Federal Republic of Germany, *(b)* France, *(c)* Italy and *(d)* Spain were exported.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 4 December 1989]:* Figures for cars are:

(a) 58 per cent., *(b)* 57 per cent., *(c)* 36 per cent., *(d)* 53 per cent.

Figures for vans are not readily available.

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what percentage of the cars and vans which were produced in the United Kingdom in 1988 were exported.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 4 December 1989]:* 18 per cent.

BAT Factory (Liverpool)

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will estimate *(a)* the total loss in receipts to the Exchequer and *(b)* the extra cost to Government Departments arising from the closure of the British American Tobacco factory in Liverpool; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 6 December 1989]:* No realistic estimates are practicable. As to the possible principal effects, no significant loss of tobacco duty or

VAT is expected since the factory manufactures for export. Corporation tax payable by BAT will depend upon the company's overall trading results. Unemployment benefits and social security costs depend upon the number of claimants, their individual circumstances and the time before they find other work. The Government's existing programmes to assist enterprise and creation of new jobs are of course available in this area but any such costs would be met from existing provisions.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will assess the effect on the economy of Liverpool of the proposed closure of the British American Tobacco factory; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 6 December 1989]*: No realistic assessment is practicable. British American Tobacco would no longer pay rates on the site but, in that it intends to offer the factory free to the Merseyside development corporation, it seems likely that the premises will again be beneficially occupied and thus rates will again become payable. Unemployment benefits and social security costs depend upon the number of claimants, their individual circumstances and the time before they find other work.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will meet the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside and other Liverpool Members to discuss the implications of the proposed closure of the British American Tobacco factory in Liverpool.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 6 December 1989]*: I would be happy to meet the hon. Members concerned.

Non-oil Exports

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the total non-oil export volume in the United Kingdom for each of the last five years.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have been asked to reply.

The information required is in the Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics, copies of which are available from the Library.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Crack

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much crack by weight and volume was confiscated in the United Kingdom or entering the United Kingdom in *(a)* 1987, *(b)* 1988 and *(c)* each month of 1989.

Mr. Mellor: Seizures of crack reported by the police to the National Drugs Intelligence Unit were:

Year	*Seizures*
1987	12
1988	27
[1]1989	124

[1] January—November.

Weights of crack seizures by the police analysed by the forensic science service were:

	Grammes
1987	6·7
1988	113·7
1989	
January	2·3
February	85·1
March	26·3
April	6·4
May	22·3
June	2·8
July	8·9
August	41·8
September	9·6
October	12·2
November	21·6

In addition Customs reported one seizure of 1 gm of crack in 1987, one of 0·9 gm in 1988 and two in March 1989 amounting to 138 gm.

Courts (Expenditure)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in determining public expenditure plans for 1990-91 what provision was made for the cost of (i) coroners' courts, (ii) probation and (iii) magistrates' courts.

Mr. Waddington: Under the new planning total, the Government no longer make expenditure plans or provision for local authority spending but only for central Government support towards that spending. Central Government provide specific grant at the rate of 80 per cent. towards the costs of the probation service and magistrates courts.

The planned grant provision in 1990-91 for magistrates courts is £184·1 million for current expenditure and £40·6 million for capital expenditure, and for the probation service £198·8 million for current expenditure and £7·5 million for capital expenditure. In addition, credit approvals for capital expenditure will be made available totalling £10·5 million for magistrates' courts and £3·8 million for probation. Coroners courts are supported not through specific grant but through revenue support grant.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to improve the working of the criminal injuries compensation scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: The Criminal Injuries Compensation Board's annual report, for the year ended 31 March 1989 (Cm. 900, published on 6 December) shows that it received 43,385 applications—a record number—during the year. This year's intake is expected to show a further unprecedented rise to over 50,000 applications. The board has a backlog of some 96,000 cases, with consequent delays to all claims.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and I have taken steps to meet these problems. We have increased staff from 220 in 1987 to 320. We have appointed more board members. Two thirds of the work is now dealt with by locally-recruited staff in a new office in Glasgow. A major computerisation programme will begin early next year. Despite the substantial increase in applications and the disruption caused by relocation of work to Scotland, the board resolved 38,830 cases last year, compared with 29,965 in the best previous year. On past performance we can expect far more cases to be resolved when the changes in staffing, location, and procedures have been fully absorbed. Meanwhile we have discussed with the chairman of the board the need for further improvements.

The Criminal Justice Act 1988 provides for the scheme to be placed on a statutory footing. The board says in its report that to make the scheme statutory now would disrupt work and add to arrears. We accept that judgment. In view of the urgent need to tackle the backlog and improve the board's service to present and future claimants I have decided, with the agreement of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, and the board, not to make the scheme statutory yet but to make changes in the present non-statutory scheme to streamline it.

The revised scheme will come into effect on 1 February 1990. The principal changes to which I should call attention are the discretion given to the board to delegate decision-making in the first instance to staff, and revised provisions for oral hearings. Delegation will allow more flexibility and efficiency. Under revised hearings provisions all applicants will retain a right to have their cases reviewed by at least two members of the board, but applications for a hearing may be considered by two members of the board on the papers and a hearing will be held only if the case warrants.

I should also draw attention to an increase in the lower limit for compensation awards. This was last increased on 7 November 1986 to £550. The purpose of the limit is to exclude relatively minor injuries from the scope of the scheme and to concentrate resources on cases most deserving of compensation. With the passage of time it is right to raise the limit to £750. The new limit will apply to new applications.

While not bringing the scheme set down in the Criminal Justice Act 1988 into effect, I am taking this opportunity to incorporate Parliament's wishes on several points. The revised scheme will cover claims arising from offences of trespass on a railway; payment of compensation in fatal injury cases to the cohabitee of the deceased person; payment to victims of a set sum for a child born as a consequence of rape; a limit on compensation for loss of earnings of one and a half times gross average earnings and removal of compensation for damage or loss of clothing.

The Government are determined that victims should receive proper recognition under the criminal justice system, including the timely payment of compensation for personal injuries resulting from crime. The revised scheme will allow for better use of resources to achieve that end and contribute towards an improvement in the quality of service to claimants.

The revised scheme is as follows:

Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme

Administration

1. The Compensation Scheme will be administered by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, which will be assisted by appropriate staff. Appointments to the Board will be made by the Secretary of State, after consultation with the Lord Chancellor and, where appropriate, the Lord Advocate. A person may only be appointed to be a member of the Board if he is a barrister practising in England and Wales, an advocate practising in Scotland, a solicitor practising in England and Wales or Scotland or a person who holds or has held judicial office in England and Wales or Scotland. The Chairman and other members of the Board will be appointed to serve for up to five years in the first instance, and their appointments will be renewable for such periods as the Secretary of State considers appropriate. The Chairman and other members will not serve on the Board beyond the age of 72, or after ceasing to be qualified for appointment, whichever is the earlier except that, where the Secretary of State considers it to be in the interests of the Scheme to extend a particular appointment beyond the age of 72 or after retirement from legal practice, he may do so. The Secretary of State may, if he thinks fit terminate a member's appointment on the ground of incapacity or misbehaviour.

2. The Board will be provided with money through a Grant-in-Aid out of which payments for compensation awarded in accordance with the principles set out below will be made. Their net expenditure will fall on the Votes of the Home Office and the Scottish Home and Health Department.

3. The Board, or such members of the Board's staff as the Board may designate, will be entirely responsible for deciding what compensation should be paid in individual cases and their decisions will not be subject to appeal or to Ministerial review. The general working of the Scheme will, however, be kept under review by the Government, and the Board will submit annually to the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Scotland a full report on the operation of the Scheme, together with their accounts. The report and accounts will be open to debate in Parliament.

Scope of the Scheme

4. The board will entertain applications for ex gratia payments of compensation in any case where the applicant or, in the case of an application by a spouse or dependant (see paragraphs 15 and 16 below), the deceased, sustained in Great Britain, or on a British vessel, aircraft or hovercraft or on, under or above an installation in a designated area within the meaning of section 1 subsection (7) of the Continental Shelf Act 1964 or any waters within 500 metres of such an installation, or in a lighthouse off the coast of the United Kingdom, personal injury directly attributable—

(a) to a crime of violence (including arson or poisoning); or

(b) to the apprehension or attempted apprehension of an offender or a suspected offender or to the prevention or attempted prevention of an offence or to the giving of help to any constable who is engaged in any such activity; or

(c) to an offence of trespass on a railway.

Applications for compensation will be entertained only if made within three years of the incident giving rise to the injury, except that the Board may in exceptional cases waive this requirement. A decision by the Chairman not to waive the time limit will be final. In considering for the purposes of this paragraph whether any act is a criminal act a person's conduct will be treated as constituting an offence notwithstanding that he may not be convicted of the offence by reason of age, insanity or diplomatic immunity.

5. Compensation will not be payable unless the Board are satisfied that the injury was one for which the total amount of compensation payable after deduction of social security benefits, but before any other deductions under the Scheme, would not be less than the minimum amount of compensation. This shall be £750. The application of the minimum level shall not, however, affect the payment of funeral expenses under paragraph 15 below or, where the victim has died otherwise than in consequence of an injury for which compensation would have been payable to him under the terms of the Scheme, any sum payable to a dependant or relative of his under paragraph 16.

6. The Board may withold or reduce compensation if they consider that—

(a) the applicant has not taken, without delay, all reasonable steps to inform the police, or any other authority considered by the Board to be appropriate for the purpose, of the circumstances of the injury and to co-operate with the police or other authority in bringing the offender to justice; or

(b) the applicant has failed to give all reasonable assistance to the Board or other authority in connection with the application; or

(c) having regard to the conduct of the applicant before, during or after the events giving rise to the claim or to his character as shown by his criminal convictions or unlawful conduct—and, in applications under paragraphs 15 and 16 below, to the conduct, or character as shown by the criminal convictions or unlawful conduct, of the deceased and of the applicant—it is inappropriate that a full award, or any award at all, be granted.

Further, compensation will not be payable—

(d) in the case of an application under paragraph 4*(b)* above where the injury was sustained accidentally, unless the Board are satisfied that the applicant was at the time taking an exceptional risk which was justified in all the circumstances.

7. Compensation will not be payable unless the Board are satisfied that there is no possibility that a person responsible for causing the injury will benefit from an award.

8. Where the victim and any person responsible for the injuries which are the subject of the application (whether that person actually inflicted them or not) were living in the same household at the time of the injuries as members of the same family, compensation will be paid only where—

(a) the person responsible has been prosecuted in connection with the offence, except where the Board consider that there are practical, technical or other good reasons why a prosecution has not been brought; and

(b) in the case of violence between adults in the family, the Board are satisfied that the person responsible and the applicant stopped living in the same household before the application was made and seem unlikely to live together again; and

(c) in the case of an application under this paragraph by or on behalf of a minor, ie a person under 18 years of age, the Board are satisfied that it would not be against the minor's interests to make a full or reduced award.

For the purposes of this paragraph, a man and a woman living together as husband and wife shall be treated as members of the same family.

9. If in the opinion of the Board it is in the interests of the applicant (whether or not a minor or a person under an incapacity) so to do, the Board may pay the amount of any award to any trustee or trustees to hold on such trusts for the benefit of all or any of the following persons, namely the applicant and any spouse, widow or widower, relatives and dependants of the applicant and with such provisions for their respective maintenance, education and benefit and with such powers and provisions for the investment and management of the fund and for the remuneration of the trustee or trustees as the Board shall think fit. Subject to this the Board will have a general discretion in any case in which they have awarded compensation to make special arrangements for its administration. In this paragraph "relatives" means all persons claiming descent from the applicant's grandparents and "dependants" means all persons who in the opinion of the Board are dependent on him wholly or partially for the provision of the ordinary necessities of life.

10. The Board will consider applications for compensation arising out of acts of rape and other sexual offences both in respect of pain, suffering and shock and in respect of loss of earnings due to consequent pregnancy, and, where the victim is ineligible for a maternity grant under the National Insurance Scheme, in respect of the expenses of childbirth. Compensation will not be payable for the maintenance of any child born as a result of a sexual offence, except that where a woman is awarded compensation for rape the Board shall award the additional sum of £5,000 in respect of each child born alive having been conceived as a result of the rape which the applicant intends to keep.

11. Applications for compensation for personal injury attributable to traffic offences will be excluded from the Scheme, except where such injury is due to a deliberate attempt to run the victim down.

Basis of compensation

12. Subject to the other provisions of this Scheme, compensation will be assessed on the basis of common law damages and will normally take the form of a lump sum payment, although the Board may make alternative arrangements in accordance with paragraph 9 above. More than one payment may be made where an applicant's eligibility for compensation has been established but a final award cannot be calculated in the first instance—for example where only a provisional medical assessment can be given. In a case in which an interim award has been made, the Board may decide to make a reduced award, increase any reduction already made or refuse to make any further payment at any stage before receiving notification of acceptance of a final award.

13. Although the Board's decisions in a case will normally be final, they will have discretion to reconsider a case after a final award of compensation has been accepted where there has been such a serious change in the applicant's medical condition that injustice would occur if the original assessment of compensation were allowed to stand, or where the victim has since died as a result of his injuries. A case will not be re-opened more than three years after the date of the final award unless the Board are satisfied, on the basis of evidence presented with the application for re-opening the case, that the renewed application can be considered without a need for extensive enquiries. A decision by the Chairman that a case may not be re-opened will be final.

14. Compensation will be limited as follows—

(a) the rate of net loss of earnings or earning capacity to be taken into account shall not exceed one and a half times the gross average industrial earnings at the date of assessment (as published in the Department of Employment Gazette and adjusted as considered appropriate by the Board);

(b) there shall be no element comparable to exemplary or punitive damages.

Where an applicant has lost earnings or earning capacity as a result of the injury, he may be required by the Board to produce evidence thereof in such manner and form as the Board may specify.

15. Where the victim has died in consequence of the injury, no compensation other than funeral expenses will be payable for the benefit of his estate, but the Board will be able to entertain applications from any person who is a dependant of the victim within the meaning of section 1(3) of the Fatal Accidents Act 1976 or who is a relative of the victim within the meaning of the Schedule 1 to the Damages (Scotland) Act 1976. Compensation will be payable in accordance with the other provisions of this Scheme to any such dependant or relative. Funeral expenses to an amount considered reasonable by the Board will be paid in appropriate cases, even where the person bearing the cost of the funeral is otherwise ineligible to claim under this Scheme. Applications may be made under this paragraph where the victim has died from his injuries even if an award has been made to the victim in his lifetime. Such cases will be subject to conditions set out in paragraph 13 for the re-opening of cases and compensation payable to the applicant will be reduced by the amount paid to the victim.

16. Where the victim has died otherwise than in consequence of the injury, the Board may make an award to such dependant or relative as is mentioned in paragraph 15 in respect of loss of wages, expenses and liabilities incurred by the victim before death as a result of the injury whether or not the application for compensation in respect of the injury has been made before the death.

17. Compensation will not be payable for the loss of or damage to clothing or any property whatsoever arising from the injury unless the Board are satisfied that the property was relied upon by the victim as a physical aid.

18. The cost of private medical treatment will be payable by the Board only if the Board consider that, in all the circumstances, both the private treatment and the cost of it are reasonable.

19. Compensation will be reduced by the full value of any present or future entitlement to—

- *(a)* United Kingdom social security benefits;
- *(b)* any criminal injury compensation awards made under or pursuant to statutory arrangements in force at the relevant time in Northern Ireland;
- *(c)* social security benefits, compensation awards or similar payments whatsoever from the funds of other countries; or
- *(d)* payments under insurance arrangements except as excluded below which may accrue, as a result of the injury or death, to the benefit of the person to whom the award is made.

In assessing this entitlement, account will be taken of any income tax liability likely to reduce the value of such benefits and, in the case of an application under paragraph 15, the value of such benefits will not be reduced to take account of prospects of remarriage. If, in the opinion of the Board, an applicant may be eligible for any such benefits the Board may refuse to make an award until the applicant has taken such steps as the Board consider reasonable to claim them. Subject to paragraph 18 above, the Board will disregard monies paid or payable to the victim or his dependants as a result of or in consequence of insurance personally effected, paid for an maintained by the personal income of the victim or, in the case of a person under the age of 18, by his parent.

20. Where the victim is alive compensation will be reduced to take account of any pension accruing as a result of the injury. Where the victim has died in consequence of the injury, and any pension is payable for the benefit of the person to whom the award is made as a result of the death of the victim, the compensation will similarly be reduced to take account of the value of that pension. Where such pensions are taxable, one-half of their value will be deducted; where they are not taxable, eg where a lump sum payment not subject to income tax is made, they will be deducted in full. For the purposes of this paragraph, "pension" means any payment payable as a result of the injury or death, in pursuance of pension or other rights whatsoever connected with the victim's employment, and includes any gratuity of that kind and similar benefits payable under insurance policies paid for by employers. Pension rights accruing solely as a result of payments by the victim or a dependant will be disregarded.

21. When a civil court has given judgment providing for payment of damages or a claim for damages has been settled on terms providing for payment of money, or when payment of compensation has been ordered by a criminal court, in respect of personal injuries, compensation by the Board in respect of the same injuries will be reduced by the amount of any payment received under such an order or settlement. When a civil court has assessed damages, as opposed to giving judgment for damages agreed by the parties, but the person entitled to such damages has not yet received the full sum awarded, he will not be precluded from applying to the Board, but the Board's assessment of compensation will not exceed the sum assessed by the court. Furthermore, a person who is compensated by the Board will be required to undertake to repay them from any damages, settlement or compensation he may subsequently obtain in respect of his injuries. In arriving at their assessment of compensation the Board will not be bound by any finding of contributory negligence by any court, but will be entirely bound by the terms of the Scheme.

Procedure for determining applications

22. Every application will be made to the Board in writing as soon as possible after the event on a form obtainable from the Board's offices. The initial decision on an application will be taken by a single member of the Board, or by any member of the Board's staff to whom the Board has given authority to determine applications on the Board's behalf. Where an award is made the applicant will be given a breakdown of the assessment of compensation, exept where the Board consider this inappropriate, and where an award is refused or reduced, reasons for the decision will be given. If the applicant is not satisfied with the decision he may apply for an oral hearing which, if granted, will be held before at least two members of the Board excluding any member who made the original decision. The application for a hearing must be made within three months of notification of the initial decision; however the Board may waive this time limit where an extension is requested with good reason within the three month period, or where it is otherwise in the interests of justice to do so. A decision by the Chairman not to waive the time limit will be final. It will also be open to a member of the Board, or a designated member of the Board's staff, where he considers that he cannot make a just and proper decision himself to refer the application for a hearing before at least two members of the Board, one of whom may be the member who, in such a case, decided to refer the application to a hearing. An applicant will have no title to an award offered until the Board have received notification in writing that he accepts it.

23. Applications for hearings must be made in writing on a form supplied by the Board and should be supported by reasons together with any additional evidence which may assist the Board to decide whether a hearing should be granted. If the reasons in support of the application suggest that the initial decision was based on information obtained by or submitted to the Board which was incomplete or erroneous, the application may be remitted for reconsideration by the member of the Board who made the initial decision or, where this is not practicable or where the initial decision was made by a member of the Board's staff, by any member of the Board. In such cases it will still be open for the applicant to apply in writing for a hearing if he remains dissatisfied after his case has been reconsidered and the three-month limitation period in paragraph 22 will start from the date of notification of the reconsidered decision.

24. An applicant will be entitled to an oral hearing only if—

- (a) no award was made on the ground that any award would be less than the sum specified in paragraph 5 of the Scheme and it appears that applying the principles set out in paragraph 26 below, the Board might make an award; or
- (b) an award was made and it appears that, applying the principles set out in paragraph 26 below, the Board might make a larger award; or
- (c) no award or a reduced award was made and there is a dispute as to the material facts or conclusions upon which the initial or reconsidered decision was based or it appears that the decision may have been wrong in law or principle.

An application for a hearing which appears likely to fail the foregoing criteria may be reviewed by not less than two members of the Board other than any member who made the initial or reconsidered decision. If it is considered on review that if any facts or conclusions which are disputed were resolved in the applicant's favour it would have made no difference to the initial or reconsidered decision, or that for any other reason an oral hearing would serve no useful purpose, the application for a hearing will be refused. A decision to refuse an application for a hearing will be final.

25. It will be for the applicant to make out his case at the hearing, and where appropriate this will extend to satisfying the Board that compensation should not be withheld or reduced under the terms of paragraph 6 or paragraph 8. The applicant and a member of the Board's staff will be able to call, examine and cross-examine witnesses. The Board will be entitled to take into account any relevant hearsay, opinion or written evidence, whether or not the author gives oral evidence at the hearing. The Board will reach their decision solely in the light of evidence brought out at the hearing, and all the information and evidence made available to the Board members at the hearing will be made available to the applicant at, if not before, the hearing. The Board may adjourn a hearing for a reason, and where the only issue remaining is the assessment of compensation may remit the application to a Single Member of the Board for determination in the absence of the applicant but subject to the applicant's right to apply under paragraph 22 above for a further hearing if he is not satisfied with the final assessment of compensation. While it will be open to the applicant to bring a friend or legal adviser to assist him in putting his case, the Board will not pay the cost of legal representation. They will, however, have discretion to pay the expenses of the applicant and witnesses at a hearing. If an applicant fails to attend a hearing and has offered no reasonable excuse for his non attendance the Board at the hearing may dismiss his application. A person whose application has been dismissed by the Board for failure to attend a hearing may apply in writing to the Chairman of the

Board for his application to be reinstated. A decision by the Chairman that an application should not be reinstated will be final.

26. At the hearing the amount of compensation assessed by a single member of the Board or a designated member of the Board's staff will not be altered except upon the same principles as the Court of Appeal in England or the Court of Session in Scotland would alter an assessment of damages made by a trial judge.

27. Procedure at hearings will be as informal as is consistent with the proper determination of applications, and hearings will in general be in private. The Board will have discretion to permit observers, such as representatives of the press, radio and television, to attend hearings provided that written undertakings are given that the anonymity of the applicant and other parties will not in any way be infringed by subsequent reporting. The Board will have power to publish information about its decisions in individual cases; this power will be limited only by the need to preserve the anonymity of applicants and other parties.

Implementation

28. The provisions of this Scheme will take effect from 1 February 1990. All applications for compensation received by the Board on or after 1 February 1990 will be dealt with under the terms of this Scheme except that in relation to applications in respect of injuries incurred before that date the following provisions of the 1990 scheme shall apply:

- *(a)* Paragraph 4(c);
- *(b)* Paragraph 8, but only in respect of injuries incurred before 1 October 1979 where paragraph 7 of the 1969 Scheme will continue to apply;
- *(c)* Paragraph 10 but only insofar as it requires the Board to award an additional sum of £5,000 in the circumstances therein prescribed;
- *(d)* Paragraphs 15 and 16 but only insofar as they enable the Board to entertain applications from a person who is a dependant within the meaning of section 1(3)(b) of the Fatal Accidents Act 1976 or who is a relative within the meaning of paragraph 1(aa) of Schedule 1 to the Damages (Scotland) Act 1976 other than such a person who is applying only for funeral expenses.

29. Applications for compensation received by the Board before 1 February 1990 will continue to be dealt with in accordance with paragraph 25 of the Scheme which came into operation on 1 October 1979 ("the 1979 Scheme") or the Scheme which came into operation on 21 May 1969 ("the 1969 Scheme") except that the following paragraphs of this Scheme will apply in addition to or in substitution for provisions of these schemes as specified below:

- *(a)* Paragraph 3 of this Scheme will apply in substitution for paragraph 4 of the 1969 Scheme and paragraph 3 of the 1979 Scheme;
- *(b)* Paragraph 6(c) of this Scheme will apply in substitution for paragraph 17 of the 1969 Scheme and paragraph 6(c) of the 1979 Scheme;
- *(c)* Paragraph 14 of this Scheme will apply additionally to applications otherwise falling to be considered under the 1969 or 1979 Schemes but only insofar as it allows the Board to require an applicant to produce evidence of loss of earnings or earning capacity;
- *(d)* Paragraphs 22, 23 and 25 of this Scheme will apply in substitution for paragraphs 21 and 22 of the 1969 Scheme and paragraphs 22 and 23 of the 1979 Scheme;
- *(e)* Paragraph 26 of this Scheme will apply additionally to applications otherwise falling to be considered under the 1969 or 1979 Schemes:
- *(f)* Paragraph 27 of this Scheme will apply in substitution for paragraph 23 of the 1969 Scheme and paragraph 24 of the 1979 Scheme;

30. Applications to re-open cases received before 1 February 1990 will continue to be dealt with under the terms of paragraph 25 of the 1979 Scheme. Applications to re-open cases received on or after 1 February 1990 will be considered and determined under the terms of this Scheme.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Lebanon

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many officials in his Department are detailed to handle the monitoring of, and plans to seek the release of, British hostages in the Lebanon.

Mr. Maude: A considerable number of officials both in London and in missions overseas are concerned with the hostage issue. The number involved at any one time depends upon the circumstances.

Nuclear Tests

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those states which are party to the partial test ban treaty but at the present time oppose its amendment to constitute a comprehensive ban on nuclear testing; and what are the declared reasons for each state's opposition.

Mr. Maude: It would not be appropriate for us to speculate on the views of other parties to the Treaty, or to reveal what has been said to us privately on this subject. However, 23 countries abstained or voted against the UN General assembly L25 resolution calling for the PTBT to be converted into a comprehensive test ban treaty. Those countries were the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Austria, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Federal Republic of Germany, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Iceland, Italy, Israel, Japan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and Turkey.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action the United Kingdom Government have taken since May 1979 to achieve the discontinuance of all test explosions of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Maude: The United Kingdom participated in the unsuccessful trilateral negotiations on this subject, which took place from 1977 to 1980. But, for the foreseeable future, our security will depend on deterrence, based in part on the possession of nuclear weapons. That means a continuing need to test these weapons to ensure they remain effective and up to date. A comprehensive test ban therefore remains a long term goal.

Eastern Europe

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has consulted with academic experts at the School of Slavonic and East Europe Studies at the University of London in formulating his policies in response to changing socio-political developments in eastern Europe in the past six months.

Mr. Maude: No, but Ministers and officials of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office have frequent contacts with experts from the school, as they have with other academics, during which such matters are discussed.

India

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to have the opportunity to discuss with the new Foreign Minister of India the possibility of India joining the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no plans yet to meet the new Foreign Minister of India.

Montserrat

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the chief Minister and other Ministers in Montserrat have been consulted about the adequacy of British aid to the island following the devastation caused by hurricane Hugo; and if he is satisfied that the aid given is adequate in terms of the island's medical and rehousing needs.

Mr. Sainsbury: There has been, and continues to be, close consultation with the Government of Montserrat, particularly through our development division in Barbados. I have visited Montserrat twice since hurricane Hugo for discussion with the chief Minister and others. I am satisfied with the aid provided so far. Much remains to be done and we are urgently considering the longer term needs. The chief Minister is meeting ODA officials today, 8 December.

Scientific Culture

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the achievements of the programme for progress in scientific culture, run by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation advanced studies unit at Erice, Italy.

Mr. Maude: NATO runs an advanced study institutes programme which makes grants to individuals who apply to organise summer schools at post graduate level. Some of these have taken place at the Ettore Majorama centre for scientific culture which is an Italian institution and not organised or directly funded by NATO. This programme is of benefit to scientists from both the United Kingdom and other NATO countries.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what benefits accrue to the United Kingdom Exchequer from the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation advanced study unit at the Ettore Majorama centre for scientific culture in Erice, Italy; and what is the annual upkeep grant made available to this centre.

Mr. Maude: NATO's advanced study institutes programme makes grants to individuals who apply to organise summer schools at post-graduate level. The programme is of benefit to the scientific community in the United Kingdom and in other Alliance countries. An analysis of the precise financial benefit is not available. Some of the summer schools have taken place at the Ettore Majorama centre for scientific culture. However, this is an Italian institution and is not organised or directly funded by NATO.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Market Research

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many market research and sample surveys were carried our by or for his Department in the last 12 months; what was the cost of each; what was the total cost; how many were carried out in house; how many were carried out for his Department by outside organisations; and what percentage of the total expenditure was paid to outside organisations.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The latest period for which information is available is from 1 April 1988 to 31 March 1989. During this period, 35 market research, sample surveys and similar studies were carried out on behalf of the Department. None was carried out in-house. The costs involved were:

	Number
Under £5,000	6
£5,000 to £10,000	6
£10,000 to £20,000	13
£20,000 to £30,000	4
Over £30,000	6

Total cost = £1,257,896.

Note: These studies were at differing stages of development—not all involved client interface during 1988-89.

The Department also sponsors part of the social policy research unit at York university. They were involved in seven studies during 1988-89 at a total cost of £184,363·50.

AIDS

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will update the figures given in the reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe, on 23 June, *Official Report*, column *276*, for the cost of diets for people with AIDS or HIV infection; if he will also give figures for the income support available to people under 25 years of age who are unemployed but still capable of work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Based upon the food component of the September 1988 retail prices index, the diet costed at £14·19 would now cost £15·43 and that of £9·46 would now cost £10·29. The income support available to people under the age of 25 years is £27·40 a week for all 18 to 24 year olds, and certain 16 to 17 year olds who, of necessity, have to live away from home; 16 to 17-year-olds who live in someone else's household may qualify for £20·80 a week.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what recent consultations he has had concerning the financial needs of people with AIDS/ARC and HIV; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what representations he has received concerning the financial needs of people with AIDS/ARC/HIV; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I have received various representations from organisations, including the Terrence Higgins trust, and from individuals. Officials have also had recent consultations with the Department of Health.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to be able to send a substantive reply to the letter of 12 July from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe, on income support for people with AIDS/ARC/HIV; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I hope to be able to reply to the right hon. Gentleman today.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will specify any difference in treatment in regard to means-tested benefits between payments under the Vaccine Damage Payments Act 1979 and the £20,000 payments from the Macfarlane trust in respect of *(a)* children and *(b)* adults.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: All payments from the Macfarlane trust are disregarded for benefit purposes. Lump sump payments made under the Vaccine Damage Payments Act 1979 are normally taken into account as capital, unless they are placed in trust for the recipient. They are then disregarded.

(a) if the payment is for a child, until he or she is no longer a dependant;

(b) if the payment is for an adult, for 2 years, or longer in certain circumstances.

Any payments from a trust will be taken into account as income or capital in the normal way.

ENVIRONMENT

Dogs

83. **Mr McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to introduce legislation for the establishment of a national registration and licence system for dogs.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We do not agree that the main problems caused by dogs would be solved by a national dog registration scheme, though consideration is being given to alternative schemes to deal with straying and fouling. Our proposed solutions are set out in the consultation paper "Action on Dogs" issued in August. Controls on dangerous dogs have already been significantly strengthened by the Dangerous Dogs Act 1989.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to introduce legislation relating to dog registration; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave yesterday to the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion).

European Environmental Agency

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if data deposited with the proposed European Environmental Agency will be subject to the provisions of the Official Secrets Act.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Under the terms of the draft regulation on the proposed European Environment Agency, data supplied or or emanating from the agency may be published and shall be made accessible to the public, subject to compliance with the rules of the Commission and the member states on the dissemination of information.

CFCs

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the meeting of the states parties to the Montreal protocol on chlorofluorocarbon control held in Geneva in November; and how the decisions taken at this meeting will affect Her Majesty's Government's policies to combat the greenhouse effect.

Mr. Trippier: The meeting was one of a series of preparatory meetings for the second meeting of the parties to the Montreal protocol in London next summer. Its purpose was to identify the amendments and adjustments to the protocol which will be proposed at that meeting. This was achieved. The United Kingdom, acting in concert with the European Community, has taken a leading position on the timetable for phasing out CFCs which are greenhouse gases as well as ozone depleting substances.

"Inside Sellafield"

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek to obtain for his Department's library from Channel Four television or Pip Limited a copy of *(a)* the transcript and *(b)* the videotape of the programme "Inside Sellafield" broadcast on 9 November.

Mr. Trippier: The programme has been seen and studied by several of the Department's scientific and administrative staff. There are no plans to buy a transcript or videotape for the library.

Nature Conservancy Council

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the trade unions representing the Nature Conservancy Council work force in Scotland concerning his proposed reorganisation of the National Conservancy Council; and if he will make a statement as to the nature of these representations.

Mr. Trippier: None.

Transport Planning

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received any recent communication from the Open university's energy and environment research unit on the matter of environmental aspects of transport planning.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No.

Acid Rain

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of acid rain deposition, and contamination of groundwater by acidity is caused by monocultural foresty development in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Trippier: The Department's acid waters review group in their second report, copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House, concluded that the primary cause of acidification in sensitive areas of the United Kingdom was acid deposition from the atmosphere. Afforestation might increase the deposition of pollutants by 30 per cent. in a mature stand. The effect of the contamination of groundwater is difficult to quantify. Research by the Forestry Commission and within the Department's air pollution research programme on quantifying the effect of afforestation, including monocultural forestry, on acid deposition is continuing.

Hazardous Waste

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the number of large facilities which can handle low and intermediate level radioactive wastes for treatment and volume reduction in *(a)* the European Community, excluding the United Kingdom, and *(b)* the rest of the world.

Mr. Trippier: The Department does not maintain a comprehensive list of large overseas facilities which can handle low and intermediate-level radioactive wastes for treatment and volume reduction.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many large chemical incinerators there are in Britain that can handle special wastes;

(2) if he will give details of the amounts found by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution of polychlorinated biphenyls and dioxin in the flue gases from the Rechem international incinerator plant at Ponteg, Pontypool; and what information he has on comparable figures of large chemical incinerators in the mainland of Europe;

(3) if he will provide an estimate of the total amount of special wastes dumped at the Leigh environmental waste disposal site at Walsall;

(4) if he will summarise the results found by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution of tests for polychlorinated biphenyls and dioxin in herbage and soil samples around the Rechem incinerator plant at Ponteg, Pontypool;

(5) what amounts of chemical waste were incinerated at the Rechem plant in Pontypool in each year from 1985 to the present time; and what quantities of polychlorinated biphenyls contaminated waste were handled each year;

(6) what estimate he has of the cumulative total amount of polychlorinated biphenyls manufactured over the last 30 years in *(a)* the Monsanto chemical works in Newport, Gwent, *(b)* Britain, *(c)* western Europe and *(d)* worldwide;

(7) what information he has as to the amount of special waste incinerated on board ships during 1988 *(a)* in the North sea, and *(b)* in European waters;

(8) what information he has as to the number of large chemical incinerators which can handle special wastes in *(a)* the European Community, excluding the United Kingdom, and *(b)* the rest of the world;

(9) what information he has as to the number of large chemical incinerators for toxic wastes worldwide having *(a)* a double door with an air-lock, and *(b)* a single door;

(10) what information he has of alternative methods to incineration now being developed or considered for the destruction of polychlorinated biphenyls;

(11) what is the total amount of special wastes that have been subjected to the Leigh environmental sealofsafe solidification process; and what proportion of this is in a non-solid form;

(12) what quantities of flyash have been imported through Swansea docks for every year from 1979 to the present time; and what are the results of analyses carried out for dioxin in such flyash;

(13) what quantities of special wastes were imported into Britain for incineration for every year from 1979 to the present time;

(14) whether Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution will consider the installation of continuous monitoring equipment to measure the amounts of polychlorinated biphenyls dioxin in the flue gas from the Rechem plant in Pontypool.

Mr. Trippier : I wrote to the hon. Member on 5 December.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment in determining public expenditure plans for 1990-91 what provision was made for the cost of (i) refuse disposal, (ii) land drainage, (iii) cemetaries and cremation, (iv) environmental and port health, (v) planning control and implementation, (vi) recreation, (vii) refuse collection and (viii) community charge collection.

Mr. Patten: Information is not available in the form requested.

An assessment of local authorities' revenue needs for these services and others was made in the standard spending assessment (SSA) for the other services block. The total SSA for other services for 1990-91 is £4,491 million. Within this total, £160 million was identified for land drainage.

The public expenditure planning total includes the credit approvals issued to local authorities and central Government grants towards local authority capital expenditure but does not include local authority self-financed capital expenditure. The provision for 1990-91 includes credit approvals and capital grants of £9 million for land drainage. There is also provision of £193 million for credit approvals for local environmental services, which include the services mentioned in the question. Of this, £33 million will be issued to authorities needing to carry out remedial works on the build up of landfill gas at waste disposal sites and £39 million will be issued to the authorities responsible for waste disposal expenditure in Greater London and the metropolitan counties.

The public expenditure planning total also includes provision for expenditure of £44 million by the Sports Council and £24 million by the Countryside Commission.

Environmental Audits

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will encourage British companies to conduct environmental audits.

Mr. Trippier: I welcome the growing practice of environmental auditing which has been adopted by industrial corporations. Such audits help to safeguard the environment by ensuring a more judicious use of resources and energy and minimising waste.

Housing (Repossession)

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish the University of Bristol research report on possession action cases by local authorities.

Mr. Chope: I welcome this report by researchers at the university of Bristol which underlines the need for early action by housing managers when local authority rent arrears arise. Court proceedings can too easily substitute for effective housing management practice.

The report, published today, was based on a study of 1,200 possession action cases brought by local authorities most of which were actions to recover rent arrears. It showed that there were considerable variations in the level of rent arrears before local authorities took action in the courts. Delays meant that rent arrears often increased substantially before cases were heard in court.

The Lord Chancellor's civil justice review recommended several improvements to the current procedures for possession actions and suggested a new streamlined rent action to speed debt recovery and avoid some possession cases coming to court.

Highway Maintenance

Sir Michael Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will review the data used in calculating the highway maintenance element of the standard spending assessment relating to the treatment of winter maintenance.

Mr. David Hunt: Following representations from my hon. Friend and others, I have concluded that the formula for the highway maintenance component of standard spending assessments (SSAs) does not reflect my right hon. Friend's desired treatment of winter maintenance. We have therefore today notified the local authority associations and informed all local authorities of a revised formula. After allowing for some other data changes, this will increase the standard spending assessments component for this service for a number of non-metropolitan counties which have a high incidence of snow. I have put details in the Library. As a result the standard spending assessment for north Yorkshire will increase by £3·1 million, which is equivalent to a £6 per head reduction in the community charge bill.

Carnwath Report

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to issue a consultative paper on the recommendations of the Carnwath report.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 7 December 1989]:* My right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State announced the publication of the report and his intention to consult widely about it on 5 April.

Civil Servants

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many civil servants in his Department work *(a)* full time and *(b)* part time on (i) heritage, (ii) archaeology and (iii) the royal parks.

Mr. Chris Patten *[holding answer 7 December 1989]:* The complement of headquarters civil servants dealing with heritage and archaeology is 392·5 full time equivalents. Within this complement there are about 17 part-time workers—most employed at the new Historic Palaces Agency. Ten officers work full-time in the Department on archaeological casework to do with the scheduling of monuments and sites. However, responsibility for advising Government on archaeological matters and for grant-aiding particular projects lies with English Heritage. Its ancient monuments division has 45 staff and a further 22 are engaged on monuments scheduling work.

The royal parks have a complement of 599 full-time equivalent staff. Within this complement there are three part-time workers.

Nature Conservancy Council

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those representations he has received *(a)* welcoming and *(b)* opposing his plans to dismember the Nature Conservancy Council.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 7 December 1989]:* My Department has received a large number of representations, about the proposals to reorganise the Nature Conservancy Council. It is not possible to allocate these in a meaningful way to the precise categories envisaged by the hon. Member. A number of representations contained elements both of support and of criticism.

EMPLOYMENT

Earnings

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide for both full-time adult males and females figures corresponding to those given in his answer of 1 November *Official Report,* column *240,* in cash and in percentages for the period 1979 to 1989, together with the number of employees represented by each category at each of the dates.

Mr. Nicholls: The available information is provided in the table:

Increases in weekly earnings, April 1979 to April 1989 and estimates of employees in employment, March 1979 and 1989

	Average earnings		*Median earnings*		*Employees in employment*	
	Cash £	*Per cent.*	*Cash* £	*Per cent.*	*Thousands* 1979	1989
Males						
Manufacturing	162·8	160	142·4	149	na	3,518·8
Non-manufacturing	173·6	176	145·3	161	na	7,257·5
Females						
Manufacturing	99·1	165	86·0	149	1,603·1	1,226·9
Non-manufacturing	123·6	191	107·2	180	3,902·5	4,635·5

Notes:

1. Earnings data relates to full-time adult employees in Great Britain whose earnings were not affected by absence.
2. Estimates of employees in employment in Great Britain are taken from the regularly published employment series.
3. na denotes not available.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the increase in output per head and the corresponding averages and medians for manual and non-manuals in each case with a further breakdown for each of the principal manufacturing industry groups for the last 10 years to April.

Mr. Nicholls: Information is not available on output per head in the form requested. Output per head for the principal manufacturing industry groups is given in table 7.2 of the Monthly Digest of Statistics.

Ambulance and Nursing Services

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether men in the ambulance and nursing services are regarded as manual or non-manual workers.

Mr. Nicholls: Ambulance men are regarded as manuals and nurses as non-manuals in the classification of occupations used for statistical purposes by my Department.

Training Schemes

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what training schemes were referred to in the published decisions of the adjudication officers in the period between April and June 1989 that 300 claims for unemployment benefit were disallowed because of refusal or premature termination of training.

Mr. Eggar: A person can be disqualified from receiving unemployment benefit only in cases of refusal or premature termination of training, if it is a training scheme approved by the Secretary of State for the purposes of section 20(1)8(e)-(g) of the 1975 Social Security Act.

The only training scheme approved by the Secretary of State is the youth training scheme.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employment trainees have secured permanent employment in the Seaham and Peterlee areas following completion of their training.

Mr. Nicholls: Information about the destinations of people leaving employment training in the Seaham and Peterlee areas is not available.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employment trainees there are in the Seaham and Peterlee areas.

Mr. Nicholls: On 1 December 1989, the latest date for which information is available, there were 705 trainees on employment training in Seaham and Peterlee.

Older Workers

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will monitor the demand for older people to return to the work force due to the decreasing numbers of young skilled workers and ensure that returning older workers are not exploited.

Mr. Nicholls: The changing patterns of older workers' participation in the labour market are monitored through the labour force survey.

The onus is on employers to offer terms and conditions which encourage older workers to remain in or return to the labour force. The Government have emphasised the impact on employers of the declining number of young people and will continue to stress to employers the importance of making the best use of the abilities and skills of all people in the labour force, particularly under-utilised groups such as older workers.

Lead

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what level of lead in the bloodstream is considered to be medically safe for industrial workers working on processes which bring them into regular contact with lead; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The Control of Lead at Work Regulations 1980 and the accompanying approved code of practice specify that where the level of lead in the blood is greater than 70 microgrammes per 100 millilitres (or 40 microgrammes per 100 millilitres for a women of reproductive capacity), the worker should be removed from further exposure to lead until the blood-lead levels have fallen below these concentrations.

Working Mothers

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the proportion of mothers of children aged five years to 11 years who are in *(a)* part-time, and *(b)* full-time work for the latest year that figures are available.

Mr. Nicholls: Among women in Great Britain whose youngest dependent child was aged at least five years but under 11 it is estimated, using information from the labour force survey, that in spring 1988 just over 45 per cent. were in part-time employment and about 18½ per cent. were in full-time employment.

Disabled Persons

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the reasons for his decision not to hold centrally information about the numbers of firms adhering to the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944; and whether these compliance levels will be analysed centrally before any recommendation concerning the future of the quota system is made by him.

Mr. Eggar: Information about the number of firms adhering to the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944 is held centrally. However, this does not include the more detailed information about specific industries requested in the hon. Gentleman's question on 6 November 1989 at column *478*. To assemble and hold such information centrally would be disproportionately costly.

Information on quota compliance levels is being considered in the internal review of services to people with disabilities which this Department is currently undertaking.

SCOTLAND

Health Boards

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each health board the amount spent on advertising for each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information available from health boards' annual accounts about advertising costs is shown in the table:

Health board	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
Argyll and Clyde	69,071	102,687	90,722
Ayrshire and Arran	63,175	71,459	98,574
Borders	26,753	36,331	49.516
Dumfries and Galloway	27,639	25,950	24,141
Fife	72,329	99,243	65,989
Forth Valley	39,570	50,248	48,293
Grampian	76,441	88,909	126,015
Greater Glasgow	81,158	153,086	227,574
Highland	39,160	49,565	45,111
Lanarkshire	56,500	55,872	68,742
Lothian	119,062	140,231	160,636
Orkney	2,847	1,848	3,559
Shetland	6,985	7,102	12,065
Tayside	74,563	79,968	83,774
Western Isles	17,852	21,956	18,282
Total	773,105	984,455	1,122,993

Public Appointments

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many persons above the age of *(a)* 60, *(b)* 65 and *(c)* 70 years he has appointed to public bodies in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Rifkind: I do not have comprehensive information of this kind. If the hon. Lady has any particular point in mind, I should be glad if she would write to me about it.

Enterprise Companies

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much he expects to be spent in the present financial year to assist the development of local enterprise companies in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: It is not possible to identify separately the administrative costs incurred by the Scottish Office, Scottish Development Agency, Highlands and Islands Development Board and Training Agency in 1989-90 in relation to the development of local enterprise companies. The provision of development funding to local enterprise companies—in the lowlands to be made jointly by the Scottish Development Agency and Training Agency, and in the highlands and islands to be made jointly by the Highlands and Islands Development Board and Training Agency—is not likely to exceed £0·2 million in 1989-90.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland under which class of the Scottish Office vote moneys are to be paid out for the development of local enterprise companies.

Mr. Lang: The provision of development funding to local enterprise companies in the lowlands will be made jointly by the Scottish Development Agency and Training Agency and in the Highlands and Islands by the Highlands and Islands Development Board and Training Agency. My right hon. and learned Friend funds the Scottish Development Agency and the Highlands and Islands Development Board from subheads A1 and B1 respectively of class XVI, vote 3. Resources for the Training Agency's activities in Scotland are provided under class XVI, vote 4, subhead A1.

Tourism

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much was spent by *(a)* Scottish Development Agency and *(b)* the Highlands and Islands Development Board in promoting tourism and the tourist industry in each of the last five financial years.

Mr. Lang: The most recent figures available are as follows:

(a) Scottish Development Agency

Financial year	*Expenditure £ million*
1984-85	0·3
1985-86	0·3
1986-87	3·7
1987-88	0·1
1988-89	Nil

(b) Highlands and Islands Development Board

Financial year	*Expenditure £ million*
1984-85	8·2
1985-86	9·0
1986-87	8·7
1987-88	8·2
1988-89	8·8

Notes:

1. The Scottish Development Agency figures cover loan and equity finance for tourism projects which meet its normal investment criteria and tourist projects under schemes for urban and rural development. In addition, a number of feasibility studies, land engineering and property development projects funded by the agency may have tourism benefits.
2. Provision by the Highlands and Islands Development board is through its marketing and projects programmes and under its section 8 assistance scheme. The above figures do not include expenditure on salaries and administration.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he anticipates roles for the tourist industry and those involved in promoting tourism within the proposed local enterprise companies, Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I expect local enterprise companies to reflect the importance of tourism in their areas. Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise will be able to draw upon tourism expertise in the same way as the Highlands and Islands Development Board, the Scottish Development Agency and the Training Agency.

Voluntary Organisations

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about his Department's decision to withdraw funding from the East Lothian Council for Voluntary Service; and if he has any proposals for alternative support for voluntary organisations in East Lothian.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 30 November 1989]:* I shall write to the hon. Member.

DEFENCE

Nuclear Submarines (India)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment his Department has made of the security implications for the United Kingdom of the acquisition of nuclear powered submarines by India.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are no apparent security implications for the United Kingdom arising from the acquisition of nuclear-powered submarines by India.

Nuclear Tests

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the United Kingdom Government's current approach to the seismic verification of treaties constraining nuclear testing;

(2) if he will outline the important verification difficulties that remain to be resolved before an agreement can be reached by the United Kingdom Government on a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor) on 27 June 1988 at column *61*, and to the working paper on seismic monitoring tabled in the conference on disarmament in 1985 (CD 610), a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many scientific personnel are currently employed by the United Kingdom Government or by Government-sponsored enterprises working on verification of a global comprehensive test ban treaty.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence's research establishment at Blacknest, near Aldermaston, employs 27 scientific personnel, including a number of contract staff, who undertake seismological research which could be used in establishing the requirements of a verification regime for further constraints on nuclear testing.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the United Kingdom Government's annual expenditure, for each year since May 1979, on verification of a global comprehensive test ban treaty.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Information on the costs of seismological research undertaken at Blacknest, near Aldermaston, dating back to 1979 could be provided only at disproportionate cost. I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 19 October 1989 at column *251* concerning the costs of this work for the financial year 1988-89.

Officers and Other Ranks

Mr. Wilkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the levels of recruitment and outflow for officers and other ranks in all three services in the periods January to September 1988 and January to September in the current year.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Numbers for intake to the services from civil life and outflow from the services are as follows:

	Intake January to September		*Outflow January to September*	
	1988	*1989*	*1988*	*1989*
All Services				
Total	26,154	27,155	28,578	31,672
Male officers	1,949	1,907	2,486	2,638
Service men	22,229	22,451	23,976	26,759
Female officers	264	286	266	260
Service women	1,712	2,511	1,850	2,015
Royal Navy				
Total	4,082	4,082	4,513	4,779
Male officers	424	445	507	516
Service men	3,230	3,065	3,595	3,760
Female officers	22	36	36	39
Service women	406	536	375	464
Royal Marines				
Total	755	716	886	819
Male officers	40	40	40	41
Service men	735	676	846	778
Army				
Total	16,496	17,419	17,542	18,808
Male officers	936	969	1,131	1,251
Service men	14,669	15,215	15,382	16,594
Female officers	96	124	117	127
Service women	795	1,111	912	836
Royal Air Force				
Total	4,801	4,938	5,637	7,266
Male officers	549	453	808	830
Service men	3,595	3,495	4,153	5,627
Female officers	146	126	113	94
Service women	511	864	563	715

RAF Cadets (Exchange)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the implication for national security of the proposed exchange of Royal Air Force flying cadets from Bracknell and Cranwell colleges with Soviet flying cadets from the Gagarin Air Academy in Moscow.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A successful exchange of visits has taken place this year between the directing staff of the Royal Air Force Staff College Bracknell and the Gagarin Academy. Further exchanges are being considered but there are no plans for an exchange of air force cadets. Care has been taken to ensure that defence contacts with the Soviet Union meet security requirements.

Long-range Air-launched Missiles

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether approval has been sought from the United States Government for the Anglo-French co-production of a long range air-launched missile.

Mr. Alan Clark: It is not clear what long-range air-launched missile the hon. Member has in mind, but in no case has such approval been sought.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions have taken place with *(a)* British Aerospace, *(b)* Thomson-CSF and *(c)* the French Government about the co-production of a long-range, air-launched missile.

Mr. Alan Clark: None.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what specifications have been provided to British Aerospace in respect of the production of a new long-range, air-launched missile.

Mr. Alan Clark: None.

BAe and Thomson-CSF

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions the Government have had with the joint venture company recently formed by British Aerospace and Thomson-CSF.

Mr. Alan Clark: The MOD has been informed by BAe and Thomson-CSF of the companies' proposal to form a joint venture defence weapon system company to be known as Eurodynamics. Subject to consideration of national security and competition implications in the light of the detailed proposals by the companies, the MOD would welcome the proposition.

Royal Navy (Defence Missile System)

Mr. Lee: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the Royal Navy's requirement for a support defence missile system.

Mr. Neubert: I can announce today that we intend, subject to the satisfactory conclusion of negotiations with the other participating nations, to join a 24-month project definition phase for the local area missile system (LAMS) variant of the family of anti-air missile systems next year. We have therefore decided, after very careful consideration, not to participate in the next phase of the NATO anti-air warfare system (NAAWS) project.

The choice between these two collaborative programmes has been an extremely difficult one because both projects offer the prospect of a highly capable ship defence system. Many complex factors have had to be assessed; particular consideration has been given to the balance between technical performance and programme cost and risk. The United Kingdom's requirement for a SDMS is linked to the MOD's plans to procure an anti-air warfare (AAW) escort ship to come into service at the turn of the century to replace the type 42 destroyers. On balance, it has been concluded that, of the two projects, FAMS offers the better prospect of providing an affordable and capable system within that time scale.

Running Costs Limit

Mr. Neil Hamilton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he proposes to make any change to the 1989-90 running costs limit for his Department.

Mr. Tom King: The running costs limit for the Ministry of Defence will be reduced by £12,907,000 from £5,162,254,000 to £5,149,347,000. It reflects a decrease of £28,907,000 to compensate for an overspend in 1988-89 offset by a £16,000,000 increase for additional security measures. This follows the normal practice of reducing the limit for one financial year by the amount of any overspend in the previous year.

HEALTH

Ambulance Service

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list, for each year since 1979, the total number of ambulance vehicles, staff and costs, at 1989 prices by region.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested is shown in the tables:

Number of ambulance vehicles 1979-89[1]—England—By Region

Region	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
Northern	548	549	566	546	546	470	458	477	479
Yorkshire	615	590	590	660	597	636	638	647	680
Trent	590	687	668	651	644	648	678	688	698
East Anglian	194	202	218	221	218	219	225	231	235
North West Thames	194	194	197	199	196	193	200	202	200
North East Thames	173	175	172	168	149	148	137	133	150
South East Thames	343	346	344	311	317	300	300	300	300
South West Thames	1,230	1,270	1,227	1,281	1,179	1,184	1,170	1,127	1,121
Wessex	295	295	302	328	308	297	293	280	247
Oxford	286	282	289	289	285	284	283	279	283

Region	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88
South Western	472	479	479	490	484	480	447	457	438
West Midlands	691	704	749	749	728	713	690	713	702
Mersey	310	302	302	306	338	351	387	393	393
North Western	601	595	614	608	616	568	534	532	556
Total	6,542	6,670	6,717	6,807	6,605	6,491	6,440	6,459	6,482

Notes:

[1] The total number of vehicles used to transport patients.

[2] The figures for the south west Thames region include those for the London ambulance service.

National Health Service Ambulance Staff in post by region
At 30 September each year

whole-time equivalent

Region	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
England	17,129	17,768	18,221	18,324	18,397	18,103	18,188	18,966	19,010	18,761
Northern	1,415	1,446	1,473	1,474	1,482	1,424	1,396	1,401	1,390	1,357
Yorkshire	1,404	1,548	1,606	1,622	1,630	1,604	1,596	1,640	1,666	1,573
Trent	1,780	1,798	1,842	1,890	1,904	1,905	1,934	1,968	1,979	1,961
East Anglia	581	597	599	626	638	646	675	770	772	773
North West Thames	475	465	492	484	467	456	456	488	541	525
North East Thames	510	534	566	584	565	537	542	591	593	594
South East Thames	870	908	938	942	943	950	949	957	951	920
South West Thames	592	641	638	637	633	596	629	667	663	675
Wessex	906	907	947	954	943	952	946	990	978	952
Oxford	727	730	753	762	750	750	757	815	837	835
South Western	1,375	1,401	1,408	1,424	1,438	1,430	1,441	1,470	1,482	1,455
West Midlands	1,764	1,809	1,873	1,849	1,889	1,849	1,880	1,936	1,914	1,917
Mersey	799	826	852	870	894	913	893	947	955	932
North Western	1,605	1,653	1,649	1,688	1,703	1,684	.1605	1,668	1,701	1,687
London Ambulance Service	2,325	2,506	2,587	2,519	2,518	2,505	2,491	2,659	2,587	2,605

Source: Department of Health (SM13) Annual Census of National Health Service non-Medical manpower.

Note: All figures are independently rounded to nearest whole-time equivalent.

Total revenue expenditure on ambulance services (at 1988-89 prices)

£'000s

Regions	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89[1]
Northern	23,226	24,625	24,527	24,141	23,503	22,857	22,661	23,297	22,820	22,207
Yorkshire	23,015	24,920	25,036	24,515	25,129	24,883	24,964	25,921	25,651	24,687
Trent	28,119	29,958	29,388	29,311	29,175	29,409	29,074	30,958	30,957	30,009
East Anglian	11,673	12,324	12,328	12,207	12,761	12,632	12,614	13,562	13,370	13,073
North West Thames	19,779	21,725	22,126	21,282	20,381	20,110	20,334	22,389	8,759	8,696
North East Thames	21,583	23,616	24,020	23,265	22,717	22,072	22,303	24,643	9,389	9,149
South East Thames	23,792	25,759	25,852	25,409	25,066	24,336	24,039	25,916	15,673	15,252
South West Thames	17,976	19,603	19,813	19,301	18,866	18,495	18,453	19,816	58,143	57,622
Wessex	16,095	16,944	17,019	17,035	17,363	17,476	17,439	18,384	18,025	16,975
Oxford	12,960	13,225	13,176	12,973	12,669	12,411	12,183	13,402	13,507	13,462
South Western	22,524	23,162	22,857	22,813	22,962	22,821	22,539	24,989	25,049	24,150
West Midlands	29,746	30,973	30,608	29,979	29,668	30,106	29,696	31,684	32,052	30,886
Mersey	12,857	14,115	14,207	13,824	13,773	13,930	13,846	15,122	15,095	14,679
North Western	26,307	28,185	27,489	27,235	27,571	26,416	26,153	27,259	26,700	25,439
ENGLAND TOTAL	289,651	309,134	308,445	303,290	301,606	297,951	296,298	317,344	315,189	306,283

[1] 1988-89—Provisional cash figures (as yet subject to audit).

Sources: Annual accounts of regional and district health authorities in England (those of their predecessor authorities for the years prior to 1982-83).

Notes to the table:

1. The figures have been expressed at 1988-89 prices by the use of the Gross Domestic Product Deflator.
2. From 1987-88 the South West Thames regional health authority accounts for the expenditure of the London Ambulance Service. In earlier years the costs were shared by the four Thames regional health authorities.

AIDS

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he will be taking to prevent double counting in anonymous AIDS testing.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In any anonymous survey there is a possibility of double counting. However, this problem is taken into account in the survey design and can also be minimised by appropriate statistical methods.

Funding (Leicestershire District Health Authority)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on representations he has received for additional funding for the Leicestershire district health authority.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. and learned Friend has received no recent representations for additional funding for Leicestershire health authority.

Doctors and Dentists Review Body

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will indicate how much additional money he has recommended to the doctors and dentists review body as the sum needed to take into account the extra work for general practices arising from the new contract;

(2) if he will publish his Department's evidence to the doctors and dentists review body.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No. There is a long-standing agreement between the parties concerned that evidence to the doctors and dentists review body is not published until after the Government have announced their decisions on the recommendations made by the review body.

Child Migrants

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action his Department is taking on grants to assist child migrants; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department is considering a grant application from the Child Migrants trust. Officials have met and are in contact with representatives of the Child Migrants trust to discuss how the Department might assist. We are unable to make a decision about the trust's grant application until extra information requested is provided and considered.

Phoenix House, Liverpool

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many drug addicts used services provided by Phoenix house, Liverpool during the past 12 months; and if he will make a statement on the future of Phoenix house.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not held centrally. Phoenix house is a major non-statutory organisation providing a variety of services for drug misusers to which the Government have allocated over £1 million under the central funding initiative to develop drug misuse services.

WALES

Health Service

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many and which community health councils in Wales have made representations to him opposing the National Health Service White Paper "Working for Patients".

Mr. Grist: The White Paper includes a wide range of measures to improve the organisation and management of the NHS so as to maximise patient care. Community health councils are in frequent correspondence with the Department about many issues. In recent months many such representations have concerned one or more aspects of individual White Paper proposals, and have included views supporting or expressing concern about them. It would be possible only at disproportionate expense to analyse these in the manner requested by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the number of National Health Service beds available for the elderly in each Welsh health authority area from 1985 to 1988 inclusive.

Mr. Grist: The number of beds in specialities designated as geriatric, psychogeriatric and elderly mentally infirm is shown in the following table. Elderly patients can, however, be treated in beds allocated to other specialities.

	Average daily available beds			
Health authority	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Clwyd	585·1	590·6	562·9	534·0
East Dyfed	417·6	419·5	409·9	404·9
Gwent	981·2	973·2	966·9	958·9
Gwynedd	438·5	446·3	443·4	451·1
Mid Glamorgan	920·8	923·2	938·1	805·9
Pembrokeshire	134·4	134·5	126·4	126·6
Powys	238·0	220·3	206·2	220·5
South Glamorgan	460·6	463·9	455·9	455·8
West Glamorgan	503·9	461·6	481·5	470·5

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many general practitioner practices in Wales have more than 11,000 patients; and where they are situated.

Mr. Grist: At June 1989 there were 39 practices in Wales with more than 11,000 patients. The location of the main surgery of these practices is shown in the table:

Location	*Number of practices*
Rhyl, Clwyd	1
Wrexham, Clwyd	3
Prestatyn, Clwyd	1
Mold, Clwyd	1
Buckley, Clwyd	1
Gresford, Clwyd	1
Abergele, Clwyd	1
Carmarthen, Dyfed	1
Haverfordwest, Dyfed	1
Caldicot, Gwent	1
Monmouth, Gwent	1
Newport, Gwent	3
Amlwch, Gwynedd	1
Llandudno, Gwynedd	1
Bedwas, Mid Glamorgan	1
Bridgend, Mid Glamorgan	2
Church Village, Mid Glamorgan	1
Pontypridd, Mid Glamorgan	2
Dowlais, Mid Glamorgan	1
Merthyr Tydfil, Mid Glamorgan	1
Porthcawl, Mid Glamorgan	1
Caerphilly, Mid Glamorgan	1
Ystradmynach, Mid Glamorgn	1
Ystradgynlais, Powys	1
Brecon, Powys	1
Newtown, Powys	1
Cardiff, South Glamorgan	4
Barry, South Glamorgan	1
Gowerton, West Glamorgan	1
Swansea, West Glamorgan	1

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many long-term patients have been discharged from psychiatric hospitals in Wales in every year since 1985 in each area health authority in Wales.

Mr. Grist: The number of patient discharges following a stay of one year or more, is shown in the following table:

Patient discharges from mental illness hospitals or units

	1985	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Clwyd	65	44	47	63
East Dyfed	30	42	46	43
Pembrokeshire	—	—	—	—

	1985	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
went	46	42	56	53
wynedd	—	4	4	2
id Glamorgan	33	55	41	51
owys	6	6	17	12
outh Glamorgan	39	26	35	43
est Glamorgan	31	31	47	44
Patient discharges from mental handicap hospitals or units				
lwyd	1	3	5	8
ast Dyfed	3	1	—	—
embrokeshire	4	5	3	10
went	7	10	33	12
Gwynedd	9	10	9	16
Mid Glamorgan	22	7	18	19
Powys	5	12	7	6
South Glamorgan	5	14	11	13
West Glamorgan	31	7	14	8

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many psychiatric hospital beds in Wales have been closed down since 1985 in each area health authority.

Mr. Grist: Information on the numbers of average daily available beds is shown in the following table:

	Mental illness[1]			*Mental handicap*		
	Number of beds		*Changes in number*	*Number of beds*		*Changes in number*
	1985	*1988*	*1985-88*	*1985*	*1988*	*1985-88*
Clwyd	657·3	558·0	− 99·3	92·0	62·7	−29·3
East Dyfed	577·3	492·3	− 85·0	71·0	32·0	−39·0
Gwent	931·0	883·0	− 48·0	421·7	374·7	−47·0
Gwynedd	46·5	92·2	+ 45·7	333·2	325·7	− 7·5
Mid Glamorgan	1,197·0	1,031·3	−165·7	488·2	420·0	−68·2
Pembrokeshire	—	—	—	32·0	32·0	—
Powys	335·0	323·0	− 12·0	209·5	196·1	−13·4
South Glamorgan	687·8	654·6	− 33·2	411·1	384·3	−26·8
West Glamorgan	406·6	371·2	− 35·4	142·5	80·0	−62·5

[1] Includes mental illness, mental illness (children), adolescent psychiatry, psychogeriatric and elderly mentally infirm.

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how any representations he has received from general ractitioners in Wales *(a)* opposing and *(b)* supporting he National Health Service White Paper "Working for atients".

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my reply of 6 ecember to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones).

Pensioners

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the number of pensioners aged *(a)* 75 to 85 years and *(b)* 85 years and over in each Welsh county in numbers, and as a percentage of the total population in the areas concerned.

Mr. Grist: The estimated populations aged 75 to 85 and aged 85 and over of each county in numerical and percentage terms are shown in the following table:

	Aged 75-84 inclusive		*Aged 85 and over*	
1988 population county	*In thousands*	*Per cent.*[1]	*In thousands*	*Per cent.*[1]
Clwyd	24·3	6·0	6·5	1·6
Dyfed	20·6	5·9	5·1	1·5
Gwent	22·5	5·0	5·7	1·3
Gwynedd	15·9	6·7	4·5	1·9
Mid Glamorgan	26·5	4·9	6·0	1·1
Powys	7·1	6·1	1·7	1·5
South Glamorgan	20·5	5·1	5·9	1·5
West Glamorgan	20·9	5·7	5·3	1·5

[1] As a percentage of total population of each county.
ource: OPCS mid year estimates of population.

Rural Transport

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for ales what plans he has for co-ordinating bus and coach metables in rural Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: None. It is for bus operators to issue eir own timetables. County councils have powers to romote bus and coach services in conjunction with ommercial operators if they so wish.

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for ales what plans he has to provide a subsidy to Dyfed ounty council to assist in providing a bus-rail link from ampeter to Llandovery.

Mr. Peter Walker: None. The county council have owers to subsidise a service from their own resources.

Mentally Handicapped People

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to visit the St. Augustinusstichting village at Gemep, Holland, to investigate the pioneering work undertaken to create a village community for the mentally handicapped.

Mr. Grist: The principles underlying the provision of mental handicap services in Wales are set out in the Government's all Wales mental handicap strategy. There are no proposals to alter these principles.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he is considering alternative futures for Llanfrechfa Grange hospital on the lines of the village community for the mentally handicapped at St. Augustinusstichting, Gemep, Holland.

Mr. Grist: Proposals for any substantial variation in the service provided in a district are a matter in the first instance for the health authority.

Drug Addicts

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what centres exist for the treatment of drug addicts residing in each of the counties of Wales; and whether he has any proposals for increasing the provision.

Mr. Grist: The provision of services and facilities for drug misusers in their area is essentially a matter for individual health and local authorities to determine. Existing and planned local services will suffice for the needs of the majority of problem drug misusers but there remains a small number of cases where more specialist help is needed. Two in-patient units exist with special interest in such cases. These are the Adfer unit in South Glamorgan and a unit at the North Wales hospital, Denbigh. In addition, we are aware of two voluntary sector projects which can provide residential rehabilitation facilities for drug misusers. These are the Rhoserchan project near Aberystwyth, and Teen Challenge at Llanelli.

To supplement and support those local services the Government established in 1986 the central initiative to combat drug misuse. That initiative provides additional increasing resources for statutory and voluntary services. The current annual provision is around £1·5 million, details of which I announced in April of this year. Copies of that announcement are available in the Library of the House. Future provision will be announced in the new year.

Water

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales for which sites in Wales he has exercised his power under section 42 of Part II of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 to issue certificates exempting discharges from the public register held by the water authority; what was the name of the plant operator; and on what dates the certificates were issued.

Mr. Grist: None.

Welsh Language Teaching

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to announce his decisions in respect of the secondary schools which have applied for exemption from the provision in the national curriculum to teach Welsh to pupils in years one to three.

Mr. Peter Walker: I am currently considering responses to the consultation on my proposals for Welsh in the national curriculum and aim to publish draft orders for attainment targets and programmes of study around the end of the year.

I shall reach decisions about the case for exempting individual schools in good time for the beginning of implementation in Autumn 1990. Before doing so I shall want to consult the local education authorities for their views.

Correspondence

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many letters his Department has received during the 1988-89 parliamentary Session from hon. Members representing Welsh constituencies; and what was the average length of time between the receipt of the correspondence and the sending of a reply.

Mr. Peter Walker *[holding answer 5 December 1989]:* My Department received 2,997 letters from hon. Members representing Welsh constituencies during the 1988-89 parliamentary Session. Replies were sent, on average, 17 working days after receipt.

ENERGY

Market Research

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many market research and sample surveys were carried out by or for his Department in the last 12 months; what was the cost of each; what was the total cost; how many were carried out in-house; how many were carried out for his Department by outside organisations; and what percentage of the total expenditure was paid to outside organisations.

Mr. Wakeham: All 46 surveys carried out for my Department in the last year were placed with outside organisations at a total cost of £705,000. Individual amounts are commercially confidential.

"Inside Sellafield"

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will seek to obtain for his Department's library from Channel Four television or Pip Limited a copy of *(a)* the transcript and *(b)* the videotape of the programme "Inside Sellafield" broadcast on 9 November.

Mr. Wakeham: No.

Retired Miners

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many *(a)* retired miners, *(b)* miners retired early through ill health and *(c)* miners made redundant, are in receipt of fuel or cash in lieu of allowances; and how many widows are in receipt of fuel or cash in lieu of allowances.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Concessionary fuel is a matter for the British Coal Corporation. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Greenhouse Effect

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a year-by-year projection for the period of 1990 to 2010 on the likely introduction of gas-fired power plants for electricity production, by mine output; and what contribution this will make to mitigation of the greenhouse global warming effect.

Mr. Michael Spicer: It is for the electricity industry to determine the type and amount of plant needed to meet expected demand. Gas-fired generating plant will have a contribution to make to reduction in emission of carbon dioxide, one of the greenhouse gases.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to paragraph 1.6 of Her Majesty's Government's response, HC611, to the Energy Committee's fourth special report on energy policy implications of the greenhouse effect, if he will specify what is meant by bottom-up pressure of sensible ideas; and how he defines sensible ideas in this context.

Mr. Peter Morrison: In the context of research relating to the greenhouse effect, it is appropriate that objectives should be specified clearly, in advance, before projects are funded. The scientific and engineering community continues to put forward a variety of suggestions for research, which can be appraised against appropriate objectives. These suggestions represent a bottom-up pressure of ideas. Those proposals which can make a contribution to our scientific understanding, or to possible ways of dealing with the consequences of the greenhouse effect, are examples of sensible ideas.

Research

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if his Department, or the energy technology support unit at Harwell, is currently conducting any collaborative research with the Swedish National Energy Administration; and whether there are any plans for future collaboration.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The primary vehicle for collaborative research with Sweden is under the auspices of International Energy Agency. Both the United Kingdom and Sweden are very active within the Agency and there is collaboration on a large number of topics, including, coal combustion, solar heating and cooling and wind energy. In addition, separated agreements exist between the Swedish national energy administration and the energy technology support unit on research, development and demonstration of bioenergy and with my Department on the energy database. My Department is always receptive to opportunities for appropriate research and development collaboration.

Collaboration on geothermal hot dry rocks took place in 1986 when my Department funded and participated in a viscous stimulation of a 500m hole drilled in Sweden.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what publications produced by *(a)* the energy research group and *(b)* the energy and environment research unit of the Open university are in his departmental library; and if he will make a statement on the utility of Open university energy research publications in informing his policies.

Mr. Wakeham: The Department of Energy's library holds the following publications of the Open university energy research group:

Combined heat and power: a discussion of Energy paper 20—R. Armson. 1977.
A critique of the electricity industry. 1976.
A dynamic physical energy model of the United Kingdom —M. A. Barrett. 1982.
DYPHEMO applications: simulation of UK energy systems with a dynamic physical energy model—M. Barrett. 1982
Energy analysis of the Report on the Census of Production —D. A. Cooper, P. F. Chapman and N. D. Mortimer. 1975.
The energy consumer's handbook—G. Hammond and C. Russell. 1980.
Energy costs of delivered energy, UK 1968—P. F. Chapman. 1973.
The energy costs of producing copper and aluminium from primary sources—P. F. Chapman. 1973.
Energy costs of road and rail freight transport, UK 1968 —N. D. Mortimer. 1974.
Energy in the home. 1978.
Energy in the home: guide to the course: unit 1, Fuel for thought; unit 2, The balance of power. 1978.
Energy in the home: unit 3, A matter of degree; unit 4, The burning question. 1978.
Energy in the home: unit 5, Baths and draughts; unit 6, Windows and walls. 1978.
Energy in the home: unit 7, Roofs and floors; unit 8, Look before you leap. 1978.
Energy requirements for the conversion of coal into liquid fuel—D. F. Hemming 1977.
Energy requirements of North Sea oil production—D. F. Hemming. 1975.
Future transport fuels—P. Chapman, G. Charlseworth and M. Baker. 1976.
Future transport fuels: discussion of SR 251: proceedings of a conference held at the Open University on 22nd March 1977—Edited by T. Baker and G. Charlesworth. 1977
Gross energy requirements for air transport—N. D. Mortimer. 1975.
Gross energy requirements of marine transport—N. D. Mortimer. 1974.
Linford low energy houses—R. Everett, A. Horton and J. Doggart. 1985. Work performed under contract for the Energy Technology Support Unit on behalf of the Department of Energy. (ETSU-S-1025).
Milton Keynes Energy Park: wind study: a report to Milton Keynes Development Corporation—T. Oreszczyn and B. Jones. 1984
The Pennyland project—R. Lowe, J. Chapman and R. Everett. 1985. Report for the Milton Keynes Development Corporation under contract to the Energy Technology Support Unit.
Primary energy requirements for the production of iron and steel in the UK— R. F. Waller. 1976.
Reflections on Britain's nuclear history: a conversation with Lord Hinton—D. Lowry. 1984

The library holds no publications by the Open university energy and environment research unit.

The library purchases or borrows publications when so requested by officers of the Department or when their contents seem relevant to current departmental work and to the Department's policy-making.

Electricity

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the total amount per annum of dry weight biomass available for combustion to produce electricity; and how much of this fuel source is currently used in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The extent to which biomass can be made available for electricity generation depends on the arrangements made for its collection and combustion and their economics. Energy Paper 55, published by my Department estimated that biomass could contribute between 4 million and 15 million tonnes of coal equivalent per year to United Kingdom energy supplies by 2025. In principle all this could be used for electricity generation. Current utilisation is estimated to be about 0·8 million tonnes of coal equivalent per year.

Non-proliferation Treaty

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what recent suggestions his Department has received from non-governmental organisations in regard to policy proposals for Her Majesty's Government's delegation to the fourth review conference of the non-proliferation treaty in Geneva in August 1990.

Mr. Michael Spicer: None.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what specific assistance in energy conversion and electricity production technologies, including pollution abatement controls, have been made available to each Comecon member state in eastern Europe in each year since 1979; and what plans there are to increase assistance in the future;

(2) what technologies designated to improve energy efficiency in the domestic, commercial and industrial sectors have been made available to eastern European member states of Comecon since 1979.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My Department has a co-operation agreement with the Soviet Union covering:

(a) oil and gas
(b) energy efficiency
(c) coal, and
(d) electricity production.

A number of Comecon countries also have access to the results of the Department's passive solar design R & D programme through the United Kingdom's participation in the UN Economic Commission for Europe's energy efficiency programme.

The Department participates in a scientific collaboration agreement with Hungary. Other assistance to Comecon countries in the energy field is given through trade, within Comecom rules: energy efficiency technology, for example, has been supplied to a number of Comecon countries. As I said in my speech to energy technologists at Cambridge recently, developments in eastern Europe underline this area as an important market for the future and I believe there are real commercial opportunities for the United Kingdom.

Plutonium

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to publish the civil plutonium production figures for 1988-89; and what it has cost him to prepare this data.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The figures were published on 5 December and copies placed in the Library of the House. My Department's role is to co-ordinate the information for publication. The bulk of the work has been done by the Central Electricity Generating Board, the South of Scotland Electricity Board, British Nuclear Fuels plc and the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority.

Efficiency

Mr. Rost: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many companies are currently involved in their best efficiency practice scheme in the sectors of steel, ceramics, chemicals, food and drink, motors and drivers, and textiles.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The direct involvement of companies in these sectors in the Best Practice programme which started in April 1989 is currently as tabulated. In addition many more companies have been involved by way of participation in consultations leading to future participation in projects or to future development of the programme.

Sector	*Companies involved in projects*	*Companies involved in supply of quantative information.*
Steel	5	23
Ceramics	0	55
Chemicals	8	31
Food and drinks	4	30
Motors and drives	5	0
Textiles	0	0

Oil Price

Mr. Rost: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what change in the demand for energy he anticipates occurring in 30 years if the real price of oil rises *(a)* to $43 a barrel, and *(b)* to $23 a barrel.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Future energy demand will depend —amongst other things—on the rate of economic growth, the price of fuels and technological progress.

The Department of Energy produced a set of scenarios for energy demand—based on IEA price assumptions—in a report entitled:

> "'An Evaluation of Energy Related Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Measures to Ameliorate Them'" October 1989."

The figures reported are baseline scenarios against which various technical options could be set. The report forms part of the United Kingdom contribution to the work of the intergovernmental panel on climate change and a copy has been lodged in the House of Commons Library.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 11 December 1989

THE ARTS

Public Libraries

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on the Government's spending plans for public libraries.

Mr. Luce: The Government do not plan local authority spending on public libraries or on other services. Revenue support grant is paid in support of local authorities' revenue expenditure generally. For 1990-91, it is proposed to distribute revenue support grant on the basis that it is appropriate for authorities in England in aggregate to incur revenue spending of £32·8 billion, in the provision of services. Of this amount, £5·004 billion is assumed to be spent on the other services block, a group of smaller services including libraries.

CIVIL SERVICE

Early Retirement

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service how many civil servants have taken early retirement for each year since 1979.

Mr. Ryder: I have been asked to reply.

The earliest year for which this information is readily available is 1982-83. The details are as follows:

Non-industrial civil service

1982-83	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*[1]
4,337	5,734	4,105	4,084	3,739	4,893	4,441

[1] Provisional

Source: Mandate

NATIONAL FINANCE

GDP

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to the growth in gross domestic product in each Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development country for the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Ryder: Following is the information requested.

Growth of GDP/GNP at Constant Prices
(percentage change on a year earlier)

	1988
United Kingdom	4·3
United States	4·4
Japan	5·8
Germany	3·6
France	3·4
Italy	3·9
Canada	5·0
Belgium	4·2
Luxembourg	5·2
Netherlands	3·0
Denmark	−0·2
Ireland	0·4
Spain	5·0
Portugal	4·1
Greece	3·4
Australia	3·8
New Zealand	0·3
Austria	4·2
Finland	4·8
Iceland	−1·4
Norway	2·6
Sweden	2·1
Switzerland	3·0
Turkey	3·4

Source: OECD and national sources.

Building Societies

Mr. Beith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will make a statement on the role of the Building Societies Commission on the proposed merger of the Guardian building society and the Cheltenham and Gloucester building society;

(2) if he will take steps to enable the Building Societies Commission to ensure that members of the Guardian and Cheltenham and Gloucester building societies are provided with statements of the case for and against the merger of those societies, and are given sufficient time to reach a considered decision.

Mr. Ryder: The Building Societies Commission has two statutory functions placed upon it under the provisions of sections 93 to 96 and schedule 16 (mergers) of the Building Societies Act 1986. First, it has to approve the contents of the statement required to be sent to all members under schedule 16 to the Act and, second, if the members approve the requisite resolutions, to confirm the merger. The commission has approved the statutory statements issued by the societies in connection with the proposed merger between the Guardian building society and the Cheltenham and Gloucester building society. If the special and borrowing members resolutions are passed, the commission intends to consider the societies' applications for confirmation on 14 February 1990, when it will consider any representations made by interested parties. That hearing must be directed to consideration of whether the statutory procedures and the provisions of the 1986 Act and the societies' rules have been complied with. It is not for the commission to consider the merits of the terms of a merger.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Ministerial Responsibilities

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what additional responsibilities have been assumed by the Minister for the Economy in Northern Ireland in the Department of Economic Development since 25 July;

(2) what are the current responsibilities of the Minister for the Environment in Northern Ireland;

(3) what changes have been made to the budget of the Minister for the Environment in Northern Ireland since 25 July;

(4) what changes have been made to the budgets of the Minister for the Economy in Northern Ireland in the Department of Economic Development and the Department of the Environment since 25 July.

Mr. Brooke: All Northern Ireland Departments are under my direction and control and I have allocated economic development and environment responsibilities as follows:

Mr. Needham
Urban Regeneration;
Urban Development Grant;
Belfast Action Teams;
Promotion of Belfast City Centre;
Planning Service;
Lands Service; and
Ports and Harbours.

Mr. Peter Bottomley
The remainder of the Department of Environment functions.

The main changes to budgetary allocations since 25 July are summarised in the table and have been reflected as necessary in the autumn Supplementary Estimate approved on 4 December.

Department of Economic Development
Industry Trade and Employment;
Increase of £42 million reflecting additional provision for Shorts and Harland and Wolff offset by emerging savings on Industrial Development and Labour Market services.
Energy;
Reduction of £8 million through additional loan repayments by NIE.

Department of Environment
Mr. Needham's responsibilities
Reduction of £2 million mainly reflecting delays in Urban Development Schemes coming forward for grant.
Mr. Bottomley's responsibilities
Roads and Transport;
Net reduction of £1 million reflecting several minor changes.
Housing;
Reduction of £42 million reflecting interest savings from the write-off of loans to NIHE. The reduction did not affect the resources available for physical housing programmes. Indeed the availability of increased Housing receipts has facilitated an increase in the gross expenditure by the NIHE.
Environmental and Miscellaneous Services;
Additional £1 million reflecting several minor changes.

The changes to budgets do not involve any increase in total public expenditure.

Motorways (Accidents)

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many road accidents have been reported involving stationary vehicles on motorway hard shoulders in each of the years 1980 to 1989; and how many people were *(a)* injured and *(b)* killed.

Mr. Cope: The Chief Constable of the RUC has advised me that the relevant records were computerised in 1986 and information for the years prior to that could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The information for the years 1986 to 1989 is set out in the following table:

	Number of accidents	*Persons killed*	*Persons injured*
1986	3	—	4
1987	3	—	8
1988	3	—	4
[1]1989	1	—	1
TOTALS	10	—	17

[1] To 31 October 1989.

Shorts Base

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on what date construction work commenced on the new building, roadworks, car park and entrance at the Shorts base at Lough Mann situated on the Downpatrick-Ballynahinch road in South Down.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Construction work had already started on the building without the required planning permission in May 1989. A temporary access for which permission had been granted for a period of one year on 24 January 1989 had already been completed by May 1989. No new car parking facilities are proposed.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on what date or dates the planning department carried out inspections at the site of the building currently under construction at the Shorts base at Lough Mann situated on the Downpatrick-Ballynahinch road in South Down.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: An inspection was carried out on 16 May 1989 when Short Brothers plc was told that planning permission was required for the works already commenced. A further site inspection took place on 1 September 1989.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what consultations were held between the local farmers, householders, etc. and the town and country planning service about the building under construction, new roadworks, new entrance and car park at the Shorts base at Lough Mann situated on the Downpatrick-Ballynahinch road in South Down.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Prior to 5 December 1989 the planning application received from Short Bros. plc was for a temporary access to the site for which planning permission was granted on 24 January 1989 for a period of one year. This application was advertised and processed in the normal way and attracted no local representations.

A planning application for the remainder of the works was made complete on 5 December 1989 and it will be advertised and processed in the normal way.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what consultations were held between the management of Shorts aircraft factory and officials in the Department of the Environment town and country planning service and the Department of the Environment roads service about the building currently under construction, the new car park, and the new entrance at the Lough Mann base situated on the Downpatrick-Ballynahinch road in South Down.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Following a meeting on site in May 1989 with the divisional planning officer, Short Bros. contacted the Department on several occasions and obtained advice on the information required to allow for the proper processing of a planning application. The application was not made complete until 5 December 1989.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what inspections were carried out by the planning department at the site of the building under construction at the Shorts base at Lough Mann situated on the Downpatrick-Ballynahinch road in South Down.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Two site inspections were carried out, one in May 1989 and the other in September 1989.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what type of work will be carried out in the new building currently under construction at the Shorts base at Lough Mann situated on the Downpatrick-Ballynahinch road in South Down.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A current planning application describes the proposed development as an extension to the firm's storage and assembly facility at Lough Mann.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when was the planning application in respect of the new entrance and new car park at the Shorts base at Lough Mann situated on the Downpatrick-Ballynahinch road in South Down submitted and when was approval issued.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: An application for planning permission for a temporary access on to the Downpatrick-Ballynahinch road was received on 31 October 1988 and approved for a period of one year on 24 January 1989. No new car parking facilities were shown on this application.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when was the planning application made and approval issued in respect of the two signs erected on either side of the Downpatrick/Ballynahinch road adjacent to the new entrance at the Shorts base at Lough Mann situated on the Downpatrick-Ballynahinch road in South Down.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: An application for planning permission was not made for the erection of these signs. As Short Bros plc has undertaken to remove the signs by 24 January 1990, the DOE(NI) does not intend to take any action on the matter.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when was the planning application submitted and approved in respect of the new building under construction at the Shorts base at Lough Mann situated on the Downpatrick-Ballynahinch road in South Down; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: An incomplete planning application was made on 8 September 1989, and completed on 5 December 1989. This application will be subjected to the normal consultation process before Down district council is asked to consider the DOE(NI) opinion on the proposal.

Security

Mr. Ron Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the security situation in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Cope: So far this year, 60 people have died as a result of the security situation in Northern Ireland; including nine RUC officers, 12 Regular soldiers (including two members of the UDR) and 39 civilians.

The security threat remains at high, but the professional and courageous efforts of the security forces have resulted in 360 people being charged with serious terrorist-type offences. A large amount of weaponry, ammunitions and explosives has also been recovered in the Province. There have also been substantial finds of arms and explosives by the Garda Siochana in the Republic of Ireland.

Adrian Carroll (Murder)

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if the Royal Ulster Constabulary has in its possession a gun the ballistics of which match the weapon used in the murder of Adrian Carroll in Armagh in November 1983.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 8 December 1989]:* This is a matter for the Chief Constable, but I understand that police checks on recovered weapons which it is believed could have been used in the murder of Mr. Carroll have not revealed a matching weapon.

Civil Service

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentages of the Northern Ireland civil servants described in the third report of the equal opportunity unit for the Northern Ireland Civil Service as being educated outside Northern Ireland or whose religion was not known were *(a)* non-industrial civil servants, *(b)* in higher grades or *(c)* born in Great Britain.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 4 December 1989]:* Of the 2,933 Northern Ireland civil servants educated outside Northern Ireland or whose religion was not known at 1 January 1989; 57·1 per cent.—1,675—were non-industrial civil servants; 12·1 per cent.—355—were in higher grades; deputy principal equivalent or above in the non-industrial Civil Service.

The Northern Ireland Civil Service does not monitor the number of staff born in Great Britain and the information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many employees of the Northern Ireland Civil Service were educated in Great Britain.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 7 December 1989]:* At 1 January 1989, the Northern Ireland Civil Service had 754 staff who, in its equal opportunities monitoring system, were classified as having been educated outside Northern Ireland. It is not known how many were educated in Great Britain and the information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Rivers and Lakes

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total number of *(a)* rivers and *(b)* lakes maintained by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries Division, in each district council area in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 7 December 1989]:* The Department of Agriculture currently maintains a total of 61 waters consisting of rivers, lakes and reservoirs for angling by those members of the public who purchase a Department permit.

The location and details of all Department of Agriculture fisheries are published in an angling guide and I have arranged for a copy to be sent to the hon. Member.

It is not possible to allocate fisheries to individual district council areas as the information is not held in the form requested and some of the fisheries can run through two or more district council areas.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total number of Northern Ireland Civil Service employees who are classified by the equal opportunities unit as being either educated outside Northern Ireland or their religion was not known; and how many of these employees are employed at grade H, and each other higher grade, in the non-industrial sector.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 7 December 1989]:* A total of 2,933, as at 1 January 1989, of whom the following were in the non-industrial Civil Service.

Grade Level	A	81
	B	97
	C	177
	D	172
	E	438
	F	250
	G	206
	H	254

Roads

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the estimated hourly vehicle capacity of *(a)* Ballyrobin road, Templepatrick side of traffic lights *(b)* Ballyrobin road; airport side of traffic lights, *(c)* Killead road, Killead village and *(d)* Oldstone road, north of traffic lights.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 8 December 1989]:* There is no agreed definition of capacity for roads. It is not possible to provide these figures.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Training

34. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, how much is spent each year on the training of the clergy.

Mr. Alison: The commissioners have no responsibility for the training of the clergy, and their funds are not available for the purpose. However, I understand that the latest figure (for 1988) was £3·9 million, though I must explain that this relates exclusively to ordination training. Should my hon. Friend wish to pursue his interest in this area, I will willingly give him the name and address of the body with which he should correspond.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

ODA Debt

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the total outstanding Overseas Development Administration debt in *(a)* 1982, *(b)* 1988 and *(c)* for each country in 1988; how much was repaid each year between 1982 and 1988; and under what terms the credits had been made available.

Mrs. Chalker: The figures for the calendar year 1988 are not yet available and therefore the following figures are given on a financial year basis for the sake of consistency. The outstanding debt totals at the end of 1982-83 and 1988-89 were £1,208,126,092 and £1,176,970,296 respectively; the breakdown of the latter by country is shown in table 1. The figures do not include loans which at the relevant dates had been converted to grants under the retrospective terms adjustment arrangements or written off. In the case of India an equivalent measure to retrospective terms adjustment was adopted in the form of local costs finance equal to the payments due. The amounts repaid between 1982-83 and 1988-89 are shown in table 2. The terms of loans varied considerably and details of all loans could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Table 1

Breakdown by country of outstanding debt totals at end of 1988-89

	£
Antigua	145,033·72
Barbados	523,070·30
Belize	11,552,858·93
Bolivia	270,856·48
Brazil	3,340,202·17
British Virgin Islands	2,477,144·55
Cameroon	66,775·58
Cayman Islands	900,223·70
Colombia	2,591,575·67
Costa Rica	3,214,041·25
Cyprus	344,048·99
Dominica	6,353,939·01
Ecuador	7,557,273·24
Egypt	6,863,734·57
Falkland Islands	191,025·81
Fiji	1,887,821·78
Gibraltar	902,075·73
Ghana	331,120·53
Grenada	3,263,707·50
Guyana	25,041,467·13
Honduras	3,985,888·79
India	193,946,546·91
Ivory Coast	2,564,520·59
Jamaica	49,332,675·99
Jordan	37,285,063·06
Laos	27,983·00
Liberia	77,749·50
Malaysia	13,767,453“87
Malta	1,692,486·23
Mauritius	8,235,343·27
New Hebrides	114,620·00
Nicaragua	584,705·62
Nigeria	5,055,084·04
Paraguay	4,220,000·00
Peoples Democratic Republic of Yemen	4,162,899·66
Peru	4,194,608·68
Philippines	5,481,634·67
St. Kitts-Nevis	758,694·63
St. Lucia	635,066·65
St. Vincent	81,549·56
Seychelles	10,921,084·69
Singapore	7,291,652·00
Solomon Islands	4,736,949·90
Swaziland	10,196,888·58

	£
Thailand	981,392·08
Tonga	1,673,486·92
Trinidad and Tobago	60,000·00
Tunisia	339,822·01
Turkey	69,871,630·85
Vietnam	196,789·37
Zambia	45,262,252·23
Zimbabwe	26,166,265·70
Bailey Malta (Ltd)	6,405,480·00
Country Total	598,126,274·69
Multilateral	67,778,686·72
Commonwealth Development Corporation	511,065,334·24

Table 2
Amounts repaid between 1982-83 and 1988-89

	£
1982-83	69,691,483·78
1983-84	70,103,983·98
1984-85	70,896,173·25
1985-86	70,475,174·81
1986-87	69,720,259·00
1987-88	70,893,107·50
1988-89	68,538,447·67

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Staff (Ages)

38. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what proportion of House staff employed on 1 November were *(a)* under 18 years, *(b)* under 25 years and *(c)* over 50 years.

Mr. Beith: The total number of staff employed at 1 November 1989 was 988 of whom *(a)* 1 (or 0·1 per cent.) was under 18; *(b)* 111 (or 11·23 per cent.) were under 25; and *(c)* 274 (or 27·73 per cent.) were over 50 years of age.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Maladministration

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General if he will propose an amendment of the law to enable maladministration by judges and court officials to be reviewed by the Parliamentary Commissioner when they are not acting in a purely judicial capacity.

The Attorney-General: No.

Judicial Appointments

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Attorney-General (1) how many black judges he estimates there will be in the year 2000; and what percentage of the total this will be;

(2) what percentage and number of county court judges are black;

(3) what percentage and number of judges who sit full time in the Crown court are black;

(4) what percentage and number of judges who sit in the Court of Appeal and Court of Criminal Appeal are black;

(5) what percentage and number of judges who sit in the Divisional Court are black;

(6) what percentage and number of judges who sit in the High Court are black;

(7) what percentage and number of those who sit in the House of Lords in its capacity as an apellate court are black;

(8) what percentage and number of recorders are black.

The Attorney-General: Records are not kept of the ethnic origin of members of the judiciary or of candidates for judicial appointment but our understanding of the present position is as follows.

There are no black Lords of Appeal in Ordinary, Lord Justices of Appeal or High Court judges. There are 422 circuit judges of whom one is black (0·2 per cent.). There are 703 recorders of whom five are black (0·7 per cent.).

It is impossible to produce a meaningful estimate of the number of individuals from ethnic minorities who will hold judicial office in the year 2000. Every effort however is being made to encourage black lawyers in the appropriate age groups to put themselves forward for judicial office, and it is the Lord Chancellor's hope that by 2000 there will be many more black judges.

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Attorney-General (1) how many female judges he estimates there will be in the year 2000; and what percentage of the total this will be;

(2) what percentage and number of county court judges are female;

(3) what percentage and number of judges who sit full-time in the Crown courts are female;

(4) what percentage and number of judges who sit in the Divisional Court are female;

(5) what percentage and number of recorders are female;

(6) what percentage and number of those who sit in the House of Lords in its capacity as an appellate court are female;

(7) what percentage and numbers of judges who sit in the Court of Appeal and Court of Criminal Appeal are female;

(8) what percentage and number of judges who sit in the High Court are female.

The Attorney-General: The following figures are correct as at 1 December 1989.

There are 10 Lords of Appeal in Ordinary, of whom none is female.

There are 27 Lords Justices of Appeal, of whom one is female (3·7 per cent).

There are 81 High Court judges, of whom one is female (1·2 per cent).

There are 422 circuit judges, of whom 17 are female (4 per cent).

There are 703 recorders, of whom 25 are female (3·6 per cent).

It is impossible to produce a meaningful estimate of the number of female judges there will be in the year 2000.

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Attorney-General (1) what steps he is taking to increase the number of female judges; (2) what steps he is taking to increase the numbers of black judges.

The Attorney-General: Candidates for judicial appointment are considered on their merits, regardless of sex or ethnic origin. The Lord Chancellor has, however, made it clear on a number of occasions that he would very much like to appoint more women and members of ethnic minorities to judicial office, and has urged groups representing women lawyers and lawyers from ethnic minorities to encourage those of their members in the appropriate age groups to put themselves forward as candidates for appointment.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Procedural Reform

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make a statement on his assessment of the case for reform of the procedures of the House.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes).

Facilities (Visitors)

43. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will review the earliest time at which visitors can be admitted at St. Stephen's Entrance; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The arrangements for visitors are kept under review by the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee and I understand that it would be hard to justify the additional costs of opening St. Stephen's entrance earlier than the present time of 9 am on sitting days due to the small numbers of visitors seeking entrance at that hour.

European Community Debates

44. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make a statement about the number of hours spent debating European Economic Community matters during the 1988-89 Parliament.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The number of hours spent debating European Community matters during the 1988-89 Session was approximately 90 hours, including three debates totalling 16 hours on the six-monthly White Papers on developments in the European Community covering the period January 1988 to June 1989, 11·5 hours in Standing Committee and four hours on ministerial statements. This total excludes time spent in discussion of European Community matters during debates on wider issues or at other times such as Question Time.

Prime Minister's Press Secretary

45. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what facilities are provided in the Palace of Westminster for the Prime Minister's Press Secretary.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: None.

Members of the European Parliament

46. **Mr. Aitken:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he expects to bring forward any proposals that will allow Members of the European Parliament to participate in committees or any other proceedings of the House.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have no plans at this stage to bring forward such proposals. However, the report of the Select Committee on Procedure on the scrutiny of European legislation published on 30 November contains recommendations on developing the links between Parliament and MEPs. I cannot comment on detailed points in the report at this stage, but I have already assured the House that the Goverment will look carefully and constructively at all the report's recommendations.

PRIME MINISTER

Nuclear Arms

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister if, during the debriefing meeting of NATO nations' heads of state and government in Brussels on 4 December, President Bush indicated whether the issues of the fourth review conference of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and non-proliferation policies were discussed by Presidents Bush and Gorbachev in Malta.

The Prime Minister: No. The President gave no indication that these issues had been discussed.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister when she last took the opportunity to discuss with President Bush the forthcoming amendment conference of the partial test ban treaty.

The Prime Minister: I have not discussed this issue with President Bush.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister when she last took the opportunity to discuss with President Bush joint United States-United Kingdom initiatives that may be taken to strengthen the 1968 nuclear non-proliferation treaty before the fourth review conference of that treaty.

The Prime Minister: I have not discussed this with President Bush. There is, however, frequent contact with the United States on such matters at official level.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister when she last took the opportunity to discuss with President Bush *(a)* the adequacy of NATO nation expenditure on nuclear weapons and *(b)* initiatives that may be taken on nuclear disarmament.

The Prime Minister: I last met President Bush at the NATO summit on 4 December; defence issues were among those discussed at the summit.

Human Rights

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Prime Minister if she intends to discuss the issues of Palestinian human rights and self-determination when she next meets her Israeli counterpart.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to meet Mr. Shamir.

Rain Forests

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if she will give details of the allocation to individual projects of £100 million United Kingdom support announced in her speech to the United Nations for rain forest protection.

The Prime Minister: We currently have in preparation over 50 projects in 22 countries. Allocations from the £100 million I announced on 8 November will be made for these and other projects. Since August ODA forestry missions have visited Brazil, Cameroon, India, Malaysia, Nepal, Nigeria, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. Details of particular projects will be made known when formal agreement has been reached with the country concerned. The £100 million is for commitment over the next three years.

Nuclear Energy

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister what actions the Government have taken, and intend to take, to encourage those parties to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty that have not yet negotiated their mandatory safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency, to do so.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 8 December 1989]:* The negotiation and conclusion of a safeguards agreement pursuant to article III of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT) are matters for each NPT party and the International Atomic Energy Agency. However, we take every appropriate opportunity to underline the importance we attach to the fulfilment of obligations under the NPT.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister what steps the Government intend to take to assist in increasing the funding for International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards activities.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 8 December 1989]:* The International Atomic Energy Agency's safeguards activities are financed from its regular budget. These activities play a vital role in guarding against the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and the whole international community benefits. When the agency's board of governors discusses the budget for 1991-92, the United Kingdom will continue to argue that safeguards activities deserve the highest priority.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy to raise at the Strasbourg summit of European Community Heads of Government with the President and Prime Minister of France, France's export policies for nuclear materials and sensitive nuclear technology and prospects of France joining the nulear non-proliferation treaty.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 8 December 1989]:* I did not raise these issues at the European Council meeting in Strasbourg.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister if, during her meeting with President Roh Tae Woo of South Korea in London recently, she discussed the dangers to peace in the Korean peninsular of the North Korean development of a military nuclear materials production capability based on a United Kingdom designed reactor and the fourth review conference of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty next August and its role in preventing nuclear proliferation in the Korean peninsula.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 8 December 1989]:* Neither subject was raised.

Cambodia

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Prime Minister when the two officials referred to in her letter of 4 December to the hon. Member for Halifax will arrive in Phnom Penh.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 8 December 1989]:* The British officials arrived in Cambodia on 8 December 1989.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Buttons

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what representations he has received from the British Button Manufacturers Association relating to the statutory instrument, 1989 No. 1291; and whether he will seek to amend the instrument in the light of the representations;

(2) what consultation his Department held with representatives of the British button industry on the provisions of statutory instrument 1989 No. 1291.

Mr. Redwood: The British Button Manufacturers Association has made representations for exempting from the provisions of the Food Imitations (Safety) Regulations 1989 buttons which resemble food. These regulations implement from 1 January 1990 the European Community dangerous imitations directive and within the terms of the directive it would not have been permissible to accede to these representations.

Mail Charges

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whose approval was required for the Post Office to revise their scale of surcharges for understamped mail; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Decisions on the level of postal tariffs, including surcharges, are a matter for the Post Office. However, the Post Office is required to consult the Post Office Users National Council before making changes.

Companies Act Investigations

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what policies his Department operates about the employment on privatisation of accountancy firms criticised in his Department's reports on Companies Act inquiries; how these are enforced; and what rules he lays down about the use of individual accountants and practices criticised in these reports.

Mr. Redwood: Firms, including accountancy firms, are invited to tender for the provision of advisory services to the Department on the basis of its assessment of their suitability to provide those services. In making its assessment, the Department pays due regard to adverse criticisms of individual firms particularly where they might be relevant to the particular work for which the firms could be invited to tender.

Security Interests in Property

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what responses have been received to consultation following the publication of the Diamond report, "A Review of Security Interests in Property"; and when the Government expect to be able to make a statement about reform of the law in this area;

(2) if, now that the Diamond report, "A Review of Security Interests in Property", has been published and the

consultation period is ended he will ask the Scottish Law Commission to resume its work on floating charges and include any appropriate recommendations that arise from their consultative memorandum No. 72, "Floating Charges and Receivers", published in October 1986;

(3) what steps he intends to take to remove the present prohibition in the law of Scotland on taking security over moveable property without possession; and what representations he has had on this subject.

Mr. Redwood: A significant number of responses have been received to the proposals outlined in part II of Professor Diamond's report, "A Review of Security Interests in Property" published by HMSO in January. Professor Diamond recommends radical reform in a complex area of the law which will need careful consideration. The Government will make public their conclusions, in the light of the responses received, in due course.

Professor Diamond's report pays particular attention to the restrictions of current Scots security law and a number of respondees commented on this aspect. It will be given due weight in the Government's consideration of what action should be taken in response to the report.

The question whether the Scottish Law Commission decides to resume its work on floating charges and receivers will to some extent depend upon the conclusions the Government reach on Professor Diamond's report. The work was not suspended at the request of the Government.

Privatisation

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what principles his Department has developed as a basis of common practice for firms and businesses to be privatised in the valuation of *(a)* property assets, *(b)* subsidiary shareholding, *(c)* stocks, *(d)* good will, *(e)* other assets, and *(f)* debt; what consultations he had with the accountancy profession in developing these standards; and how they are reviewed after each individual privatisation.

Mr. Redwood: My Department takes appropriate professional advice on the basis of the particular circumstances and requirements of each firm or business to be privatised.

Auditors

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action is taken by his Department in dealing with auditing firms that deliver poor audits.

Mr. Redwood: Complaints about auditors' conduct of statutory audits of companies are normally referred to the relevant professional body and the outcome of the referral is noted.

Mobile Telecommunications

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has any plans for introducing further competition into mobile telecommunications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: On 22 June 1989 the then Secretary of State, Lord Young, announced that a consortium led by Mercury Communications Ltd. or its parent company, Cable and Wireless, would be offered a licence to operate a mobile telecommunications network within the frequency range of 1·7 to 2·3 GHz, subject to the submission of an acceptable proposal. He also invited applications for one or two further licences to operate such networks. Seven applications were received by the closing date on 14 September.

The proposal from the consortium headed by Mercury, and the other applications have been fully assessed by the Director General of Telecommunications, who has made recommendations to the Secretary of State. We are grateful to the director general and his staff for their careful and thorough assessment.

Following his advice, I can confirm I am offering a licence to Mercury PCN Ltd., a consortium comprising Mercury Communications Ltd. Motorola Ltd. and Telefonica.

I am also offering licences to a consortium consisting of British Aerospace (Space Communications) Ltd., Matra Communication, Millicom UK, Pacific Telesis UK (3) Ltd. and Sony; and a consortium consisting of STC, US West, Thorn EMI and Deutsche Bundespost Telekom, which will operate under the name of Unitel Ltd.

These licences will permit the operators to run personal communications networks (PCNs) in the frequency range 1·7-1·9 GHz. They will come into service in the early 1990s. We expect them to compete initially with the services offered by the two existing cellular radio operators, Cellnet and Racal-Vodafone at that time. By the mid to late 1990s, the cost and convenience of equipment may make the use of a PCN a competitive alternative not only to the cellular operators' services but to the fixed telephone network.

The details of operating licences and radio spectrum allocation will now be discussed with the successful licensees. As the announcement of 22 June indicated, they will be able to provide their own radio-based network infrastructure between cells. They will also be permitted to share infrastructure in rural areas if they wish to do so.

The announcement on 22 June specified that the networks should be based on either the GSM standard developed for the pan-European cellular network or the digital European cordless telephone (DECT) technology. In order to allow for full consultation within Europe we have decided not to take a final decision on these two technologies at this stage. This consultation will be undertaken by the successful licensees, with the support of my officials, through the European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI). However, our objective of a common technical standard as a framework for competitive United Kingdom PCN services remain the same, and we expect this to be based upon a European technology or a combination of technologies currently being standardised in Europe.

PCNs will take the development of telecommunications in the United Kingdom a major step forward. They will allow the same telephone to be used at home, at work and on the move. The United Kingdom will be the first country in the world to offer PCN services. The prominent international companies involved in both the successful and unsuccessful applicants attest to the position of this country as a world leader in mobile communications. The United Kingdom companies leading the consortia also make clear the strength of our own telecommunications sector. The quality of applications for these licences was excellent, and I am sure that those we have selected will make PCNs a powerful competitive force in the telecommunications world of the 1990s.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many civil servants in his Department work *(a)* full time and *(b)* part time on (i) the film industry, (ii) the record industry, (iii) the publishing industry, (iv) the press, (v) the design industry, (vi) the fashion industry, (vii) leisure and (viii) tourism.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 7 December 1989]:* The industries specified do not, in all cases, relate directly to the division of industry responsibilities within my Department. The responsibility for tourism rests with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment. In total, approximately 28 staff are directly concerned with the industries listed and devote all or part of their time to them.

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the expenditure by his Department in the last financial year on *(a)* the film industry, *(b)* the record industry, *(c)* the publishing industry. *(d)* the Press, *(e)* the design industry, *(f)* the fashion industry, *(g)* leisure and *(h)* tourism.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 7 December 1989]:* In 1988-89 expenditure on the film industry was £2 million and expenditure in support of the Depatment's design policies was £7·8 million, mainly for grant in aid to the Design Council. The responsibility for tourism rests with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment. My Department has no specific expenditure programme related to the other industries, although all companies eligible can apply for assistance under the Department's various initiatives and programmes.

Government Shareholdings

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the shareholdings held by the Government in two categories *(a)* golden shares and *(b)* other shareholdings and give the percentage holding and the current market value in each case.

Mr. Lilley: I have been asked to reply.

The Government hold special shares in the following companies, Mersey Docks and Harbour Company; Britoil; Cable and Wireless; Jaguar; Sealink; British Telecom; British Aerospace; VSEL Consortium; British Gas; Rolls-Royce; BAA; British Steel; Anglian Water; Northumbrian Water; North West Water; Severn Trent; South West Water; Southern Water; Thames Water; Welsh Water; Wessex Water; and Yorkshire Water.

Details of the Government's other shareholdings are given in the "Consolidated Fund and National Loans Fund Accounts 1987-88: Supplementary Statements" (HC59). The 1988-89 supplementary statements will be laid before the House on 18 December. The Government will retain residual shareholdings in each of the 10 water companies. Precise details of the numbers of those shares are not yet available. The current market value of the shareholdings can be established from the International Stock Exchange official list.

Mr. Norris: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the amount of Government debt written off in each of the privatisations effected by Her Majesty's Government since 1979.

Mr. Lilley: I have been asked to reply.

The normal practice on privatisation of a nationalised industry or company wholly or majority owned by Government is to repay, rather than write off debt. This repayment may be financed from the company's existing resources, the injection of new equity, or new debt finance. In some cases, the Government provide the finance to repay debts, for example, by an equity injection. Such finance is shown in the relevant departmental programme of the public expenditure White Paper. Subsequent sales of the Government's interests in a company are recorded in the privatisation programme in the PEWP.

National loan fund debt has been formally written off only in the following privatisation cases:

Year and company	*Amount* £
1980-81	
National Freight Corporation (under Section 45 of the Transport Act 1980)	100,000,000
1982-83	
British Transport Docks Board (under Section 6(1) of the Transport Act 1981)	81,293,616
1984-85	
British Telecom (BT (Extinguishment of Loans) Order 1982	2,789,865,772
1986-87	
BAA (under section 3 of the Airports Act 1986)	43,503,340
1989-90	
Water Companies (under section 86 of the Water Act 1989)	5,028,346,588

These write-offs had no direct effect on public expenditure in as much as they represented a reconstruction of the balance sheets of the industries concerned. In each case, having had NLF debt written off, the successor company issued new securities to be held by the Secretary of State as assets of the consolidated fund pending realisation.

Public dividend capital has been reduced in three privatisation cases:

Year and Company	*Amount* £
1980-81	
British Airways Board (under the Civil Aviation Act 1980 S1(1))	160,000,000
1980-81	
British Aerospace (under the British Aerospace Act 1980)	60,000,000
1988-89	
British Steel (under the British Steel Act 1988)	500,000,000

A further £3,480,000,000 of borrowing by British Steel under section 18(1) of the Iron and Steel Act 1982 was written off on privatisation.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

School Buses

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the progress of his review of school bus three-to-a-double-seat policy.

Mr. Alan Howarth: I have nothing to add to the answer that I gave my hon. Friend on 23 October.

Magnet Schools, Bradford

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his replies of 5 December, whether Bradford local education authority informed him of its public statement announcing a postponement of the magnet schools programme; whether Bradford local education authority has indicated any intention of withdrawing supplementary bids linked to the development of magnet schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend is aware of the announcement made in October by Bradford LEA postponing its magnet schools programme. In subsequent discussions with officials of the Department, the LEA confirmed that it wished my right hon. Friend to proceed with his consideration of its supplementary bids for funds to support the programme, in preparation for a commencement in September 1991.

Students' Awards

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will announce his decisions in respect of the levels for 1990-91 of students' maintenance awards, and of awards for mature students, and mature students' dependants allowances.

Mr. MacGregor: I intend to make an announcement at around the usual time.

Peto Clinic, Budapest

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many British school children are currently undertaking training at the Peto clinic in Budapest; and how many of these are funded by their local education authority.

Mr. Alan Howarth: This information is not collected centrally.

Open University (Vice-Chancellor)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to meet the new Vice-Chancellor of the Open University.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend and I met the Vice-Chancellor, Dr. John Horlock, on 30 November. His successor, Dr. John Daniel, now of Laurentian university in Canada, will not be in post until July 1990.

Grant-Maintained Schools

Mr. Franks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the number of schools which have been granted grant-maintained status, and the number of such applications so far received.

Mrs. Rumbold: To date 51 schools have voted in favour of applying for grant-maintained status, of which 48 have so far published proposals. My right hon. Friend has taken decisions on 41 cases, of which 32 have been approved for grant-maintained status. Decisions on the remaining applications will be taken on their merits in due course.

National Curriculum

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he intends to publish for consultation the draft order with attainment targets and programmes of study for English in the national curriculum for pupils aged eight to 16 years.

Mr. MacGregor: I have today published for consultation a draft order with an associated document setting out the attainment targets and programmes of study for English in the national curriculum, as I am required to do by section 20(5) of the Education Reform Act. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales is consulting on the draft order under the provisions of section 22(3) of the Act. Copies have been placed in the Library.

The draft order relates to key stages 2 to 4—pupils aged eight to 16. The order for key stage 1 was laid before the House in May this year and took effect from September.

The new draft order has been prepared in the light of advice from the National Curriculum Council, following its consultation on the Government's proposals published in June. I have accepted the council's recommendations for attainment targets and programmes of study in full. I believe that the draft order will be widely welcomed as providing a challenging framework for the raising of standards of English in our schools. The consultation period ends on 22 January 1990. I intend to make the final order in March 1990, in good time for implementation starting in the autumn.

Teacher Training

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many students were recruited to courses of initial teacher training in the current year.

Mr. MacGregor: A survey undertaken by my Department shows that 21,757 students entered courses of initial teacher training in 1989, an increase of 1,574 over 1988. Recruitment to primary courses was 12·7 per cent. higher than last year. Intakes to secondary courses overall were 1·5 per cent. above last year, and intakes to science courses were 3·2 per cent. up on last year, although recruitment in the shortage secondary subjects continued to fall short of targets. I am placing the principal results of the survey in the Library.

Student Loans

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress has been made by the Student Loans Company Limited on preparatory work for the student loans scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The Student Loans Company Limited has signed a contract with Electronic Data Systems (EDS) for the provision of the main administrative system for the student loans scheme. EDS was selected by the financial institutions after an extensive evaluation of competing bids by an independent panel. As foreshadowed in the memorandum of understanding, my Department has contracted with the company for this purpose. My Department has also contracted with the company to fund items of miscellaneous expenditure required for preparatory work on the student loans scheme.

EMPLOYMENT

Claimants

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many claimants have been issued with the explanatory warning letter when employment service staff have considered the claimant has not sufficiently actively sought work in each week from 9 October and for each region;

(2) how many claimants have been referred to an adjudication officer, either directly or via an unemployment benefit office for failing to meet the actively seeking work requirement; how many claimants were (i) allowed, (ii) disallowed benefit or credits by the adjudication officer; and how many had benefits or credits suspended for each week from 9 October and for each region;

(3) how many claimants have been referred to the adjudication officer, either directly or via the unemployment benefit office, for refusing employment and for whom a UB195 has been completed; and how many were *(a)* disqualified and *(b)* not disqualified from receiving benefits or credits for up to 26 weeks, for each week from 9 October and for each region.

Mr. Eggar: Figures in the precise form requested are not available. The table shows statistical information for the period 9 October to 27 October on questions of actively seeking and refusal of employment. Decisions outstanding as at 27 October will be recorded in the subsequent statistical returns.

National Monthly Return—
Actively Seeking Referrals and Disallowances
Refusal of Employment Referrals and Disqualifications
Period ending: 27 October 1989

	Actively seeking employment				*Refusal of Employment*		
Regions	*Claimants issued warning letters*	*Claims referred to adjudication officer*	*Allowed*	*Disallowed*	*Claims referred to adjudication officer*	*Not disqualified*	*Disqualified*
Northern	44	4	0	0	2	0	1
Yorkshire and Humberside	120	12	0	0	15	2	0
East Midlands and Eastern	68	3	2	0	13	1	0
London and South East	589	53	4	3	99	2	2
South West	99	21	0	0	2	0	0
Wales	113	18	0	1	13	0	0
West Midlands	59	6	0	0	15	0	0
North West	112	1	0	0	9	2	1
Scotland	149	4	0	0	14	2	0
National	1,353	122	6	4	182	9	4

Earnings

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the increase in weekly and hourly earnings of full-time adult male manual workers in manufacturing and other full-time adult males not in the public sector in each year from 1979 to 1989.

Mr. Nicholls: The available information from the new earnings survey is provided in the table:

Percentage increase in weekly and hourly earnings of full-time adult male employees[1]

	Manual employees in manufacturing		*Non-manual employees not in public sector*	
April of each year	*Weekly earnings per cent.*	*Hourly earnings per cent.*	*Weekly earnings per cent.*	*Hourly earnings per cent.*
1980[2]	17·7	20·1	23·5	23·4
1981[2]	8·2	11·9	12·8	14·4
1982[2]	10·7	10·2	11·7	11·7
1983[3]	7·0	7·3	9·5	9·2
1984	9·2	7·5	10·5	10·3
1985	8·6	8·0	8·8	7·9
1986	6·3	6·4	9·2	9·8
1987	6·8	6·3	9·4	9·3
1988	8·4	7·1	11·0	10·4
1989	8·6	8·0	10·5	10·4

Notes:

[1] average gross weekly and hourly earnings, not affected by absence for those on adult rates; manufacturing as defined in the 1980 SIC (but see notes[2] and[3]

[2] males aged 21 and over on all rates; 1968 SIC definition of manufacturing

[3] males aged 21 and over on all rates; 1980 SIC definition of manufacturing

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish tables showing for each standard region, Scotland and Wales the average gross weekly earnings and average gross hourly earnings of full-time employees on adult rates whose pay was unaffected by absence, males and females separately, analysed into the age groups; under 18 years, 18 to 20 years, 21 to 24 years, 25 to 29 years, 30 to 39 years, 40 to 49 years, 50 to 59 years, and 60 to 64 years, for each of the years 1979 and 1989 and in cash and real terms using April 1989 prices.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls *[holding answer 7 December 1989]:* Due to the extensive amount of information requested, I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report* tables showing the proportion of (1) manual, (2) non-manual and (3) all full-time employees earning less than *(a)* £157, *(b)* £160, *(c)* £163, and *(d)* half average earnings a week, for (i) men, (ii) women and (iii) all full-time employees, including overtime, shift and public borrowing requirement premia, in each county and standard economic region in England and in each London borough.

Mr. Nicholls: Due to the extensive amount of information requested, I will write to the hon. Member.

Employment Training

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish up-to-date figures for Great Britain and each Training Agency region for each month since June, of the cumulative number of *(a)* referrals to employment training from the employment service to training agents, *(b)* agreed employment training action plans at training agents, *(c)* starts with employment training training managers, *(d)* the number in training on employment training each month and *(e)* the number on continuation training.

Mr. Nicholls: The information on referrals, action plans, starts and in-training figures is provided in the tables. Information is not separately available for those on continuation training.

Table 1

Cumulative referrals from employment service to employment training: July 1989 to October 1989

Employment service region	*July*	*August*	*September*	*October*
London and South East	16,000	32,900	52,400	67,800
South West	3,400	6,700	10,900	14,900
West Midlands	8,500	16,600	25,800	33,500
East Midlands and Eastern	5,500	11,100	17,400	22,400
Yorkshire and Humberside	7,700	15,500	24,000	31,300
North West	12,600	24,400	38,200	50,100
Northern	6,600	13,300	20,500	27,000
Wales	5,000	9,700	16,000	21,100
Scotland	10,300	22,800	36,600	49,000
Great Britain	75,800	153,000	241,900	317,100

Table 2

Cumulative employment training action plans at training agents July 1989 to November 1989

Training agency region	*July*	*August*	*September*	*October*	*November*
South East	3,500	6,400	10,000	13,100	15,700
London	4,200	8,600	13,600	18,200	22,900
South West	1,800	3,600	6,400	8,600	11,000
West Midlands	4,300	8,200	13,400	17,600	22,000
East Midlands and Eastern	3,100	6,200	9,200	11,900	14,900
Yorkshire and Humberside	4,700	9,300	15,600	20,500	25,400
North West	6,000	11,600	18,200	24,500	30,500
Northern	4,000	7,900	13,000	17,400	21,800
Wales	2,300	4,500	7,700	10,500	13,200
Scotland	4,500	10,000	16,400	22,200	28,100
Great Britain	38,200	76,100	123,800	164,800	205,800

Table 3

Cumulative starts at employment training managers: July 1989 to November 1989

Training agency region	*July*	*August*	*September*	*October*	*November*
South East	4,500	6,400	9,800	12,300	14,600
London	3,100	5,800	10,600	14,000	17,600
South West	1,500	2,700	5,000	6,900	8,600
West Midlands	3,300	6,500	11,000	14,700	18,500
East Midlands and Eastern	3,000	5,500	9,000	11,800	14,600
Yorkshire and Humberside	3,800	7,300	12,800	17,400	22,200
North West	5,300	9,800	16,000	21,200	26,800
Northern	3,600	6,600	11,500	15,200	18,900
Wales	2,700	5,000	8,700	11,600	14,200
Scotland	3,400	7,900	13,500	18,300	23,200
Great Britain	34,200	63,500	107,700	143,200	179,200

Table 4

Employment training filled places: July 1989 to November 1989

Training agency region	*July*	*August*	*September*	*October*	*November*
South East	14,500	14,200	14,900	14,900	14,800
London	19,000	19,000	20,200	20,700	21,100
South West	11,800	11,500	12,000	12,300	12,200
West Midlands	23,200	23,600	23,400	23,200	23,200
East Midlands and Eastern	16,400	16,800	16,900	16,800	16,800
Yorkshire and Humberside	25,200	25,100	25,200	25,200	25,200
North West	29,000	28,700	29,100	28,800	29,800
Northern	24,400	24,700	24,900	24,300	24,400
Wales	15,800	16,000	16,500	16,600	16,600
Scotland	23,700	24,400	25,100	25,700	26,400
Great Britain	203,000	204,000	208,000	209,000	212,000

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the destinations of all the people surveyed in the pilot survey of trainees who had left employment training; how many of the trainees contacted left employment training early; and whether he will place a copy of the full results of the pilot survey in the Library.

Mr. Nicholls: The destinations of people leaving employment training are many and varied. They include jobs, self-employment and other training or further education. Information is not available on the numbers to whom a questionnaire was sent who had left employment training early.

The results of the pilot exercise will not be placed in the House of Commons Library. This exercise was primarily designed to test the questionnaire and the methodology of the 100 per cent. follow-up survey and does not form part of the now established ongoing evaluation of the programme.

Job Clubs

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what numbers of people moved from job clubs to (i) full time, and (ii) part-time employment in the period August 1988 to August 1989 in *(a)* Great Britain, *(b)* Tyne and Wear, *(c)* Gateshead, and *(d)* Newcastle.

Mr. Eggar: In the 12-month period 1 August 1988 to 28 July 1989, the total numbers of people leaving job clubs to go into employment were:

		Number
(a)	Great Britain	70,814
(b)	Tyne and Wear	2,316
(c)	Gateshead	391
(d)	Newcastle	508

No statistics are available which differentiate between people going into full or part-time employment.

Claimants (Questionnaire)

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, under what circumstances unemployed claimants who are studying part-time are asked to complete the questionnaire attached to ES notice 178/89 and distributed throughout the employment service; what plans he has to use such a standard questionnaire after March 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The questionnaire to which the hon. Lady refers has been used for some time where unemployed claimants are studying, or intending to study, part-time to establish whether they are available for employment. It will continue to be used for the foreseeable future.

Mines (Health and Safety)

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will take steps to ensure that full consultation is undertaken by the Health and Safety Commission with the British Association of Colliery Managers and representatives of other professional and engineering staff in the coal industry before the proposed new regulations on the management of safety and health in mines and the proposed approved code of practice are considered by Ministers.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Commission has consulted widely with all interested parties and my right hon. Friend is satisfied that its procedures for consulting on proposals for regulations and approved codes of practice are satisfactory.

YTS

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will take action to ensure that trainees placed with companies through YTS have a choice of methods of wage or salary payment.

Mr. Nicholls: The Training Agency, which administers YTS, already advises on methods of payment of training allowance to non-employed trainees, but the choice of method is the responsibility of the relevant managing agent. Arrangements for payment of wages or salary to employed trainees are the responsibility of the employer.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action he is taking to prevent YTS trainees from being forced by employers to work overtime.

Mr. Nicholls: Under the terms of the YTS contract the attendance of non-employed YTS trainees for training is subject to a maximum of 40 hours per week, taking one week with another and excluding meal breaks. Attendance outside those hours is entirely a matter for negotiation between the training provider and the trainee, but cannot be required as a condition for the provision of training.

The maximum hours of attendance for employed trainees are determined by their contracts of employment.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of employees in employment in Wales for each year since 1979-80 and what is the percentage change between 1979 and the latest available year for *(a)* the whole economy, *(b)* the services sector and *(c)* the manufacturing sector; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls: *[holding answer 7 December 1989]:* The number of employees in employment in Wales for the years requested is given in the table:

Employees in Employment in Wales

(Unadjusted for seasonal variation) *(Thousands)*

(June each year)	*Employees in employment (whole economy)*	*Employees in service sector (1)*	*Employees in manufacturing (2)*
1979	1,033	572	315
1980	1,005	571	290
1981	939	562	240
1982	906	550	226
1983	888	552	213
1984	886	556	212
1985	888	561	211
1986	887	573	210
1987	907	590	217
1988	948	618	233
1989	967	634	239
1979-89			
Change	−66	62	−76
Percentage change	−6·42	10·85	−24·15

(1) 'Service sector' standard industrial classification 1980, divisions 6 to 9.
(2) 'Manufacturing' standard industrial classification 1980, divisions 2 to 4.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will publish employment statistics, on a regular basis in the *Employment Gazette*, on the arts, cultural industries and the media.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 7 December 1989]:* The Department's estimates of employment are categorised according to the 1980 standard industrial classification (SIC80). This classification does not specifically identify the arts, cultural industries and the media. However, quarterly estimates of employees in employment are published in table 1.4 of the *Employment Gazette* for SIC80 class 97 (recreational services and other cultural services). This class covers:

Film production, distribution and exhibition;
Radio and television services, theatres, etc;
Authors, music composers and other own account artists, not elsewhere specified;
Libraries, museums, art galleries, etc;
Sport and other recreational services.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has on the current level of employment in *(a)* the arts, *(b)* crafts, *(c)* museums, *(d)* libraries, *(e)* heritage, *(f)* archaeology, *(g)* royal parks, *(h)* film and cinema, *(i)* the press, *(j)* broadcasting and video, *(k)* publishing, *(l)* fashion, *(m)* design, *(n)* sound recording, *(o)* leisure and *(p)* tourism.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 7 December 1989]:* The Department's estimates of employment are categorised according to the 1980 standard industrial classification (SIC80). This classification does not specifically identify the industries requested. Detailed results for some of the industries are given by the 1987 census of employment and these are shown in the following table. Where more recent data are available, these are also shown in the table.

Employees in employment (unadjusted for seasonal variations)
Great Britain

SIC80		*September 1987*	*June 1989*
9711*	Film Production, Distribution and Exhibition	29·5	113·7
9760*	Authors, Music Composers and other own account Artists, not elsewhere specified	11·9	
9770*	Libraries, Museums, Art Galleries etc.	66·1	
9741	Radio and Television Services, Theatres etc.	75·9	80·3
9791	Sport and other recreational services	301·1	325·6
475	Printing and Publishing[1]	337·7	344·9
661, 662, 663, 665, 667, 977, 979	Tourism related industries[2]	1,283·3	1,357·8

* The latest available figures for these industries separately are from the 1987 census of employment.

[1] Includes newspapers.

[2] Includes some industries listed above.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Data Protection Act (Registration Fee)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to reduce the registration fee required under the Data Protection Act; whether he will review the charges; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We have no present plans to do so.

Market Research

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many market research and sample surveys were carried out by or for his Department in the last 12 months; what was the cost of each; what was the total cost; how many were carried out in house; how many were carried out for his Department by outside organisations; and what percentage of the total expenditure was paid to outside organisations.

Mr. Waddington: Fifteen surveys which meet the description of sample population surveys rather than market research surveys were carried out for or by the Home Department in the past 12 months. The total cost was £419,100. Three surveys were carried out in house at a cost of £5,000. Seven projects were carried out by outside organisations on behalf of the research and planning unit (RPU), and one project for the statistical department. Four projects were commissioned by the Central Office of Information for the public relations branch. Ninety-nine per cent. of total expenditure (discounting associated internal management costs) was paid to outside organistions.

Firearms

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applicants have handed in firearms for compensation under the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988; how many weapons this covers; and how many applicants have been *(a)* paid and *(b)* refused.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A total of 2,896 applications in England and Wales have been submitted claims, in respect of 3,548 weapons, surrendered to the police or otherwise disposed of, for a payment under the Government buy-in scheme for weapons newly prohibited under the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988.

Of these applicants, 2,690 have had payments authorised and 71 have been refused as ineligible under the scheme; 135 claims have yet to be resolved.

Broadwater Farm

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report on the reasons why the inquiry, conducted by the Police Complaints Authority, into the Broadwater Farm disturbances of 1985 has taken two and half years to complete.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Supervision of the investigation of complaints against the police is the responsibility of the Police Complaints Authority. The time elapsed is accounted for by the various stages in the process laid down in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. I understand that in this case the investigation, which was carried out by officers from the Metropolitan police under the supervision of the Police Complaints Authority, was extremely detailed and wide ranging. All the papers were considered by the Police Complaints Authority to ensure that the investigation had been carried out to their satisfaction, and by the Crown prosecution service to establish whether criminal charges should be brought against any police officer. There then followed further consideration by the Police Complaints Authority of the proposals relating to disciplinary proceedings.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether a date has yet been fixed for the disciplinary tribunal to hear charges against Detective Chief Superintendent Graham Melvin, arising out of his command of the Metropolitan police's investigation into the Broadwater Farm disturbances of 1985.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand that no date has yet been set for the discipline hearing. The charges arose from the investigation into criticisms made by the judge at the trial of one of those arrested following the disturbances.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police for the Metropolis as to why no black or minority ethnic press or media were represented in the media group that accompanied the police on the raid on Broadwater Farm on 29 September; what plans the police have for inviting the non-white press and media to accompany them on such raids in future: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The planning of such operations is a matter for the commissioner and his senior colleagues. Invitations to the media are an important part of the commissioner's policy of encouraging greater public understanding of police operations, and are an example of the accountability of the police to the public. Decisions on representation on individual operations are taken in the light of circumstances and with a view to effective coverage for all parts of the community.

Broadcasting Complaints Commission

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what in each year of its formation has been the annual cost of the Broadcasting Complaints Commission.

Mr. Mellor: Since the commission came into operation on 1 June 1981, its net expenditure for each financial year has been as follows:

	£
1981-82	97,956·13
1982-83	145,723·29
1983-84	150,638·00
1984-85	182,595·94
1985-86	172,711·54
1986-87	182,303·34
1987-88	200,320·90
1988-89	209,198·24

Broadcasting

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is proposing to take to include provision for the deaf in his new Broadcasting Bill.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 7 December 1989]:* The Government believe that it is important for there to be proper provision of broadcasting services for the deaf and hard of hearing. As a consequence, Channel 3 licence holders will, in the first year of the licence, be required to provide 10 per cent. more hours of subtitling than was achieved on average by the TV companies in the previous year. The Channel 5 licensee will have to provide a similar proportion of subtitled programmes. The ITC will thereafter set a reasonable target each year for an increase in subtitling on Channel 3 and 5 services.

The BBC and Channel 4 will continue to be bound by public service commitments and therefore can be expected to continue to provide subtitling. The BBC is working towards the time when nearly all pre-recorded peak-time programmes will carry subtitles.

European Community

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on EC document COM(89)524 published in the *Official Journal of the European Communities* on 18 November.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 7 December 1989]:* The Commission's proposals for a directive on voting rights for Community nationals in local elections were the subject of an explanatory memorandum submitted by the Home Office to the Select Committee on European Legislation on 17 October 1988, copies of which are available in the Library.

WALES

Health Authorities

14. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met the chairmen of health authorities in Wales; and what topics were discussed.

Mr. Peter Walker: I last met the chairmen of Welsh health authorities on 15 May 1989, when we discussed the implementation of the proposals in the White Paper "Working for Patients".

Council House Sales

15. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the progress of council house sales in Wales.

Mr. Grist: Between the introduction of our right-to-buy scheme and September 1989 about 74,000 council dwellings had been sold to sitting tenants in Wales. Owner-occupation now stands at 70 per cent.

Heartbeat Wales

16. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement in the progress of the Heartbeat Wales campaign.

Mr. Grist: Heartbeat Wales, run by the Health Promotion Authority for Wales, continues its programme to combat the high incidence of coronary heart disease in Wales. Evaluation of the project will begin next year, but interim sample surveying has shown encouraging trends in risk behaviour patterns. The authority was recently visited by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister who was most impressed by the authority's work.

Gynaecological Services

17. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about the availability of gynaecological services in rural Wales.

Mr. Grist: The availability of gynaecological services to the residents of rural Wales is a matter for the relevant district health authorities.

Local Government Finance

18. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement indicating the level of community charge and non-domestic rates in Wales for the next financial year.

Mr. Peter Walker: On present plans I will be laying the necessary reports and making a statement about the 1990-91 local authority grant settlement before Christmas. The House will have the opportunity to consider the issues then, and to debate the reports early in the new year.

National Health Service

20. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the present state of the National Health Service in Wales.

Mr. Grist: The NHS in Wales is treating and caring for more people than ever before, as a result of the efforts of all who work in the service to make the best use of the record levels of resources that we are providing. By 1990-91 funding for the NHS in Wales will have increased by nearly a half in real terms since 1978-79.

24. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received in favour of his Government's proposals for reform of the National Health Service.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend and I have received a considerable number of written representations from the medical, nursing and other health professions, from other interested bodies and organisations and from members of the public, supporting the objectives for the further improvement of the NHS in Wales set out in the White Paper "Working for Patients" (Cm. 555) which are to improve the management and effectiveness of the NHS and thus to improve patient care.

We have also had extensive detailed discussions with the health authorities, family practitioner committees and representatives of the medical and nursing professions and others working in the NHS which have shown a substantial degree of support for our objectives. In particular there is support for the introduction of assurance control in all hospital and general practice, including medical audit; the distribution of resources to ensure that money follows the patient and an end to the so-called "efficiency trap"; investment in up-to-date information systems to ensure that the maximum health care is provided from available resources; and indicative drug budgets which will not infringe in any way the right of a GP to prescribe all those medicines which individual patients need.

Inward Investment

21. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much inward investment has taken place in Wales over the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Walker: In the five-year period to the end of 1988, a total of 258 individual overseas investment projects were secured in Wales promising over 31,000 jobs. 1988 was a record year in which Wales received 22 per cent. of the new jobs associated with inward investment to the United Kingdom. The associated capital investment for that year was over £1 billion.

Income

22. **Mr. Denzil Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to increase per capita income in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: Per capita income in Wales will continue to rise as more people in the Principality secure quality jobs in modern, competitive industries and services. The Government's policies by encouraging indigenous enterprise, promoting inward investment and modernising the existing industrial base are directed to that end.

Labour Statistics

23. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest unadjusted figures for unemployment in *(a)* Newport, *(b)* Gwent and *(c)* Wales; and if he will give the equivalent figures for 1979 on the most nearly comparable basis.

Mr. Peter Walker: On 12 October 1989 the numbers of unemployment claimants in the Newport district, Gwent and Wales were 4,602, 13,797, and 86,514 respectively. Unadjusted figures for 1979 are not available on a basis that enables a valid comparison to be made.

Waste

25. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy towards the dumping of mixed toxic and household waste in sites in Wales.

Mr. Grist: Such deposit is an acceptable disposal route given suitable site conditions where specified by a waste disposal authority in a waste disposal licence issued under the Control of Pollution Act 1974.

South Glamorgan Health Authority

26. **Mr. Rhodri Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met the chairman of the South Glamorgan health authority; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend met the chairman of South Glamorgan health authority in his capacity as chairman of the Welsh health authorities chairmen's group on 7 November 1989. We discussed the financial positions of health authorities in Wales.

East Dyfed Health Authority

27. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on current financing difficulties facing East Dyfed health authority and other health authorities in Wales.

Mr. Grist: I have been fully briefed on the financial position of health authorities in Wales as a result of my Department's annual round of review meetings with authorities in September and a meeting which my right hon. Friend had with the chairman of the Welsh health authorities chairmen's committee on 7 November.

Flint Bypass

28. **Mr. Raffan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on his decision to call in the application by Clwyd county council for planning permission to construct a bypass road for Flint.

Mr. Grist: The application raises issues of more than local importance and my right hon. Friend decided, therefore, to call it in for his decision. Arrangments are being made for an inspector to hold a public local inquiry and my right hon. Friend will arrive at his decision on the application as soon as possible after the inquiry has closed.

Area Health Authorities

29. **Mr. Ray Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met the chairmen of area health authorities in Wales; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Peter Walker: I last met the chairmen of Welsh health authorities on 15 May 1989, when we discussed the implementation of the proposals in the White Paper "Working for Patients".

Homelessness

30. **Mr. Gwilym Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assesment he has made of the adequacy of homelessness statistics produced by local councils in Wales.

Mr. Grist: Homelessness returns were reviewed and extended in 1987 to provide a wider range of information on homelessness in the Principality. Additional guidance was given to local authorities to improve consistency in their recording practices and further consideration may be given to the return in the light of the measures I am introducing to tackle homelessness.

It is essential that vigorous efforts should be maintained to help those who are entitled to assistance in securing a home under part III of the Housing Act 1985, in Wales as elsewhere. The Act remains important as a long-stop measure to help people in need who have become homeless through no fault of their own. This was implicit in the recent review of homelessness legislation.

In large part, the review deals with the situation arising in London and the south-east of England. In Wales, the pressures are comparatively less intense. Detailed statistical information on homelessness in the Principality is given in section 7 of "Welsh Housing Statistics, No. 9, 1989"—a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. These data show that the problems associated with homelessness vary in extent between districts. They are not confined to any one specific area: they should certainly be considered together with wider issues in the development of effective housing strategies, both locally and at the all-Wales level. Indeed, in that context, the review makes some very important comments on lessons and conclusions for the future. I hope that all those concerned with housing in the Principality will take note of them. Arrangements have already been made for copies of the review to be distributed widely in Wales. But as regards substantive action, we shall: carry out a separate consultation in Wales on measures of guidance for local authorities, to secure a better, more consistent service for homeless people in Wales under the Housing Act 1985; as announced, allow for an increase in gross provision of £30 million for local authority capital expenditure on housing in the next financial year, with no limit on expenditure for certain home renovation grants, against the £197 million in 1989-90. This increased provision will be of general assistance to local authorities, not least in carrying out their statutory responsibilities in securing accommodation for homeless people, in close liaison with all housing providers, whilst taking account of their own local needs and priorities.

We shall also encourage local authorities to make use of a new cash incentive scheme to help council tenants buy homes elsewhere, so releasing homes to let to the homeless —details of the scheme will be announced very soon—and introduce new measures to assist local authorities to build on improvements they have already made in the management of their own stock, for example over the management of "voids" in Wales, to enhance customer care, to target resources still more effectively and to develop partnership arrangements for the provision of homes for homeless people. The impetus for this work has been given by the "quality circle initiative" sponsored by the Secretary of State and the Council of Welsh Districts. It will take account of recently published studies on good practice in housing management, including those of the Audit Commission, and will include consultation with local authorities on the introduction of performance indicators, and on the development and refinement of operationally useful data. It will be supported by an increase of over 30 per cent. in funding for my Department's successful management education and training programmes which benefit all housing providers —and for which the budget will substantially exceed three quarters of a million pounds for the first time in 1990-91.

We shall ensure that additional weighting is given to practical schemes to alleviate homelessness in approving bids for the urban programme 1990-91—a sum of around £1 million will be released by that route next year—and assist housing associations to extend substantially their current commitment to tackling homelessness. Provision for Housing for Wales has been raised by some £27 million for 1990-91—an increase of 40 per cent. compared with 1989-90. This will stimulate a major increase in the provision of dwellings for which homeless families will be eligible. Housing for Wales is already working with local authorities to devise joint strategies to deal with the most pressing priorities within each district. The next step is to secure nomination arrangements to help local authorities in getting homeless families housed. Housing for Wales will be monitoring the performance of housing associations in realising the benefits of this significant new approach.

We shall pursue the possibility of introducing a cash incentive scheme to help housing association tenants move into the private sector, thereby releasing those properties to let for homeless families, and substantially increase the planned availability of central funding for those voluntary organisations in Wales that have the capacity to be of real help in dealing with homelessness. Next year we shall significantly more than double the £143,000 made available to this sector in 1989-90. In addition, my officials will initiate discussions with voluntary bodies about the best way of building upon the wide range of high-quality services that these organisations already provide—especially in matching those who need accommodation with those who can offer it, for example through the organisation of lodging schemes in co-operation with local authorities.

We shall ensure that special attention is paid to the needs of Wales in relation to the development of a comprehensive advice service for people in the early stages of housing problems, and initiate further discussions on the implementation of the new structure for promoting mobility between local authority and housing association sectors within the Principality.

We shall also give priority to issues of homelessness in deploying resources available from the Department's housing top slice. For the coming financial year, £2 million has been set aside. Bids will be invited in advance of the HSIP round for 1990-91. This will extend the arrangement made for 1989-90 involving the allocation of around £1 million for areas experiencing particular difficulties.

I am confident that, taken together, these measures will be of very considerable assistance in dealing constructively with issues of homelessness within the Principality both now and for the future. At a time when we in Wales have a growing population and increasing numbers of households—when indeed, we have more people, better housed than ever before, for the most part in their own homes, it is all the more essential that we tackle homelessness positively and with the utmost care.

Market Research

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many market research and sample surveys were carried out by or for his Department in the last 12 months; what was the cost of each; what was the total cost; how many were carried out in-house; how many were carried out for his Department by outside organisations; and what percentage of the total expenditure was paid to outside organisations.

Mr. Peter Walker: My Department undertakes a wide range of regular surveys. An analysis of these to provide the information required would be disproportionately costly. On the basis of the information identified in the time available, there have been nine one-off market research and sample surveys either undertaken or commissioned solely and directly by my Department in 1989—two of which were conducted in-house, the remaining seven by outside organisations. The individual costs were:

	£
	70,000
	5,000
	14,650
	1,730

	£
	2,450
	4,194
	12,678
	2,075
	88,353
TOTAL	201,130

Of this total, 83 per cent. was paid to outside organisations.

Holiday Homes

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he has taken to ensure that the new house repairs and renovation grant system is sufficiently tightly drawn to avoid grant money being used for improvement of holiday homes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The conditions in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 on owner-occupation and availability for letting will enable local authorities to ensure that grant money is not used for second or holiday homes.

Poultry Flocks

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many premises in each county of Wales require inspection under the provisions of the testing of poultry flocks orders.

Mr. Peter Walker: The number of main agriculture holdings in each county in Wales in 1988 where 25 or more domestic fowls were kept to produce eggs for human consumption, and the number of breeding premises and hatcheries subject to testing was:

	Laying flocks	*Breeding flocks*	*Hatcheries*
Wales	1,190	60	3
Powys	197	9	1
Gwynedd	208	13	1
Dyfed	342	17	1
Clwyd	170	12	—
South Glamorgan	37	—	—
Mid Glamorgan	51	2	—
West Glamorgan	45	2	—
Gwent	140	5	—

The Poultry Laying Flocks (Testing and Registration) Order 1989 also requires the testing of laying flocks of less than 25 birds if the eggs are sold for human consumption. Information is not available on how many of the 4,876 main holdings in Wales where fewer than 25 hens are kept sell some or all of their eggs for human consumption; nor is information available on minor holdings which might be affected.

TRANSPORT

Speed Restraints

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list his criteria for speed humps, rumble strips and road-narrowing measures in residential areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Specific provisions for road humps are contained in the Highways (Road Humps) Regulations 1986 SI.1986 No. 1856, and detailed guidance on them was published in traffic advisory leaflet 3/87. We are consulting on revised regulations aimed at allowing road humps to be installed more widely. The Department has drawn attention to a number of other traffic calming measures in traffic advisory leaflet 1/87. Standards and criteria have not been laid down. Decisions on when and where to install such traffic calming measures are for individual highway authorities to take. Copies of SI.1856 and supporting publications have been placed in the Library.

British Rail

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Irvine), *Official Report*, column *4*, of 4 December 1989, he will make a statement on how much of the investment in British Rail over the next three years will be spent on the East Suffolk line from Lowestoft to Ipswich and the Wherry line from Lowestoft to Norwich.

Mr. Portillo: It is for British Rail to decide the detailed allocation of resources. I understand that British Rail plans to invest at least £1 million in infrastructure on these routes over the next three years. The region will also benefit from wider programmes of investment in new rolling stock.

Buses

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the suitability of the height and design of the steps of the Volvo double deck buses to be leased on to the LBL, London General Bus subsidiary to provide adequate access for women with young children, the elderly and people with walking disabilities.

Mr. Atkins: Bus design is generally a matter for bus operators. I understand that these buses comply with design standards laid down by London Regional Transport. The Department takes every opportunity to remind the bus industry of the special needs of elderly and disabled passengers. We recently launched a video which demonstrates the features recommended by the disabled persons transport advisory committee in its "Recommended Specification for Buses Used to Operate Local Services". The video is now available on free loan to local authorities and bus operators.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will instruct LRT to stop the further tendering of further bus routes to those companies which have failed to fulfil their contractual obligations in the past and had routes taken away from them as a consequence.

Mr. Portillo: The tendering of bus routes and the selection of contractors is a matter for London Regional Transport. I understand that, in assessing bids, it takes account of the operators' previous performance.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the proportion of LBL buses running late during the current year over previous years; and what steps he has taken to improve the quality of service to the public.

Mr. Portillo: Statistics for London Regional Transport's timetable bus services for the first three quarters of 1989 show that there was an 18 per cent. chance of a bus departing between five and 15 minutes late, and an 11·5 per cent. chance of a bus departing more than 15 minutes late or not arriving. This compares with 19·5 per cent. and 10·5 per cent. respectively for the same period in 1988. My right hon. Friend will shortly be setting quality of service objectives for LRT's bus and railway activities.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the numbers of accidents involving PSV vehicles in London in each of the last five years; and how many of these accidents involved buses with fewer than 24 seats.

Mr. Portillo: The number of accidents involving PSV vehicles in the Greater London area during the last five years is as follows. The seating capacity of buses in accidents is not recorded on the STATS19 accident report form.

Year	*Number of accidents*
1984	3,553
1985	3,326
1986	3,226
1987	2,920
1988	2,993

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps are being taken to regrade the designed construction of mini-midi buses to provide greater passenger safety.

Mr. Atkins: All buses, including mini and midi-sized buses, are subject to construction regulations to ensure adequate passenger safety.

The European Commission has announced an intention to make a directive next year to cover the construction of buses, including coaches and minibuses. We have pressed, and shall continue to press, for that directive to contain provisions that set a high standard of safety. We are particularly concerned to ensure that seat belts of good quality, which are simple to use and have retractor mechanisms, are specified for all seats in minibuses and coaches.

We also want to see that steps and hand rails are specified which will make it easier for elderly people to get on and off buses safely.

I very much hope that manufacturers and operators will now voluntarily provide these simple and obvious safety features, without having to wait for legislation.

Manchester Airport

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what further negotiations his Department has had on additional transatlantic flights to and from Manchester airport; what has been the outcome; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Negotiations were held with the United States between 29 November and 1 December. The United Kingdom is seeking a balanced expansion of opportunities for the airlines on both sides to enable additional transatlantic services to be introduced to serve Manchester airport. Arrangements are in hand to resume these talks in the near future.

Random Breath Tests

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many representations he has received in favour of the introduction of random breath tests.

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary invited representations in a consultation paper earlier this year and most comments for and against will have been directed to him. Since April the Department have received some 25 representations in favour of introduction.

Railway Closures

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many stations and railway lines closed in the 1960s and 1970s have been reopened.

Mr. Portillo: Approximately 70 stations and 24 stretches of line. In addition since 1978 BR has opened 106 new stations and constructed seven new lines.

Oil Discharges

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many cases of alleged illegal discharges of oil from non-United Kingdom ships in United Kingdom waters have been passed since 1978 to the flag states of the vessels concerned.

Mr. McLoughlin: Figures prior to 1985 are not readily available. Since then eight cases of possible illegal oil discharges by non-United Kingdom ships in United Kingdom waters have been referred to the competent authorities in the relevant flag states for investigation.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has agreed British Rail's proposals for investment in rolling stock for Channel tunnel rail services.

Mr. Parkinson: I am pleased to announce today my approval of British Rail's proposals for investment totalling more than £350 million for the purchase of trains to run from 1993 between London and Paris and London and Brussels. This represents British Rail's share of the combined passenger fleet of 30 trains which will be using the tunnel from June 1993. It amounts to a major investment in the provision of rail services through the Channel tunnel. It is another important step towards achieving the goal of London-Paris and London-Brussels direct train services. I look forward to receiving further investment proposals from British Rail for the rolling stock required for passenger services beyond London and for freight services.

Mr. Moate: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the terms and scope of the contract between British Rail and Trafalgar house with regard to the Channel tunnel link and with regard to international traffic on existing or improved rail routes; if he will arrange for a copy of the contract or of the heads of agreement to be placed in the Library; and if he will describe the respective roles of the contracting parties if the high speed link should not proceed.

Mr. Portillo: These matters are currently being negotiated between British Rail and their private sector partners. Some of the terms may require my right hon. Friend's approval: others may be confidential to the parties.

Public Appointments

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many persons above the age of *(a)* 60, *(b)* 65 and *(c)* 70 years he has appointed to public bodies in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Atkins: The information requested is not held centrally. It could be provided, if at all, only at disproportionate cost. However, I can assure my hon. Friend that we endeavour to appoint members from as broad a range of age groups as possible.

M1 (Improvements)

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how long he expects the interim improvement scheme at junction 21 of the M1 motorway to last; what will it cost; and when he expects the full widening and junction improvements at junction 21 to be done and completed; and at what cost.

Mr. Atkins: The interim improvement of junction 21 would accommodate normal traffic growth until the late 1990s. However, proposals for major developments close to the junction could reduce this by about five years. The interim improvement is intended to relieve congestion and improve safety for motorway traffic. The estimated cost is £1·008 million.

The long-term improvement of junction 21 is part of the scheme for widening and junction improvements on the M1 included in the White Paper "Roads for Prosperity". The known pressures at the junction will be monitored and taken into account in assessing the timing of the junction 21 element of this major project. The budget cost of the long-term improvement is £10 million, although the eventual cost will depend on a layout to be determined from further detailed traffic and economic analysis.

Traffic Delay (London)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will state, or take steps to ascertain, the approximate proportion of incidents of traffic delay in the Greater London area occasioned by *(a)* illegal parking, *(b)* traffic light faults, *(c)* shed loads, *(d)* vehicle breakdowns, *(e)* accidents, *(f)* road repairs, *(g)* water main bursts, *(h)* demonstrations or marches, *(i)* official events and *(j)* bomb alerts; and if he will name the agency or body from which he has obtained, or can obtain such information and indicate the manner in which such information is, or could be, made available to the public on a periodic basis.

Mr. Atkins: The Metropolitan police have set up a working party with the traffic control systems unit for London to review contingency plans for blockages at vital junctions. It will be for them to consider whether it would be worth while to collect, monitor and publish the causes of congestion in the way the hon. Member suggests.

London Underground (Delays)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he possesses, or regularly receives, concerning delays on London Underground services caused by *(a)* shortage of staff, *(b)* signal failure, *(c)* non-availability of rolling stock, *(d)* mechanical or electrical failure, *(e)* fire or *(f)* other causes.

Mr. Portillo: I receive regular reports on overall quality of service, including punctuality and reliability. Day-to-day operations are a matter for London Underground Limited, which records individual delays and their causes.

Road Use (Smart Pricing)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to hold a meeting with transport researchers at the Open university's energy and environment research unit to evaluate the technical prospects of smart pricing for road use.

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. Friend does not plan to do so at present.

Hazardous Cargoes

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consider making it necessary for all road tankers carrying dangerous chemicals to be fitted with external warning lights whilst in transit.

Mr. Atkins: Road tankers are already required to be clearly marked to indicate when they are carrying dangerous substances. There are no plans to impose additional requirements.

A45 (Accidents)

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the number of accidents reported to the police on that section of the A45 between the Westley roundabout to the west and Rookery crossroads to the east of Bury St. Edmunds during the last 12 months for which figures are available.

Mr. Atkins: In 1988, the last full year for which records are available, the number of injury accidents on this length of road was 12, including one fatal accident, and the number of non-injury accidents was seven.

Roads

Mr. Terry Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will deposit in the Library a scale map of the proposed Greater Manchester western and northern relief road M6 to M66, as shown in diagrammatic form in the White Paper, "Roads for Prosperity."

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 8 December 1989]:* The Greater Manchester western and northern relief road is being dealt with in three sections. We have announced a proposed route for the southern section between the M6 and the M56. I shall arrange for a copy of the plan to be placed on deposit in the Library. Consultants are currently investigating solutions for the northern section of the road between the M62 and M66 motorways and we have recently appointed consultants for the centre section between the M56 and M62.

Mr. Terry Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will seek the views of the public on possible routes for the Greater Manchester western and northern relief road, M6 to M66.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 8 December 1989]:* We are currently consulting the public on a proposed route for the southern section of the Greater Manchester western and northern relief road between the M6 and M56 motorways. Work on the remaining lengths between the M56 and M66 motorways is at an early stage. It is too soon to say when we shall be able to seek the views of the public.

ENVIRONMENT

Commons Crypt (Baptismal Font)

47. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the fabric of the baptismal font in Welsh marble in the Commons Crypt was last inspected.

Mr. Christopher Chope: I will write to the hon. Member.

Market Research

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many market research and sample surveys were carried out by or for his Department in the last 12 months; what was the cost of each; what was the total cost; how many were carried out in house; how many were carried out for his Department by outside organisations; and what percentage of the total expenditure was paid to outside organisations.

Mr. Chris Patten: In the past year, 25 market research and sampling surveys (excluding those connected with water privatisation) have been carried out for my Department at total cost of around £1 million. A further six projects were carried out in house. These figures include sample surveys of businesses and local authorities, as well as of members of the general public.

The cost of individual contracts are a matter of commercial confidentiality, and those of in-house surveys cannot be given except at disproportionate cost. The costs of water privatisation will be announced to Parliament in due course in the usual way.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the approximate breakdown of the expected expenditure by the London Docklands development corporation of £1,100 million and the amount and breakdown of private investment in the area over the next five years.

Mr. Moynihan: The London Docklands development corporation's broad expenditure plans and forecast of private investment in its area are given in its recently published 1989 corporate plan, copies of which are in the Library.

Housing Tenancies

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many new tenancies have entered the private sector of the housing market since the introduction of assured tenancies under the Housing Act 1988; and how many of them are part of a business expansion scheme.

Mr. Howard: Information on the number of assured tenancies created under the Housing Act 1988 is not yet available. However, initial impressions are very encouraging. In particular it is estimated that more than £350 million has been invested in business expansion scheme companies letting on assured tenancies. With an average price of £50,000 per property, that means an extra 6,000 to 7,000 homes available for letting.

Local Authority Dwellings

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total value of dwellings owned by local authorities calculated on the basis of 1988-89 right-to-buy sales and the total loan debt outstanding on these local authority dwellings.

Mr. Howard: The Government do not possess figures on the value of dwellings in local authority ownership. Under part VI of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, in determining housing revenue account subsidy, the Secretary of State may infer aggregate values of houses and other property within local authorities' housing revenue account from the average values of any of the houses and other property they have disposed of. The Department of the Environment is currently consulting local housing authorities in England on the figures for the subsidy determination for 1990-91.

The total outstanding loan debt on dwellings in local authority ownership for 1988-89 as reported to the Department of the Environment by local authorities was £23·1 billion.

Residuary Bodies

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many transactions have taken place between residuary bodies and local authorities, where assets previously owned by those local authorities have been purchased, in order for those successor authorities to carry out their functions; and what is the value of these transactions.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Residuary body property required by local authorities for the purpose of carrying out their functions is transferred to them at nil cost by statutory order. There have been 25 orders transferring residuary body property since 1986. Authorities can also purchase surplus residuary body property at market value. Information on the number and total value of properties acquired by local authorities is not centrally available.

West Yorkshire Residuary Body

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he is taking on the representations made to him by Wakefield Civic Society, concerning the future of land currently the responsibility of the West Yorkshire residuary body.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Department replied to the letter from the Wakefield Civic Society on 6 December. I am sending a copy to the hon. Member.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total capital value of assets disposed of by *(a)* West Yorkshire residuary body and *(b)* all residuary bodies since the abolition of metropolitan county councils.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Total capital receipts from property disposals by the residuary bodies up to 30 November 1989 are as follows:

	£ million
London	605·10
Greater Manchester	23·04
Merseyside	7·50
South Yorkshire	13·70
Tyne and Wear	13·10
West Midlands	30·30
West Yorkshire	30·00
TOTAL	722·74

Waste Paper

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he intends to take to assist charities and other bodies who are in financial difficulties because of the collapse of the market in waste paper.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Government have no plans to intervene in this way.

Recycling

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is considering setting up a recycling agency to advise charities and other bodies on suitable materials to collect for recycling.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Since 1987 my Department has supported Waste Watch, a voluntary organisation based at the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO). It offers advice and training on recycling to voluntary and other bodies. My hon. Friend the Minister for Environment and Countryside recently launched the national directory of recycling information compiled by Waste Watch.

Runhag

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will approve the transfer of the new town housing at Runcorn to the housing associations known collectively as Runhag.

Mr. Chope: The Commission for the New Towns has asked for my approval to transfer about 7,000 dwellings at Runcorn to the five housing associations in Runhag. I have considered the views of tenants expressed in the recent ballot and the terms and conditions of the proposed transfer. I am satisfied that the terms are reasonable and that tenants want the relevant member of Runhag to be their new landlord. I have therefore approved the transfer. I understand that the transfer will take place today.

I am delighted that the new town tenants have voted in favour of transferring to the housing associations. I know that this vote was the culmination of over two years hard effort by Runhag and the New Town Residents Federation to achieve transfer on the best terms possible for existing tenants. I am very grateful for their perseverence and commitment.

Ministerial Visit

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the purpose of the visit to Holmewood estate, Bradford, by his Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State on Wednesday 15 November; what was the cost; what meetings were held and with whom on that date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: On 15 November I visited the Holmewood estate and several other inner-city housing schemes in Bradford, improvements to which my Department has helped fund. The purpose of my visit was to see the work that has been done so far, to learn the extent of remaining problems and to listen to the views of residents. The total cost of the visit, for myself and my private secretary, was £240 approximately. At Holmewood I had a meeting with local community representatives, council members and officers. I also visited a housing association scheme at Grosvenor road where I met residents and representatives from the housing association. I was encouraged by the progress being made in Bradford in improving existing housing estates and developing new homes in the inner city.

Business Rates

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to bring to the attention of the public and Parliament the contents of, and summarised information arising from, the proposed local non-domestic rating lists required to be deposited with local authorities by 31 December, with particular reference to (i) his estimated dates of such depositing, (ii) his estimated dates of press releases from his Department or the Inland Revenue, (iii) his plans to notify individual ratepayers of the proposed valuations and (iv) any statement he might make to Parliament before or after the Christmas recess.

Mr. Chris Patten: The valuation office will send the new draft rating lists to local authorities on 20 December. Authorities are required by the Local Government Finance Act 1988 to deposit the lists and to give notice that they have done so as soon as reasonably practicable after their receipt. Ratepayers will be informed of their rateable values when rate bills for 1990-91 are sent out, but meanwhile the draft lists will be available for public inspection at the offices of local authorities and of the valuation office. I shall send to all ratepayers an explanation of the new rating system, but it will not be possible to include individual rateable values. I shall make available to Parliament and publish an analysis of the effects of the uniform business rate and of revaluation as soon as the necessary information is available.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the expected yield from non-domestic rates in 1989-90 in England; and what are the adjustments that have to be made to this figure to allow a proper comparison to be made with the NNDR distributive amount of £10,428·5 million for 1990-91.

Mr. David Hunt: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Correspondence

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment why he has not yet replied to the letter to him dated 31 July from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to a complaint by Mr. R. Gorman of 14 Welby street, Manchester and if he will now reply.

Mr. Chris Patten: I wrote to the right hon. Member on 14 October and apologised on that occasion for the delay in replying.

Groundwork Foundation

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 7 December, when the Groundwork Foundation submitted an application to Bradford council; on what date the meeting between an officer of the Groundwork Foundation, Councillor Pickles and council officials took place; what the trust to be established in Bradford in 1990-91 will do during that period; and how much grant it will receive from Bradford council.

Mr. Trippier: An officer of the Groundwork Foundation met Councillor Pickles on 27 April 1989 and had meetings with Bradford council officials between February and June 1989. Subsequently on 10 July Bradford's policy and resources committee resolved to support in principle the establishment of a Groundwork Trust in the city. The council has allocated £40,000 for the project in its 1990-91 budget. It is understood that the preparation of a firm proposal for the trust is at present in hand.

Mersey Basin

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the environment how much the Mersey basin campaign unit in Manchester has cost his Department to run for every year since 1984.

Mr. Chris Patten *[holding answer 7 December 1989]:* The Mersey campaign unit works alongside a range of other bodies—public, private and voluntary—on both the water quality and landward aspects of the Mersey basin campaign; and supports the campaign chairman, whose post is an honorary unsalaried appointment.

The unit's staff costs are:

Year	*£*
1987-88	100,399
1988-89	115,668
1989-90	121,981

The figures for earlier years are not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Palace of Westminster

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to ensure that adequate information about the scope for energy conservation in the Palace of Westminster is available to all those who work there.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 8 December 1989]:* The Parliamentary Works Office regularly advises Members and staff of the House about the operation of the heating controls in offices and committee rooms. Occupants are expected to adopt a common sense approach towards the use of electric lighting but the staff of the Parliamentary Works Office have a continuing brief to switch off unnecessary lights as they go about their business around the Palace of Westminster. The security staff who patrol the Palace are also asked to switch off lights left on in empty rooms.

Greenhouse Effect

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on current developments in eastern Europe as they affect policies to mitigate greenhouse global warming.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 8 December 1989]:* We believe that international action is essential for an effective response to global warming. Several countries from eastern Europe already participate in the work of the inter-governmental panel on climate change, and we would welcome any increased involvement by eastern European countries in this work whether that resulted from the changes those countries are undergoing or any other reason.

Water Privatisation

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further progress he has made with the water share offers.

Mr. Howard *[pursuant to his reply, 22 November 1989, c. 3]:* The water share offers closed on 6 December. The United Kingdom public offers were 5·7 times subscribed in aggregate, triggering both overseas and institutional clawback in each of the offers. This represents a very satisfactory outcome.

I have placed in the Library of the House details of the allocation of shares to applicants.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Poland

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to make available resources, scientific expertise and technology through the Overseas Development Administration to Poland, for the purposes of environmental protection and pollution clean-up.

Mr. Waldegrave: We plan to discuss with the Polish authorities their general requirements for assistance including, where appropriate, measures to improve the environment. We have also sent a reconnaissance mission to look at the electricity generation sector, and the report will, inter alia, consider the environmental effects of the operation of the electricity utility.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much of the £50 million aid package to Poland is repayable.

Mr. Waldegrave: None.

Middle East

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he intends to invite the chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organisation to visit the United Kingdom for talks on the middle east peace process.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has at present no plans to do so.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last held and when he next intends to hold a meeting with the United States Secretary of State to discuss the situation in the middle east.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs discussed a wide range of issues with Mr. Baker earlier today.

Israel

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government monitor abuses of human rights in the Israeli-occupied west bank and Gaza strip; and whether Her Majesty's Government intend to discuss such matters with the Israeli Government.

Mr. Waldegrave: We follow closely reports of human rights abuses in the occupied territories and take every opportunity to remind the Israeli authorities of their obligation to administer the occupied territories in accordance with international law and human rights standards.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government will press Israel to recognise the Palestine Liberation Organisation and accept its offer of negotiations to settle the Palestine problem.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have repeatedly urged the Israelis over the last year to recognise that it is in their own interests to test the PLO's new policy of moderation in face-to-face negotiations.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government will press the United Nations Security Council to condemn Israel for its present stance in refusing to negotiate with the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

Mr. Waldegrave: No.

PLO

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any plans to meet senior officers of the Palestine Liberation Organisation to discuss the Palestine Liberation Organisation's position regarding peace in the middle east.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no such plans at present. But we maintain regular contact with senior members of the PLO.

Sarawak

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what studies he has made of the situation of indigenous peoples of the rain forests of Sarawak; what were the results of such studies; what representations he has made to the Government of Malaysia; and what response he has had.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have noted reports of the arrest of nomadic Penan tribespeople for blockading logging roads.

The Malaysian authorities are aware of international interest in the effects of deforestation on the global environment and on tribespeople. We have expressed concern to the Malaysian authorities, who state that their aim is to resettle the Penans and provide education, health care and an improved quality of life.

Combat Aircraft

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 27 November, *Official Report*, column *99*, what categories of aircraft are included under the definition of combat aircraft.

Mr. Waldegrave: The definition proposed on 13 July by allied negotiators for the purpose of the CFE negotiations for combat aircraft is as follows:

> "a fixed-wing or swing-wing aircraft permanently land-based of a type initially constructed or later converted to drop bombs, deliver air-to-air or air-to-surface missiles, fire guns/cannons, or employ any other weapons of destruction. Any permanently land-based version or variant of these aircraft which has been modified to perform another military function is also included. An aircraft type should not, however, be included unless a combat variant of the type concerned exists within the ATTU area in the armed forces of a member state of the same treaty of alliance to which the participating state owning the aircraft belongs."

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what additional categories of aircraft have been included in the overall figure for combat aircraft given in the *Official Report*, 27 November, column *99*, additional to those given in "Conventional Forces in Europe: The Facts".

Mr. Waldegrave: Those of aircraft in storage, together with versions and variants of combat aircraft which have been modified to perform another military function, such as training.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the reasons for the differences between the figures for North Atlantic Treaty Organisation combat aircraft in the region from the Atlantic to the Urals *(a)* provided in "Conventional Forces in Europe: The Facts", and *(b)* upon which North Atlantic Treaty Organisation has based its arms proposal to the conventional forces in Europe talks in Vienna; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Because in their proposal at the Vienna talks the allies included, principally in order to enhance the viability of the verification regime, certain versions and variants of combat aircraft which were not included in the publication "Conventional Forces in Europe: The Facts".

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the present level of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation combat aircraft in the region from the Atlantic to the Urals.

Mr. Waldegrave: On the basis of the definition of combat aircraft proposed by the allies at the Vienna talks, the current overall level is around 6,700.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on the continued production of chemical weapons under the terms of a chemical weapons convention.

Mr. Waldegrave: The draft chemical weapons convention under negotiation in Geneva would prohibit the production of chemical weapons immediately upon the convention's entry into force. The United Kingdom neither produces nor possesses chemical weapons.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government have begun work on enabling legislation with regard to the implementation of a chemical weapons convention.

Mr. Waldegrave: The likely requirements for national legislation are assessed continuously as the draft chemical weapons convention is developed. It would be premature to start trying to draft such legislation at present, however, since some complex issues, including verification, remain to be resolved.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will consider enlisting the assistance of any non-governmental organisations with the work of a national authority established under a chemical weapons convention.

Mr. Waldegrave: The work of the national authorities which it is envisaged would be established under a chemical weapons convention will cover a wide range of issues, reflecting the complexity of such an agreement. In this context, the specific expertise of organisations, such as the UK Chemical Industries Association, which we already consult closely, will be particularly valuable.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) whether signatories to a chemical weapons convention would still be able to reserve the right to retaliate in kind if subject to chemical attack, under the terms of the present draft chemical weapons convention;

(2) whether, under the terms of article XII of the draft chemical weapons convention, Her Majesty's Government will reserve the right to retaliate in kind if subject to chemical attack as presently permitted under the terms of the Geneva protocol, 1925.

Mr. Waldegrave: The relationship between a chemical weapons convention and existing international instruments concerning chemical weapons, such as the 1925 Geneva protocol, is a complex issue which is under consideration at the negotiations in Geneva. The current draft is not specific on the point raised.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the draft of the chemical weapons convention prohibits the continued production of chemical weapons once the convention has been concluded.

Mr. Waldegrave: The current draft envisages the cessation of chemical weapon production upon entry into force of the convention.

Montserrat

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will make a statement on his meeting on 6 December with a delegation from Montserrat; and what plans he has to meet any other delegations from Montserrat;

(2) what additional powers he proposes to confer on the Governor of Montserrat;

(3) what changes he is contemplating to the constitution of the dependent territory of Montserrat;

(4) what plans he has to lay before Parliament orders relating to the future of Montserrat.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he himself will be meeting the chief Minister and other representatives of Montserrat, now visiting London, before their departure on 9 December, and if he will make a statement on the purpose of their visit;

(2) if he will be allowing the people of Montserrat to express their view before 18 December on the constitutional changes proposed for the dependency; and if any steps have been taken for that purpose;

(3) what constitutional changes are proposed for Montserrat; what will be their effect on local self-government; what independent legal advice is officially available to the chief Minister in regard to the changes; what representations his Department has received in regard to the changes; and what replies have been made;

(4) what steps have been taken to consult the people of Montserrat on the proposed changes to its constitution.

Mr. Sainsbury: When I visited Montserrat on 5 November, I put to the Chief Minister certain proposals to improve the regulatory framework of the offshore finance sector and invited his Government to consider them. As these proposals necessitated changes to Montserrat's constitution, we took the opportunity to put forward a draft, incorporating other changes, including consolidating the territory's various constitutional instruments into a single document; and making some other improvements, including a Bill of Rights. A Foreign Office legal adviser went out to Montserrat a week later to explain and answer questions on the proposed new constitution. The Chief Minister was also advised by the Attorney General (legal adviser to the Government of Montserrat).

As part of the consultative process, I had further talks in London this week with the Chief Minister of Montserrat and his delegation. Following our discussions at the Foreign Office on 6 December, the Chief Minister and I recorded the understanding we had reached in an Exchange of Letters on 7 December.

We agreed on the benefit for Montserrat of the introduction of a consolidated constitution for the territory. We made the following undertakings:

(i) a new Constitution would be introduced as soon as possible by Order in Council, along the lines of that presented to the Government of Montserrat on 5 November, but with amendments agreed between Her Majesty's Government and the Government of Montserrat including a provision recognising Montserrat's right to self-determination. The main change to the existing constitution would be the transfer of responsibility for the offshore finance sector to the governor.

(ii) the Government of Montserrat would enact at the earliest possible date the legislation relating to the offshore finance sector recommended by the Coopers and Lybrand report. Thus, we felt that we could withdraw our earlier insistence that the governor be given powers to promote and pass legislation.

(iii) Her Majesty's Government would provide the necessary technical assistance to enable the Government of Montserrat to set up the necessary regulatory structure for the Montserrat finance sector, as recommended by the Coopers and Lybrand report.

Latin America

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will raise the economic problems of Latin American countries and international aid and debt with his European counterparts at the Foreign Affairs Council on 19 December.

Mr. Maude: The full agenda for the 19 December Foreign Affairs Council does not at present include the economic problems of Latin America. There is unlikely to be opportunity to raise these issues.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Child Benefit

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will calculate the total collective loss by mothers in Birkenhead resulting from the Government's decision not to uprate child benefit in line with inflation since 1979.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I regret that information relating to child benefit is available only on a national basis and cannot be given for particular areas.

War Widows

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate has been made of the number of pre-1973 war widows who are in receipt of *(a)* income support, *(b)* housing benefit and *(c)* rate relief.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: It is estimated that about 1 per cent. of pre-1973 war widows are in receipt of income support and that about 20 per cent. receive housing benefit which includes help with rates.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what amount would be recouped by Government via lost or reduced entitlement for *(a)* housing benefit, *(b)* income support, *(c)* rate relief until April 1990 and *(d)* lower rates of community charge after April 1990, as a result of giving post-1973 war widow rates of pension to pre-1973 war widows; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer the right hon. Member to the statement made earlier today by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence.

HEALTH

Embryo and Fertility Research

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assistance his Department has given to embryo and infertility work within the Nottingham health authority area.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Decisions about the priority and resources to be given to infertility services are for individual health authorities to determine within their overall allocations and in the light of local circumstances. I understand that problems have arisen in Nottingham because of the demand of local consultants for extra payments for family planning and sterilisation procedures which the DHA is unwilling to pay as the work is within the doctors' contractual commitment to the National Health Service.

General Practitioners (Contract)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of extra work that is needed in order to implement the general practitioners' new contract.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Practices already offering comprehensive services will need to do no more than at present in order to meet the requirements of the GPs' new contract. Others will need to review their practice policies. A central objective of the new contract is greater attention to health promotion and the prevention of disease. Expansion of practice teams to include more practice nurses is a favoured option for meeting this new requirement on the evidence of the current recruitment patterns.

Ambulance Service

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he has any plans to meet the leaders of the Health Service unions to discuss the exposure to competitive tender of the non-emergency aspects of ambulance journeys;

(2) if he will make it his policy to refer the ambulance dispute to arbitration in exchange for an undertaking from the unions involved to allow the exposure of the non-emergency ambulance service to competitive tender.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is the responsibility of health authorities to provide the most appropriate and cost-effective means of transport for their patients. Health authority managers must also retain control of the amounts they pay for salaries and wages in order that resources are not diverted away from patient care. This does not happen if responsibility for pay awards is given to an outside arbitrator.

Child Migrants

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the book on child migrants, a copy of which has been sent to him by Nottinghamshire county councillor, the hon. Joan Taylor.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Child migration has not been seen as a valid response to the needs of children in care for over two decades. The emigration of children in care occurs only rarely nowadays, with the Secretary of State's consent, when it is clearly in the best interests of the child and the emigration plan has been rigorously scrutinised.

National Health Service Reform

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received from the medical profession on the implications of the Government's opt-out proposals for hospitals for an integrated health provision in district health authority areas in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have received representations on this subject from a number of organisations and individuals. DHAs will be responsible for planning and securing a comprehensive range of services to meet the health care needs of their population. In doing this they will contract with a range of service providers, including NHS trusts which will remain an integral part of the NHS.

HIV

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, if he will make a statement on the current state of scientific knowledge on the efficiency of transmission of HIV in the heterosexual population.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is well established that HIV infection can be and is transmitted by heterosexual intercourse, though research into the efficiency of this mode of transmission is difficult to conduct in such a way as to produce conclusive and reliable results. Transmission through heterosexual intercourse is the most common mode of transmission worldwide.

However, most studies of long-term partnerships carried out in Europe and north America have reported that 10 to 30 per cent. of female partners of known infected males have themsleves become infected, and 4 to 15 per cent. of male partners of infected females.

This was one of the issues discussed at the expert epidemiological symposium organised by the Department of Health and the Health Education authority on 24 November this year, the proceedings of which will be published in the new year.

National Health Service Training Agency

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what role he proposes for the National Health Service Training Agency in the provision of postgraduate education for the professions allied to medicine; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what was the cost of the National Health Service Training Agency for 1986-87 and 1987-88 and the staffing of it for the same years;

(3) if he will set out the current terms of reference of the National Health Service Training Agency; whether he has any plans to alter them in the light of the recent White Papers; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The National Health Service training authority (NHSTA) is a special health authority covering England and Wales directly accountable to the Secretary of State for Health. Its function is to promote training in the National Health Service other than professional education for which statutory bodies, such as those for nursing and medicine are responsible. Its terms of reference, as set out in the National Health Service Training Authority (Establishment and Constitution) Order 1983, are:

> to identify training needs;
> to formulate, co-ordinate and develop national policy and standards;
> to provide, or make arrangements for the provision of, training programmes, courses and research;
> to stimulate, monitor and review training activity;
> to advise the Secretary of State and health authorities on all matters relating to training.

We have no plans at present to alter the NHSTA's general terms of reference. The authority is itself considering its future role and mode of operation in the light of the White Papers, and developments in Government policy on vocational training.

The responsibilities of the Council for the Professions Supplementary to Medicine extends only to pre-qualifying training. Although theoretically post-graduate education is within the remit of the NHSTA, in practice, most development work on clinical education is carried out by the professional bodies themselves, while the NHSTA concentrates on multi-disciplinary training frameworks such as Health PICKUP.

The cash limits for the NHSTA for 1986-87 and 1987-88 were:

1986-87: £5·756 million.
1987-88: £5·769 million.

Staffing costs for the same year were:

1986-87: £2·042 million.
1987-88: £2·397 million.

In Vitro Fertilisation

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which establishments provide, or research into, in vitro fertilisation for childless couples, indicating which are National Health Service facilities and which not; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Interim Licensing Authority, which is jointly sponsored by the Medical Research Council and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaeocologists, has since 1985 approved a number of centres to provide in vitro fertilisation, or to conduct specific research projects, or both. Details of these centres are given in the authority's annual report, copies of which are in the Library.

General Whitley Council Handbook

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his policy towards the use of section 33, paragraph 7 of the general Whitley council handbook.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Section 33 of the general Whitley council handbook outlines principles for dealing with local disputes on matters not arising from national Whitley agreements. We expect employing authorities and their staff to take account of these principles in determining the content of their local disputes procedures.

Dentists' Contract

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made in arriving at a contract between his Department and dentists; and if copies of any documents relating to this matter are generally available.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Following negotiations during the summer, proposals for a new contract for general dental practitioners were approved in principle by the General Dental Services Committee on 16 October as a basis for submissions to the doctors and dentists review body. The committee commended the proposals to the profession as "better for patients, dentists and dentistry". Detailed discussions are still in progress, and a formal response to the proposals from the dental profession is expected in July 1990.

The proposals are summarised in the edition of "BDA News" dated 21 October 1989. A copy of the relevant article will be placed in the Library.

National Health Service Reform

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the existing regional health authorities will comment to him on the expressions of interest in National Health Service trust status submitted by the required date, before any change is made to the form of the regional health authorities in 1990.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Expressions of interest in National Health Service trust status can be made at any time. The Department welcomes comments from regional health authorities and is working closely with regional health authority officers.

Health Authorities (Membership)

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many members of *(a)* regional health authorities and *(b)* district health authorities are from ethnic minority communities.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information on the ethnic origins of health authority members is not recorded centrally. The Department invites the Commission on Racial Equality to send us nominations when we are considering the appointment of RHA members and we encourage regional health authorities to seek nominations from local community relations groups when they are considering the appointment of members of district health authorities.

SCOTLAND

Babies (Special Care)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each year since 1981 the number of special care baby cots in the National Health Service.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is set out in the table. The decrease in the number of cots is the result of action taken to bring provision into line with actual need. An expert working group recently estimated that in Scotland as a whole provision still exceeds reasonable requirements. Rates of admission to special neonatal care vary greatly between boards, reaching 35 per cent. or more of all deliveries in some places.

Year	*Number*[1]
1981	622
1982	619
1983	617
1984	603
1985	585
1986	575
1987	563
1988	552
1989	543

[1] Average available staffed cots in special care baby units.

Market Research

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many market research and sample surveys were carried out by or for his Department in the last 12 months;

what was the cost of each; what was the total cost; how many were carried out in-house; how many were carried out for his Department by outside organisations; and what percentage of the total expenditure was paid to outside organisations.

Mr. Rifkind: In the last 12 months 37 surveys have been conducted by or on behalf of my Department, 33 of them by outside organisations. They vary greatly in size and significance, but the total expenditure was £1,115,000, 81 per cent. of which was paid to outside organisations.

Housing

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he intends to allow new town district councils to purchase vacant houses from their respective development corporation.

Mr. Lang: It is the responsibility of each development corporation to own and manage its housing stock in accordance with its own priorities. A possible role for district councils in the future of development corporation housing is outlined in paragraph 5.10 of the new towns White Paper. The White Paper commits the Government to formal consultations on the position in each town once an order for dissolution has been made and those consultations will be held with development corporations, district councils and representative tenant groups.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he proposes to advise or instruct development corporations to consult sitting tenants prior to any changes in the management of the housing stock within the new towns.

Mr. Lang: No. I am confident the development corporations can be relied on to use acceptable housing management practices when preparing management agency agreements such as those set out in paragraph 5.11 of the White Paper "The Scottish New Towns: The Way Ahead" (Command 711).

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide details of any request made by Scottish Homes to dispose of land under the terms of section 2(3A) of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Scottish Homes has made no request under section 2(3A) of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988 for consent to dispose of land.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if Scottish Homes has notified him of its intention to dispose of blocks of vacant houses to private landlords or any other non-public sector housing agency.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Prior to the introduction of section 2(3A) of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988 which came into force on 1 December 1989 Scottish Homes exercised its powers, under section 2(2)(h) of that Act, to dispose of land in accordance with arrangements made with the Secretary of State.

Such arrangements did not require Scottish Homes to notify the Secretary of State of particular disposals, provided that the sale was in the exercise of its general functions and the selling price was not less than the market value of the land, as determined by the district valuer.

Under these arrangements Scottish Homes agreed to sell six groups of new untenanted houses, totalling 203 dwellings, mainly sheltered or amenity, to registered housing associations.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what valuation he will place upon the sale of vacant houses by new town development corporations to private landlords or any other housing agency.

Mr. Lang: Any such disposal would be based on market values.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chairman and managing director of the Scottish new towns; and what items were discussed.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend last met the chairmen and managing directors of the Scottish new town development corporations on 1 December, when a wide range of matters concerning the corporations was discussed.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which Scottish new towns have informed him of plans to sell off vacant houses to private landlords or to any other housing agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Cumbernauld development corporation has recently concluded the disposal of 64 houses in the Balloch area of the town to the Bield housing association. I understand that further schemes for disposal to private landlords including housing associations are under consideration in a number of towns, but no further proposals have yet been submitted for my approval.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which Scottish new towns have informed him of plans to transfer the management of development corporation houses to private housing agencies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: No development corporation has put proposals to me for my consideration, although I am aware that there may be interest in forming such agencies in East Kilbride, Glenrothes and Livingston.

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what response he has given to the request from Ettrick and Lauderdale district council for £0·5 million to fund an urgent house building programme.

Mr. Rifkind: Next year's capital allocations, which we hope to announce before Christmas, will be determined, as in previous years, in the light of the aggregate resources available and the competing requirements of all 56 housing authorities. It is then for councils themselves to decide how to target the resources made available, based on their own assessment of housing needs in their districts, and to programme expenditure to reflect these needs, including the demand for new housing for rent if this is seen as a priority.

Road Study, Edinburgh

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many representations were made during the consultative period on the primary road study south of Edinburgh; if he will list all bodies and individuals who submitted opinions; and if he will publish the submissions received;

(2) if he will place copies of all the submissions received in the consultative study on primary road routes south of Edinburgh in the Library;

(3) when he expects to announce an official response to the study of primary road routes south of Edinburgh.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: To date representations have been received from some 200 individuals and organisations. As is normal practice, I have arranged that from 18 December a copy of all those which were not submitted in confidence will be placed in the Scottish Office Library in St. Andrew's house where they can be consulted by members of the public and copies obtained if that is desired. In response to the hon. Member's interest I am now arranging that a copy of these replies should also be made available in the Library. I expect to be able to make a statement on the outcome of the consultation early in the new year.

Bathing Waters

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what sums will be made available to each islands and regional council in Scotland so that they may progress towards compliance with the European Community directive regarding the quality of bathing waters.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Allocations for water and sewerage programmes for the current year were set at the high level of £126 million, 14 per cent. above planned provision, and were recently increased by £4·6 million. Further, my right hon. and learned Friend announced to the House on 6 December a major increase in investment in Scotland. The additional resources announced will mean a programme of £500 million over the next three years for water and sewerage services. This will allow regional and islands councils, which determine their own priorities in the light of local needs, to make faster progress in further improving the quality of the environment including any improvements related to the quality of bathing waters. The allocations to be made to each authority will be announced early next year.

Radiographers

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the statutory provisions which relate to the employment of radiographers.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In terms of the National Health Service (Professions Supplementary to Medicine) (Scotland) Regulations 1974, no health board can employ a person as radiographer unless that person is state registered under the provisions of the Professions Supplementary to Medicine Act 1960. That is the only statutory provision relating specifically to radiographers.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether, under any proposed tendering legislation, health boards will be required to stipulate in the specifications for contract that all radiographers employed must be state registered.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There is no such specific tendering legislation nor is any planned.

Labour Statistics

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland in how many travel-to-work areas in Scotland the level of unemployment is higher than the British national average; and what is his estimate of current unemployment in the City of Glasgow.

Mr. Lang: There were 40 Scottish travel-to-work areas in October 1989 (the latest available date) which had a work force unemployment rate greater than the equivalent Great Britain rate.

There were 52,352 persons unemployed in Glasgow city local authority area in October 1989.

Radiographers

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he is considering the introduction of helpers into the radiography service.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It is already open to health boards to consider appointing helpers to radiographers. As such staff are not recognised under the Whitley system, all appointments require the approval of the Scottish Home and Health Department. The mix of qualified radiography staff and helpers is a matter for the health board concerned.

De Ville Report

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will make available to hon. Members the contents of the De Ville report which relates to the question of helpers being used to assist chiropodists, physiotherapists and occupational therapists.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A copy of the report of a working group chaired by Mr. H. G. De Ville entitled "Review of Vocational Education in England and Wales" is available in the Library.

Electoral Roll

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of Scots registered on the draft electoral roll for 1989, and the comparable figures for 1987.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish draft electoral registers for 1989 contained 3,915,617 names, compared with 3, 978,196 in the draft registers for 1987.

European Structural Fund

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has made, and will make, to try and reverse the recent decision by the European Community that the Borders region was not eligible for assistance under objective 5(b) of the European structural fund.

Mr. Malcolm Rifkind: The Government put forward a strong case to the European Commission earlier this year proposing that the Borders should be given eligibility for objective 5(b) of the structural funds, but the Commission did not accept it. The Government will continue to press the case as soon as the Commission indicates it is willing to consider additional areas for eligibility.

Mental Hospitals

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will increase the funding provided for mental hospitals.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Allocations to health boards are not earmarked for specific purposes. However, both "Scottish Health Authorities Priorities for the Eighties" (December 1980) and "Scottish Health Authorities Review of Priorities for the Eighties and Nineties" (November 1988) identified care of the elderly with dementia and services for people with a mental handicap or illness as high priority programmes. Monitoring of expenditure on priority programmes began in 1981-82 and since then there has been a real-terms increase of 15 per cent. in the amounts spent by health boards on the three services.

Lennox Castle Hospital

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about the findings of the recent survey carried out in Lennox Castle hospital of widespread malnutrition among the patients.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: None.

Earnings

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* tables showing the proportion of (1) manual, (2) non-manual and (3) all full-time employees earning less than *(a)* £157, *(b)* 160, *(c)* 163, and *(d)* half average earnings a week for (i) men, (ii) women, and (iii) all full-time employees excluding overtime, shift and public borrowing requirements premia, in each regional authority and borough.

Mr. Lang: Due to the extensive amount of information requested, I will write to the hon. Member.

Student Grants

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the numbers of full-time students in receipt of student grants in Scotland under the students' allowances scheme specifying the numbers in receipt of (i) the full maintenance grant, (ii) maintenance grant reduced by assessment of parental contribution and (iii) nil maintenance, tuition fees only paid by Scottish Office, expressing each figure as a percentage proportion of the total number.

Mr. Lang: The latest available figures are set out below. They relate to the academic session 1988-89 and are in respect of all students assisted by the Scottish Education Department, excluding withdrawals during the session.

		Per cent.
Full maintenance	21,940	35·8
Part maintenance	23,902	39·1
Fees only	15,344	25·1

A fees-only award can arise from an assessment of parental income leading to a nil maintenance award or from an application for payment of fees only, in which case no assessment is made.

Adoption Register

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the rules concerning access to the adoption register in New Register house; and what measures he proposes to take to ease access for those who have a right to see such files.

Mr. Rifkind: In accordance with the Adoption (Scotland) Act 1978, the registrar general will, for the appropriate fee, have a search made of the index to the adopted children register on behalf of any person or permit that person to search the index. Thereafter the registrar general will issue to the person an extract of any entry in the adopted children register that he or she may require.

Access to the adopted children register is being eased by the conversion of the paper index to computerised format, due to be completed in 1990.

Sand Eels

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he intends to extend the ban on commercial sand eel fishing in Shetland to cover the 1990 fishing season; and whether he has any plans to extend a similar ban on sand eels to the Minch.

Mr. Lang: Officials will be discussing the latest scientific evidence on the state of sand eel stocks around Shetland with the fishing industry next month. Decisions on the 1990 fishing season will then be taken. We have no plans to ban sand eel fishing in the Minch.

Health Service

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland of the total planned additional expenditure on health services in Scotland for the year 1990-91, how much comes from new cash, cost improvement programmes and income generation, and how much of the total is for primary care.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Net expenditure on the National Health Service in 1990-91 is planned to increase by £223 million over 1989-90. All of this increase will be funded by the Exchequer. In addition, health boards should be able to generate a further £19 million from cost improvement programmes, and a further £0·5 million from income generation schemes under section 7 of the Health and Medicines Act 1988 over the levels achieved in 1989-90. Total net expenditure on primary care services is planned to increase by £68 million.

Inshore Fishing

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to announce the outcome of the review of the Operation of the Inshore Fishing (Prohibition of Fishing and Fishing Methods) (Scotland) Order 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Lang: A new order, the Inshore Fishing (Prohibition of Fishing and Fishing Methods) (Scotland) Order 1989, has today been laid before Parliament. The new regulations have been drawn up following detailed consultations with the fishing industry during the past 18 months on possible changes to the fishing regime in

Scottish inshore waters. I believe they strike an appropriate balance between protecting the respective interests of static and mobile gear fishermen, and between commercial fishermen and sea anglers. Copies of the new regulations, which are due to come into force on 1 January 1990, will be made available to industry organisations and through Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

Straw Burning

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his policy towards straw burning.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 8 December 1989]:* The extent of straw and stubble burning in Scotland following the cereals harvest is much less than in England and Wales and presents correspondingly fewer problems. While my right hon. and learned Friend intends to make provision to enable straw and stubble burning in Scotland to be banned in the Bill to provide new powers to control pollution and waste, he does not propose to exercise these powers unless a good case for doing so has been demonstrated.

Capital Grant Scheme

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total number and amount of capital grant scheme awards made this year by the Scottish Education Department to village and community halls in Grampian region to the latest available date; and what were the figures for each of the past five years.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 4 December 1989]:* The information is as follows:

Year	*Number*[1]	*Amount of grant £*
1984-85	15	177,912
1985-86	13	157,851
1986-87	9	94,642
1987-88	9	171,665
1988-89	8	198,780
1989-90	10	69,871

[1] Projects approved for grant.

The 1989-90 figures include four projects which have been approved in principle. Further documentation is awaited to enable formal offers of grant to be issued.

The scheme has recently been reviewed and new arrangements for the allocation of grant have been introduced for 1989-90 and future years. The need to clear outstanding commitments from earlier years has required a temporary reduction, in 1989-90 only, in the amount of grant available for new projects. The funds available for new projects in 1990-91 will revert to a level similar to that of earlier years.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Straw Stubble Burning

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received on his recent proposals to ban straw stubble burning.

Mr. Maclean: We have not received any representations, but our proposals have been widely welcomed as striking the right balance betwen the interests of the farming industry and the general public, particularly those who live in the countryside.

Pesticides

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, which pesticides *(a)* he has already reviewed under his review programme, *(b)* he is currently reviewing and *(c)* he plans to review; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The review of pesticides approved by my Department is undertaken by the Advisory Committee on Pesticides. Pesticides containing the following active ingredients *(a)* have been reviewed, *(b)* are under review and *(c)* are awaiting review.

a) Reviews concluded by the ACP:
Aminotriazole
Alachlor
Aldicarb
Aldrin
Binapacryl
Biological agents used as pesticides
Bitertanol
Captafol
Chlordane
Cyhexatin
DDT
Dieldrin
Dimethoate
Dinoseb
Dinoseb-acetate
Dinoterb
DNOC
Endrin
Ethylene dibromide
Fenbutatin oxide
Fentin acetate
Fentin hydroxide
Glycol ethers
Iprodione
Maleic nydrazide
Mercury compounds
Sythetic pyrethroids
2,4,5-T
Triazophos
b) Reviews currently in progress:
2-aminobutane
Bromoxynil
Captan
2, 4-D
Daminozide
Demeton-s-methyl
Demeton-s-methyl-sulphane
Diazinon
Dichlorvos
Dinocap
Ferbam
Furmecyclox
Ioxynil
Lindane
Linuron
Mancozeb
Maneb
Methyl bromide
Mevinphos
Monlinuron
Nabam
Oxydemeton-methyl
Propineb
Thiram
Zineb
Ziram
c) Reviews Planned:
Aldicarb
Alkylaryl trimethyl ammonium chloride
Allethrin

Alphachloralose
Aluminium ammonium sulphate
Aluminium phosphide
Aluminium silicate
Aluminium sulphate
Aminobutane (2 –)
Amitraz
Amitrole
Ammonium carbonate
Ammonium hydroxide
Ammonium sulphamate
Ammonium sulphate
Anthraquinone
Asulam
Atrazine
Azinphos-methyl
Aziprotryne
Bacillus thuringiensis
Barban
Benazolin
Bendiocarb
Benodanil
Benomyl
Bentazone
Benzalkonium chloride
Benzethonium chloride
Benzoylprop-ethyl
Bifenox
Bioallethrin
Bioresmethrin
Bitumen
Bone oil
Boric acid
Brodifacoum
Bromacil
Bromadiolone
Bromophos
Bupirimate
Butoxycarboxim
Calciferol
Captan
Carbaryl
Carbendazim
Carbetamide
Carbofuran
Carbophenothion
Carboxin
Cetrimide
Chloramben
Chlorbufam
Chlordane
Chlorfenvinphos
Chloridazon
Chlormequat
Chloroethylphosphonic acid (2 –)
Chlorophacinone
Chloropicrin
Chlorothalonil
Chlorotoluron
Chloroxuron
Chlorphonium
Chlorpropham
Chlorpyrifos
Chlorpyrifos-methyl
Chlorthal dimethyl
Chlorthiamid
Clopyralid
Copper ammonium carbonate
Copper complex—bordeaux
Copper hydroxide
Copper oxychloride
Copper sulphate
Coumatetralyl
Cresylic acid
Cufraneb
Cyanazine
Cymoxanil
Cypermethrin
DB (2, 4 –)
DES (2, 4 –)
Dalapon
Dazomet
Deltamethrin
Desmetryne
Di-allate
Dicamba
Dichlobenil
Dichlofluanid
Dichlorophen
Dichloropropane (1, 2 –)
Dichloropropene (1, 3 –)
Dichlorprop
Diclofop-methyl
Dicloran
Dicofol
Dienochlor
Difenacoum
Diflubenzuron
Dikegulac
Dimethoate
Diphacinone
Diphenamid
Diquat
Disulfoton
Ditalimfos
Dithianon
Diuron
Dodecylbenzyl trimethyl ammonium chloride
Dodemorph
Dodine
Drazoxolon
EPTC
Endosulfan
Ethiofencarb
Ethirimol
Ethofumesate
Ethylmercury phosphate
Etridiazole
Etrimfos
Fatty acids
Fenbutatin oxide
Fenchlorphos
Fenitrothion
Fenoprop
Fentin acetate
Fentin hydroxide
Fenuron
Ferric sulphate
Ferrous sulphate
Flamprop-F-isopropyl
Flamprop-methyl
Fluoroacetamide
Fonofos
Formaldehyde
Formothion
Fosamine-ammonium
Fosetyl-aluminium
Fuberidazole
Gibberellins
Glyphosate
Grease
Heptenophos
Hexazinone
Hydrogen iodide
Hydroxyquinoline (8 –)
Imazalil
Indol-3-ylacetic acid
Indol-3-ylbutyric acid (4 –)
Iodofenphos
Iprodione
Isoproturon
Lenacil
MCPA
MCPB
Malathion
Maleic hydrazide
Mecoprop
Mecoprop-p
Mephosfolan
Mepiquat

Mercuric oxide
Mercurous chloride
Metalaxyl
Metaldehyde
Metamitron
Methabenzthiazuron
Metham-sodium
Methiocarb
Methomyl
Methoprene
Methoxyethylmercury acetate (2 –)
Methyl bromide
Metoxuron
Metribuzin
Mineral oil
Naled
Naphthalene
Naphthylacetamide (1 –)
Naphthylacetic acid (1 –)
Naphthyloxyacetic acid (2 –)
Napropamide
Nicotine
Nitrothal-isopropyl
Nonylphenoxypoly (ethyleneoxy) ethanol-iodine complex
Norbormide
Octhilinone
Omethoate
Oxadiazon
Oxamyl
Oxine-copper
Oxycarboxin
Paraformaldehyde
Paraquat
Pendimethalin
Pentachlorophenol
Pentanochlor
Pepper
Permethrin
Phenmedipham
Phenols
Phenothrin
Phenylmercury acetate
Phorate
Phosalone
Phoxim
Picloram
Pirimicarb
Pirimiphos-ethyl
Pirimiphos-methyl
Potassium hydroxyquinoline sulphate
Potassium sorbate
Prochloraz
Prometryn
Propachlor
Propamocarb hydrochloride
Propham
Propoxur
Propyzamide
Pyrazophos
Pyrethrins
Pyridate
Quassia
Quinomethionate
Quinonamid
Quintozene
Reserpine
Resmethrin
Rotenone
Simazine
Sodium carbonate
Sodium chlorate
Sodium cyanide
Sodium hydrogen carbonate
Sodium metabisulphite
Sodium monochloroacetate
Sodium propionate
Sodium silver thiosulphate
Sodium tetraborate
Sulphur
T (2, 4, 5 –)
TBA (2, 3, 6 –)
TCA
Tar acids
Tar oils
Tebuthiuron
Tecnazene
Terbacil
Terbuthylazine
Terbutryn
Tetrachlorvinphos
Tetradifon
Tetramethrin
Thiabendazole
Thiofanox
Thiometon
Thionazin
Thiophanate-methyl
Thiourea
Tri-allate
Triadimefon
Triadimenol
Triazophos
Trichlorfon
Trichoderma viride
Tricosene ((z) – 9 –)
Tridemorph
Trietazine
Trifluralin
Trioforine
Vamidothion
Verticillium lecanii
Vinclozolin
Warfarin
Wax
Zinc
Zinc oxide
Zinc phosphide

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many pesticides and active ingredients are currently approved for use in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: There are currently 3,373 pesticide products approved by my Department representing 409 active ingredients.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many applications for new pesticides he has *(a)* received and *(b)* approved, for each year since 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Applications for pesticide registration (including renewals) received and approved by my Department were as follows:

Year	*Received*	*Approved*
1985	n/a	n/a
1986	n/a	n/a
1987	1,102	544
1988 (including off-labels)	1,363	1,068
1989 (as at 1 December 1989) (including off-labels)	1,718	906

n/a = not available.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which pesticides currently approved were approved *(a)* before 1961, *(b)* between 1961 and 1970, *(c)* between 1971 and 1980 and *(d)* between 1981 and the present day; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Approved pesticides are listed in "Pesticides 1989" a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. Those active ingredients approved prior to 31 December 1980 are listed as follows and those approved prior to 31 December 1965 are marked with an asterisk. A further breakdown of this information cannot be provided without disproportionate cost.

Aldicarb
Alkylaryl trimethyl ammonium chloride
Allethrin
Alphachloralose*
Aluminium ammonium sulphate
Aluminium phosphide*
Aluminium silicate*
Aluminium sulphate*
Aminobutane (2 –)
Amitraz
Amitrole
Ammonium carbonate
Ammonium hydroxide
Ammonium sulphamate*
Ammonium sulphate
Anthraquinone*
Asulam
Atrazine
Azinphos-methyl*
Aziprotryne
Bacillus thuringiensis
Barbon*
Benazolin*
Bendiocarb
Benodanil
Benomyl
Bentazone
Benzalkonium chloride
Benzethonium chloride
Benzoylprop-ethyl
Bifenox
Bioallethrin
Bioresmethrin
Bitumen*
Bone oil*
Boric acid
Brodifacoum
Bromacil*
Bromadiolone
Bromophos
Bupirimate
Butoxycarboxim
Calciferol
Captan
Carbaryl*
Carbendazim
Carbetamide
Carbofuran
Carbophenothion
Carboxin
Cetrimide
Chloramben
Chlorbufam*
Chlordane
Drazoxolon
EPTC
Endosulfan*
Ethiofencarb
Ethirimol
Ethofumesate
Ethylmercury phosphate
Etridiazole
Etrimfos
Fatty acids*
Fenbutatin oxide
Fenchlorphos*
Fenitrothion
Fenoprop*
Fentin acetate*
Fentin hydroxide*
Fenuron
Ferric sulphate*
Ferrous sulphate*
Flamprop-F-isopropyl
Flamprop-methyl
Flouroacetamide*
Fonofos
Formaldehyde*
Formothion*
Fosamine-ammonium
Fosetyl-aluminium
Fuberidazole
Gibberellins*
Glyphosate
Grease
Heptenophos
Hexazinone
Hydrogen iodide
Hydroxyquinoline (8 –)
Imazalil
Indol-3-ylacetic acid*
Indol-3-ylbutyric acid (4 –)*
Iodofenphos
Iprodione
Isoproturon
Lenacil*
MCPA*
MCPB*
Malathion*
Maleic hydrazide
Mecoprop*
Mecoprop-p
Mephosfolan
Mepiquat
Mercuric oxide
Mercurous chloride
Metalaxyl
Metaldehyde*
Metamitron
Methabenzthiazuron
Metham-sodium*
Methiocarb
Chlorfenvinphos*
Chloridazon*
Chlormequat
Chloroethylphosphonic acid (2 –)
Chlorophacinone*
Chloropicrin
Chlorothalonil
Chlorotoluron
Chloroxuron*
Chlorphonium*
Chlorpropham*
Chlorpyrifos
Chlorpyrifos-methyl
Chlorthal dimethyl
Chlorthiamid*
Clopyralid
Copper ammonium carbonate*
Copper complex—bordeaux
Copper hydroxide*
Copper oxychloride*
Copper sulphate*
Coumatetralyl*
Cresyslic acid*
Cufraneb
Cyanazine
Cymoxanil
Cypermethrin
DB (2, 4 –)*
DES (2, 4 –)*
Dalapon*
Dazomet*
Deltamethrin
Desmetryne*
Di-allate*
Dicamba*
Dichlobenil*
Dichlofluanid*
Dichlorophen*
Dichloropropane (1, 2 –)*
Dichloropropene (1, 3 –)*
Dichlorprop*
Diclofop-methyl
Dicloran*
Dicofol
Dienochlor

Difenacoum
Diflubenzuron
Dikegulac
Dimethoate*
Diphacinone
Diphenamid*
Diquat*
Disulfoton*
Ditalimfos
Dithianon*
Diuron*
Dodecylbenzyl trimethyl ammonium chloride
Dodemorth
Dodine*
Drazoxolon
EPTC
Endosulfan*
Ethiofencarb
Ethirimol
Ethofumesate
Ethylmercury phosphate
Etridiazole
Etrimfos
Fatty acids*
Fenbutatin oxide
Fenchlorphos*
Fenitrothion
Fenoprop*
Fentin acetate*
Fentin hydroxide*
Fenuron
Ferric sulphate*
Ferrous sulphate*
Flamprop-F-isopropyl
Flamprop-methyl
Fluoroacetamide*
Fonofos
Formaldehyde*
Formothion*
Fosamine-ammonium
Fosetyl-aluminium
Fuberidazole
Gibberellins*
Glyphosate
Grease
Heptenophos
Hexazinone
Hydrogen iodide
Hydroxyquinoline (8 –)
Imazalil
Indol-3-ylacetic acid*
Indol-3-ylbutyric acid (4 –)*
Iodofenphos
Iprodione
Isoproturon
Lenacil*
MCPA*
MCPB*
Malathion*
Maleic hydrazide
Mecoprop*
Mecoprop-p
Mephosfolan
Mepiquat
Mercuric oxide
Mercurous chloride
Metalaxyl
Metaldehyde*
Metamitron
Methabenzthiazuron
Metham-sodium*
Methiocarb
Methomyl
Methoprene
Methoxyethylmercury acetate (2-)
Methyl bromide
Metoxuron
Metribuzin
Mineral oil
Naled*
Naphthalene
Naphthylacetamide (1-)
Napthylacetic acid (1-)
Napthyloxyacetic acid (2-)
Napropamide
Nicotine*
Nitrothal-isopropyl
Nonylphenoxypoly(ethyleneoxy) ethanol-iodine complex
Norbormide*
Octhilinone
Omethoate
Oxadiazon
Oxamyl
Oxine-copper*
Oxycarboxin
Paraformaldehyde*
Paraquat*
Pendimethalin
Pentachlorophenol*
Pentanochlor*
Pepper*
Permethrin
Phenmedipham
Phenols*
Phenothrin
Phenylmercury acetate
Phorate*
Phosalone
Phoxim
Picloram*
Pirimicarb
Pirimiphos-ethyl
Pirimiphos-methyl
Potassium hydroxyquinoline sulphate
Potassium sorbate*
Prochloraz
Prometryn*
Propachlor
Propamocarb hydrochloride
Propham*
Propoxur*
Propyzamide
Pyrazophos
Pyrethrins*
Pyridate
Quassia
Quinomethionate*
Quinonamid
Quintozene
Reserpine
Resmethrin*
Rotenone*
Simazine*
Sodium carbonate
Sodium chlorate*
Sodium cyanide*
Sodium hydrogen carbonate
Sodium metabisulphite*
Sodium monochloroacetate*
Sodium propionate*
Sodium silver thiosulphate*
Sodium tetraborate*
Sulphur
T (2, 4, 5 –)
TBA (2, 3, 6 –)*
TCA*
Tar acids*
Tar oils*
Tebuthiuron
Tecnazene
Terbacil
Terbuthylazine
Terbutryn
Tetrachlorvinphos
Tetradifon*
Tetramethrin
Thiabendazole
Thiofanox
Thiometon
Thionazin*

Thiophanate-methyl
Thiourea
Tri-allate*
Triadimefon
Triadimenol
Triazophos
Trichlorfon*
Trichoderma viride
Tricosene ((Z) −9−)
Tridemorph
Trietazine
Trifluralin*
Triforine
Vamidothion
Verticillium lecanii
Vinclozolin
Warfarin*
Wax*
Zinc
Zinc oxide
Zinc phosphide*

Hormone Growth Promoters

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list those hormone growth promoters currently approved for use in the United Kingdom and state the species for which each is authorised.

Mr. Maclean: No hormonal products are approved for use as growth promoters.

Food Safety

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on what dates within the last 12 months he has met representatives from *(a)* the Food and Drink Federation, *(b)* the Co-op, and *(c)* Grand Metropolitan to discuss food matters.

Mr. Curry: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on Tuesday, 28 November 1989 at column 192.

Eggs

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last reviewed the import penetration of the United Kingdom egg market; and on what figures his current estimate is based.

Mr. Curry: We monitor the trade position on the basis of monthly Customs and Excise data. In addition, we conduct an annual review of agriculture, the results of which are now published in the series "Agriculture in the UK". "Agriculture in the UK 1988", which was published early in 1989, covered the position to the end of last year. The results of the current review will be published in due course.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) whether any eggs are imported to be sold in the United Kingdom without undergoing salmonella checks; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what tests for salmonella are required for *(a)* domestic and *(b)* imported eggs; and what are the reasons for any differences.

Mr. Curry: We are testing domestic flocks. Clearly we cannot do this for imports. But imported eggs are monitored for salmonella. When we find invasive salmonella in imports we take the case up with the member state concerned.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will exclude small-scale breeders of rare and fancy poultry breeds where eggs are not sold for human consumption from the provisions of his salmonella control measures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Breeding flocks of less than 25 birds are excluded from the scope of the Poultry Breeding Flocks and Hatcheries (Registration and Testing) Order 1989. For flocks of 25 birds or more the order provides for exemption from some of the testing requirements. This provision may, depending on the circumstances, be applied to small flocks of rare breeds.

Public Appointments

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many persons above the age of *(a)* 60, *(b)* 65 and *(c)* 70 years he has appointed to public bodies in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Curry: I regret that the information requested is not readily available.

Microwave Ovens

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will impose regulations on the temperature controls of microwave ovens; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: As the Minister made clear in the House on 6 December at column 325 the microwave ovens tested in the recent study are, in large measure, not defective. The manufacturers have issued updated instructions about their use, where the ovens were found to be not heating evenly, and have agreed to ensure that new microwave ovens will meet the higher standards which the tests have shown to be necessary.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the cost of his survey into microwave ovens; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The cost of the report by the Institute of Food Research on testing uniformity and reproducibility of reheating in domestic microwave ovens was £28,490.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what payment he received from industry towards the costs of his survey into microwave ovens; what was the value of models of ovens donated by the manufacturers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Industry made no financial contribution towards the cost of the survey. The models to be tested were decided by the researchers on the basis of sales figures for both branded and own-brand microwaves. The particular ovens were selected at random by the researchers from manufacturers' or retailers' warehouse stock. We do not have details of the potential cost if the Ministry had had to buy the 102 ovens concerned, as it would have made no difference to the study.

Mr. Beith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which microwave cookers failed to heat food to a safe temperature in tests carried out by his Department.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will list the manufacturer's name and model type of those microwave ovens which fail to heat products above 70 deg. C in his recent study; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he will now issue guidelines to consumers about the use of microwave ovens which fail to reach 70 deg. C; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: As the Minister announced on 6 December at col. 323, the manufacturers of microwave ovens have at his request issued updated instructions about their use, in cases where the recent study showed that food was not evenly heated. The Association of Manufacturers of Domestic Electrical Appliances (AMDEA) issued a press release that day listing the ovens and brief instructions and a copy is in the Library of the House.

Market Research

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many market research and sample surveys were carried out by or for his Ministry in the last 12 months; what was the cost of each; what was the total cost; how many were carried out in house; how many were carried out for his Department by outside organisations; and what percentage of the total expenditure was paid to outside organisations.

Mr. Curry: Information is not available in the form requested. Most statutory and other sample surveys are carried out using the Department's own resources and are reviewed at regular intervals to ensure they are cost-effective. The only major market research survey in the last 12 months was one on public attitudes to food safety which was conducted by outside organisations at a cost of £33,000.

Coffee

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has received any representations about the retail price of coffee.

Mr. Gummer: Yes. I have asked the Director General of Fair Trading to look into the matter.

Poultry Laying Flocks

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what additional financial support he is making to enable county council animal health inspectors to enforce his orders dealing with the registration and testing of poultry laying flocks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The resources required for this work will be taken into account in future decisions on funding of local authorities.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances

Mr. Amos: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to ensure that any changes to hill livestock compensatory allowances agreed at the Agriculture Council meeting on 11 December do not discriminate against the interests of British farmers in less favoured areas.

Mr. Curry: The changes to the EC rules governing hill livestock compensatory allowances will not take effect until 1991. We have yet to take the policy decisions about the consequential effects on our national arrangements.

Food from Britain

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food why he decided not to appoint a representative of consumer interests to the council of Food from Britain.

Mr. Curry: Food from Britain's primary role is to assist British food producers better to respond to consumer requirements both at home and in the export market. The range of talent, expertise and experience now represented on the Food from Britain council will ensure that all interests concerned in Food from Britain's work, including the consumer interests to which the Government attach a great deal of importance, will be taken properly into account.

Ractopamine

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has concerning the uses of ractopamine in pig rearing.

Mr. Maclean: I understand that ractopamine is the active ingredient in growth promoters used in some other countries, but no such product has been authorised for use in the United Kingdom.

Fishing Quotas

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to bring forward his proposals for the 1990 fishing quotas, total allowable catches and other restrictions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The EC Commission's proposals on total allowable catches and quotas for 1990 are expected very shortly. The United Kingdom will of course be pressing for the best possible fishing opportunities for the United Kingdom fleet consistent with the conservation of the stocks.

North Sea

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, further to his answer to the hon. Member for South Shields of 4 December, if he will list the competent international organisations which have agreed that (1) harsh waters from the synthesis of intal; (2) aqueous residues from preparation of paracetemol; and (3) salt solution from manufacture of O-tolex-bighamide cause no harm to the marine environment under the terms of article XVI *(a)* of the ministerial declaration of the second international conference of the protection of the North sea; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The ministerial declaration provides for a country to show to the competent international organisation that a waste causes no harm in the marine environment. It has been agreed that the Oslo Commission is the competent international organisation for this purpose, and the Oslo Commission has agreed an appropriate procedure to be followed. The Government have initiated the procedure and, as required by it, are currently in touch with other countries.

DEFENCE

Market Research

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many market research and sample surveys were carried out by or for his Department in the last 12 months; what was the cost of each; what was the total cost; how many were carried out in-house; how many were carried out for his Department by outside organisations; and what percentage of the total expenditure was paid to outside organisations.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: During the financial year 1988-89, the latest 12 months for which information is available, 28 market research and sample surveys were carried out for the Ministry of Defence at a total cost of £247,362. All were carried out by outside organisations.

Atomic Control Office

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many officials from his Department are assigned to the Atomic Control Office; what changes in numbers of personnel in the Atomic Control Office have been made since 1979; and how many meetings have been held between officials of the Atomic Control Office and officials or political representatives from the United States Government in each year since 1979 on the 1958 United Kingdom—United States mutual defence agreement on atomic energy matters.

Mr. Alan Clark: In 1979 the complement of the Atomic Control Office (London) (ACO(L)) was four persons. This was increased to five in the spring of 1987. Since January 1986 meetings between ACO(L) personnel and United States officials have averaged two per year. Figures for the years 1979 to 1985 are not readily available and the cost of obtaining them would be disproportionate.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation plans to deter the use of chemical weapons by the Warsaw treaty organisation forces following the complete withdrawal of United States chemical weapons from Europe by 1992.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We believe that the strategy of flexible response will continue to provide the best means of deterring any aggression in Europe.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications for the deployment of United States binary chemical weapons to the United Kingdom in time of crisis under the terms of the United States' contingency deployment plan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 3 November at column *625.*

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications for the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's chemical deterrence posture of the complete withdrawal of United States chemical weapons from Europe by 1992.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United States will on present plans continue to retain a limited retaliatory chemical warfare capability, which will form a contribution to NATO's overall strategy of deterrence.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether NATO has adopted procedures for the authorised release of chemical weapons in Europe in time of crisis.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No. I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 25 June 1986 at columns *163-64*.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the United States of America has adopted a contingency deployment plan for the deployment of chemical weapons in Europe in time of crisis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 24 July 1986 at columns *489-90*, to which I have nothing to add.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation policy on retaining the nuclear capability, specifically to hit targets in the western districts of the Soviet Union, in the aftermath of the intermediate range nuclear forces treaty.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Alliance reaffirmed at the NATO summit in May that for the foreseeable future there was no alternative to the policy of flexible response as a strategy of deterrence, and that this strategy requires a mix of nuclear and conventional forces, including European-based ground-launched nuclear missiles, which should be kept up to date where necessary.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what sub-strategic nuclear systems the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation currently possesses that are capable of reaching targets in the western districts of the Soviet Union.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to volume 1 of the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1989 (Cm 675-I). The information he requires is listed in figure 12 under NATO's intermediate nuclear forces.

Tax-free Concessions

Mr. Nicholas-Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the tax-free concessions available to British service men based *(a)* in the United Kingdom, and *(b)* abroad.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces will write to my hon. Friend.

Atomic Weapons Establishment

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence under what statute the Government will appoint a management contractor to run the atomic weapons establishment.

Mr. Neubert: No specific statutory authority is necesssary for the appointment of the initial management contractor at AWE by Government contract following selection by competion.

Mr. O'Neill: To as the Secretary of State for Defence what are the current annual labour costs of the atomic weapons research establishments at *(a)* Aldermaston, *(b)* Burghfield, *(c)* Cardiff and *(d)* Foulness.

Mr. Neubert: For security reasons, it has been the policy of successive Governments not to release information of this nature.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the average length of service of *(a)* administrative, executive and clerical staff, *(b)* specialist staff, *(c)* industrial-craft staff and *(d)* industrial non-craft staff at the atomic weapons establishment site at Aldermaston.

Mr. Neubert: The average length of service of staff at AWE Aldermaston is:

Industrials:	8 years.
Non-industrials:	14 years.

A more detailed breakdown is not readily available.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current number of *(a)* administrative, executive and clerical staff, *(b)* specialist staff, *(c)* industrial-craft staff and *(d)* industrial-non craft staff employed by the atomic weapons establishment.

Mr. Neubert: It is not our practice to disclose details of the number or deployment of staff employed on the nuclear programme.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current number of staff attached to the safety division of the atomic weapons establishment; and what is its current budget.

Mr. Neubert: For reasons of national security it has been the policy of successive Governments not to reveal the number or deployment of staff employed at the atomic weapons establishment.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current shortfall in staff at the atomic weapons research establishments in Aldermaston in the following grades *(a)* administrative, executive and clerical staff, *(b)* specialist staff, *(c)* industrial-craft staff and *(d)* industrial-non craft staff.

Mr. Neubert: The current staff shortfalls at AWE Aldermaston broken down by category are as follows:

	Number
Administrative, Executive and Clerical Grades	43
Specialist Staff	129
Craft Industrials	66
Non Craft Industrials	54

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total amount of overtime that has been paid out at the atomic weapons establishment sites at *(a)* Aldermaston, *(b)* Burghfield, *(c)* Cardiff and *(d)* Foulness.

Mr. Neubert: The total amount of overtime paid out at the AWE sites during 1988-89 is:

	£ million
Aldermaston	6·6
Burghfield	0·9
Cardiff	0·4
Foulness	0·5

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans exist for the retention of the safety division of the atomic weapons establishment after the introduction of private contractors at the atomic weapons establishment.

Mr. Neubert: Safety will remain the highest priority. The detailed relationship between the existing safety division and the proposed compliance office is still under consideration.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what will be the nature of the relationship between the chief executive of the atomic weapons establishment and the compliance director of that establishment under the Government's proposals for the future organisation of the atomic weapons establishment.

Mr. Neubert: Following the appointment of the management contractor, it is planned that the compliance director will be responsible for advising the chief executive on environmental, safety and health requirements. In addition, the compliance director will be responsible to the Ministry of Defence on safety and security issues, with particular reference to the contractor's performance in these respects.

Frigates

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next intends to place any orders for type 23 frigates.

Mr. Neubert: Shortly.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 12 December 1989

THE ARTS

New Museums

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Minister for the Arts how many new museums have been opened in the last three years.

Mr. Luce: The Museums Association database estimated in 1988 that the number of museums and galleries in the United Kingdom was estimated to have risen to some 2,400 from approximately 1,750 in 1984.

I understand that the Museum and Galleries Commission estimates that the number has now risen to approximately 2,500.

National Television Archive

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he intends to set up a national television archive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: The British Film Institute already operates an extensive film and television archive and I hope that it will be possible for them to extend this in co-operation with the television industry.

CIVIL SERVICE

Agencies

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what further progress has been made in the establishment of agencies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: Since I last reported to the House, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment has announced, on 1 December at column 461, his intention that the Employment Service should be launched as an executive agency in April 1990.

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what proportion of the Civil Service is covered by both existing and proposed agencies.

Mr. Luce: Staff in the 10 executive agencies established so far under the Next Steps initiative taken together with those in the functions announced to date as candidates for agency status, represent about one third of the Civil Service.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Health and Social Services (Appointments)

The Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will list all area board and district manager and any deputy posts which have been recruited in the last four years, together with the salaries and length of contract;

(2) if he will list all director, assistant director and deputy posts which have been recruited or advertised in the last four years by health and social services boards, together with the length of contracts offered and the salaries;

(3) what information he has about further plans by health and social services boards to recruit management posts; what was the total cost of all posts recruited in the last four years and any posts currently being advertised; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The appointment of general managers and senior managers at board and unit of management level is a matter for boards to decide in accordance with determinations and guidance issued by the Department of Health and Social Services. This guidance is available in the Library.

The information requested in respect of general manager and senior manager posts including the present basic salaries and length of contracts is set out in the tables below.

The boards will be proceeding to fill other senior manager posts at board headquarters and units of management.

Table 1

General manager/senior manager posts for which boards recruited during period 1 December 1985 to 30 November 1989

Category	*Post*	*Date of appointment*	*(1) Current basic salary*	*(2) Contract*	*Board*
General Manager	Board General Manager	1/4/1987	39,340	3 years	Northern
General Manager	Unit General Manager (Antrim Hospital)	1/11/1989	31,075	3 years	Northern
Senior Manager	Director of Planning	4/9/1989	30,960	3 years	Eastern

Notes:

1. All of these posts are eligible for performance related pay in addition to the basic salary which for a unit general manager includes a discretionary amount in addition to the grade rate for the post.
2. Contracts are for three years and can be rolled on annually for not more than one year.

Table 2

General manager-senior manager posts for which boards are in the process of recruiting

Category	*Post*	*(1) Date of appointment*	*(2) Current basic salary*	*(3) Contract*	*Board*
General manager	Unit general manager (Belfast City hospital)	1 April 1990	34,122	3 years	Eastern
General manager	Unit general manager (Royal group of hospitals)	1 April 1990	35,673	3 years	Eastern
General manager	Unit general manager (Ulster, Ards and Bangor hospitals)	1 April 1990	30,228	3 years	Eastern
General manager	Unit general manager (Mater hospital)	1 April 1990	25,258	3 years	Eastern
General manager	Unit general manager (Musgrave Belvoir and Forster Green hospitals)	1 April 1990	30,228	3 years	Eastern
General manager	Unit general manager (Lisburn and Down)	1 April 1990	33,191	3 years	Eastern
General manager	Unit general manager (South and East Belfast and Castlereagh and Purdysburn)	1 April 1990	33,191	3 years	Eastern
General manager	Unit general manager (North and West Belfast and Muckamore)	1 April 1990	30,228	3 years	Eastern
General manager	Unit general manager (North Down and Ards)	1 April 1990	23,258	3 years	Eastern
General manager	Unit general manager (Armagh and Dungannon)	1 April 1990	29,945	3 years	Southern
General manager	Unit general manager (Craigavon and Banbridge hospitals)	1 April 1990	29,945	3 years	Southern
General manager	Unit general manager (Craigavon and Banbridge Community)	1 April 1990	29,945	3 years	Southern
General manager	Unit general manager (Newry and Mourne)	1 April 1990	29,945	3 years	Southern
General manager	Unit general manager (Area Mental Health)	1 April 1990	25,251	3 years	Southern
General manager	Unit general manager (Western)	1 April 1990	33,191	3 years	Northern
General manager	Unit general manager (Eastern)	1 April 1990	30,227	3 years	Northern
General manager	Unit general manager (Northern)	1 April 1990	26,754	3 years	Northern
General manager	Unit general manager (Altnagelvin Group of Hospitals)	1 April 1990	31,357	3 years	Western
General manager	Unit general manager (Foyle Community)	1 April 1990	29,945	3 years	Western
General manager	Unit general manager (Area Mental Health)	1 April 1990	29,945	3 years	Western
General manager	Unit general manager (Omagh/Fermanagh Hospitals and Community Services)	1 April 1990	30,792	3 years	Western
Senior manager	Director of Operations	1 April 1990	39,170	3 years	Eastern

Notes:

1. The unit general manager posts will be filled on a substantive basis from 1 April 1990. However, some may be filled on a designated basis before that date.
2. All of these posts are eligible for performance related pay in addition to the basic salary which for a unit general manager includes a discretionary amount in addition to the grade rate for the post.
3. Contracts are for three years and can be rolled on annually for not more than one year.

ENERGY

Mersey Barrage

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received about the Mersey barrage; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: As the hon. Member knows from my discussions with him, an application for inclusion in the initial tranche of the non-fossil fuel obligation has been made by the Mersey Barrage Company. This application is being considered and discussions are taking place with the company.

The Mersey barrage project can be considered for inclusion in the non-fossil fuel obligation only if agreement is reached between area boards and the company on a suitable contract and the project is commercially viable.

Coal

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will provide details of any agreements for British Coal to supply coal to National Power and Powergen in future years.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy indicated the main terms of the coal supply contracts recently agreed between British Coal and National Power and PowerGen in the Second Reading debate on the Coal Industry Bill on 4 December. The details, however, are a commercial matter for the parties concerned.

Nuclear Power

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what plans he has to re-evaluate the role of nuclear power in the context of environmental damage from fossil fuels.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Government recognise the contribution that nuclear power can make towards minimising the problems of the greenhouse effect and acid rain caused by the burning of fossil fuels. My hon. Friend will recall the statement made to the House by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy on 9 November when he said that

> "the Government will wish to review the prospects for nuclear power as the Sizewell project nears completion in 1994".

The environmental advantages of nuclear power will be taken fully into account in this review.

Electricité de France

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what subjects he intends to raise when he next meets the head of Electricité de France.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend and I have no plans to meet the head of Electricité de France.

Reactor Programmes (Costs)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many meetings have been held between his Department and *(a)* the Central Electricity Generating Board, *(b)* the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority and *(c)* British Nuclear Fuels plc, on the issues of decommissioning costs, reprocessing costs and nuclear waste management costs for (i) the Magnox reactor programme and (ii) the advanced gas cooled reactor programme in the last 12 months; and what reports have been received by his Department from these organisations on these subjects over the past year.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My Department has had many meetings with the CEGB, BNFL and UKAEA in the past year at which the topics of decommissioning, reprocessing and nuclear waste management were discussed. My Department has received a report from the UKAEA reviewing the CEGB's decommissioning cost estimates for their Magnox and AGR nuclear power stations.

CEGB Chairman

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) how many meetings he has had with the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board since 1 September; how many telephone conversations he has had with the Central Electricity Generating Board chairman over the same time span; and what issues were discussed in each communication;

(2) what correspondence he has had with the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board since 25 July; what issues were addressed; and if he will place copies of the correspondence in the Library.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend and I are in regular contact with the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board about matters of mutual interest. These communications are confidential.

Nuclear Reactors (Czechoslovakia)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any plans to offer United Kingdom designed nuclear reactors to Czechoslovakia, under the enabling arrangements of articles III and IV of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, in support of Czechoslovakia's industrial and environmental plan to reduce dependence on fossil fuel-generated electricity.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend and I have no such plans.

Spent Nuclear Fuel (Sellafield)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make it his policy to deposit with the new European Environmental Agency full details of all contracts held by British Nuclear Fuels with foreign bodies for the reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel at Sellafield and to include details of all categories of radioactive waste arising.

Mr. Michael Spicer: It will be for the agency to request whatever information or analysis it requires to carry out the work programme approved by its management board in due course.

British Nuclear Fuels Ltd.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will set out his responsibilities in regard to the operation of the British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. Sellafield plant.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Responsibility for the operation of the Sellafield site rests with British Nuclear Fuels plc.

Uranium

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the total of processed uranium exported by the United Kingdom in each year since 1973-74 *(a)* in tonnes and *(b)* in value at constant prices; and what was the total of uranium imported by the United Kingdom in each year since 1973-74: *(a)* in tonnes and *(b)* in value at constant prices.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Since 1979, uranium ore concentrate containing over 10,000 tonnes of uranium, has been imported for use in the United Kingdom civil programme. During the same period, uranium ore concentrate containing over 30,000 tonnes of uranium, has been processed by British Nuclear Fuels plc on behalf of overseas customers for subsequent export. Annual figures could be given only at disproportionate cost. The value of this material is commercially confidential. All such uranium is subject to Euratom safeguards and to the terms of the United Kingdom-Euratom-International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards agreement.

Murton Colliery

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement concerning the future use of the 40-acre spoil tip at Murton colliery.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The use of land belonging to British Coal is a matter for its management to determine. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Collieries (Work Hours)

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what are the average hours worked by employees underground, and surface, at Murton, Dawdon, Easington and Vane Tempest collieries week by week in the current financial year.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for British Coal. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Privately-owned Mines

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many men are employed underground in privately-owned mines in the north-east.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for British Coal. I have asked the chairman of British Coal, the licensing authority for privately-owned mines, to write to the hon. Member.

Nuclear Electric plc

Mr. Eadie: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what will be the salaries of *(a)* the chairman and chief executive, *(b)* the deputy chairman with special responsibilities for production, *(c)* the director for corporate affairs and personnel, *(d)* the director of construction and future programmes, and *(e)* non-executive directors of the new company Nuclear Electric plc.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The designate board of Nuclear Electric have been appointed at the following salaries:

(i) The chairman is paid £125,000 per annum.

(ii) Full time members of the board are paid in the range £60,000-70,000 per annum.

Non-executive members of the Board have not yet been appointed.

Nuclear Power (Subsidies)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what discussions have recently taken place between officials from his Department and the European Commission on the implications of his plans to subsidise nuclear electricity in regard to European Community rules on energy marketing and competition policy.

Mr. Michael Spicer: A number of meetings have taken place with the Commission in recent months on a range of issues to do with electricity privatisation.

Energy Conservation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give for each region and for the United Kingdom as a whole, for every quarter and every full year since neighbourhood energy action schemes started, the number of *(a)* neighbourhood energy action schemes, *(b)* draught proofing jobs completed under national energy schemes, *(c)* loft insulation jobs completed under national energy schemes and *(d)* trainees under national energy schemes.

Mr. Wakeham: Figures in the detail sought by the hon. Member for neighbourhood energy action schemes in the United Kingdom are not available for the period requested. The following table gives the aggregated data that is available in respect of the calendar years to the end of 1988:

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Number of operating projects at year end	69	85	162	360	427	235
Number of draughtproofing jobs completed in year	[1]25,715	39,915	67,808	123,621	162,631	164,749
Number of participant workers/ trainees at year end	n/a	932	1,630	1,767	2,027	n/a

n/a—Not available.

[1] 1980-83 inclusive.

The number of loft insulation jobs completed under the homes insulation scheme is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give for the latest available quarter, and for the same quarter in the previous year, for each metropolitan county and each non-metropolitan county and Greater London, the number of *(a)* neighbourhood energy action schemes, *(b)* draughtproofing jobs completed under neighbourhood energy action schemes, *(c)* loft insulation jobs completed under neighbourhood energy action schemes and *(d)* trainees under neighbourhood energy action schemes.

Mr. Wakeham: Information on a county by county basis could only be made available at disproportionate cost. However, provisional information on a regional basis is available as follows in respect of community insulation projects co-ordinated by Neighbourhood Energy Action.

July to September 1989 (figures in brackets relate to July to September 1988)

	Number of schemes-projects	*Number of draught-proofing jobs completed*	*Number of loft insulation jobs completed*	*Number of trainees-participant workers*
East Midlands	28(35)	2,313(2,594)	10 (48)	271 (520)
London	12(33)	288 (497)	5 (40)	31 (610)
North East	18(26)	2,307(3,475)	48 (96)	253 (508)
North West	45(55)	5,005(6,350)	43 (44)	672(1,240)
Scotland	71(73)	8,455(3,559)	384(574)	755(1,122)
South East	23(48)	946(1,421)	26 (47)	121 (523)
South West	16(29)	802(2,049)	83(183)	190 (461)
Wales	35(46)	3,201(2,658)	64 (42)	338(1,001)
West Midlands	26(56)	2,458(4,393)	51(336)	314 (875)
Yorkshire and Humberside	24(36)	3,331(5,182)	76(180)	351 (724)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will place in the Library the official report on neighbourhood energy action schemes.

Mr. Wakeham: It is not entirely clear to what the question refers. However, it may refer to a recent report produced by Neighbourhood Energy Action for its own purposes entitled "Energy Efficiency and Employment Training—One Year On". That report is publicly available from NEA, which I have asked to send a copy to the hon. Member.

Pit Closures

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many pits have been closed since 1979; and what were the total estimated reserves in them at time of closure.

Mr. Michael Spicer: For a list of pit closures for the period concerned I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) on 29 November at cols *254-55*. I have asked the chairman of British Coal to write to the hon. Member about the total estimated reserves in the pits concerned.

Emissions

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) how many tonnes extra of carbon dioxide emissions will be produced by United Kingdom power stations, using the generating plant and capacity currently in place, by an average growth rate of 2·5 per cent. in gross domestic product in 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92;

(2) how many tonnes extra of sulphur dioxide emissions will be produced by United Kingdom power stations, using the generating plant and capacity currently in place, by an average growth rate of 2·5 per cent. in gross domestic product in 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92.

(3) what will be the growth in percentage terms of carbon dioxide emissions from United Kingdom power stations, using the generating plant and capacity currently in place, by an average growth rate of 2·5 per cent. in gross domestic product in 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92;

(4) what will be the growth, in percentage terms, of sulphur dioxide emissions from United Kingdom power stations, using the generating plant and capacity currently in place by an average growth rate of 2·5 per cent. in gross domestic product in 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Future levels of emissions will depend on the nature of the plant mix employed to meet the demand for electricity and the shape of the associated load curve. There is no straightforward link between growth in gross domestic product and electricity demand.

TRANSPORT

European Environmental Agency

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what categories of information he will exclude from deposition with the proposed European environmental agency.

Mr. Atkins: It will be for the agency to request information from member states. Until we have received such requests it is impossible to say whether we can meet them.

Railways

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what funds he intends to make available to British Rail to enable the recommendations arising from the Clapham disaster to be carried out on the east coast line.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Member to the reply to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) on 4 December at column 88. As my right hon. Friend has told the House, finance will not stand in the way of implementing the report.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list British Rail lines in Wales closed to passengers in each year since 1979; what discussions he has had with British Rail about the lines which could be reopened for the use of passenger services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: British Rail was given consent to close the Vale of Rheidol line last March. This railway is a narrow gauge steam railway which was operated principally for tourists. The line was sold to Brecon Mountain Railway Ltd. and has continued to operate to a similar timetable. No other BR line in Wales has been closed since 1979.

Vehicle Noise

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the average noise emitted by *(a)* a private car, and *(b)* a heavy goods vehicle proceeding at their respective national motorway speed limits; and by how much these increase as a result of infractions of the speed limit by (i) 10 mph and (ii) 20 mph respectively.

Mr. Atkins: Assuming a high speed road in good condition, the following are the estimated average noise levels received at a point 7·5 metres from the centre of the vehicle and 1·2 metres above the ground.

Vehicle type	*Average noise levels dB(A) at vehicle speeds*			
	60 mph	*70 mph*	*80 mph*	*90 mph*
Private car	83	85	87	89
Heavy goods	90	92	93	95

Coastguard Service

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his reply of 27 November, *Official Report,* column *82,* if he will list the primary, secondary and third 999 telephone routes to the south west coastguard from North Devon.

Mr. McLoughlin: The routing of 999 calls is a matter for British Telecom.

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his reply of 27 November, *Official Report,* column *82,* if he will cause inquiries to be made into whether the 999 call indicated as having been misrouted was made to Milford Haven because Swansea coastguard was not available or did not answer the original 999 call.

Mr. McLoughlin: British Telecom has already, at the request of Her Majesty's Coastguard carried out an investigation into the misrouted call. Its finding is that the call was routed to Milford Haven due to a technical fault on the Swansea line, the operator automatically re-routing the call in accordance with standard procedures.

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether, in circumstances when the primary coastguard is not available on a 999 call, the secondary station contacted has a firm procedure for reporting back to the primary station or takes control of the incident; and if he will make a statement with regard to the incident on 15 August in which a youth drowned in Rapperee cove, Ilfracombe.

Mr. McLoughlin: It is standard procedure within Her Majesty's Coastguard that any station receiving an indication of a distress situation, by whatever means the information is received, will, if the incident is not within its area of responsibility, pass the information by the most expedient means to the appropriate station for action. In the incident on 16 August, Milford Haven coastguard, having received a 999 telephone call indicating distress, not within its area, passed the information firstly by VHF radio, and subsequently by telex, to Swansea coastguard.

European Council

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether matters relating to road safety were discussed at the recent meeting of the European Council of Transport Ministers; and what conclusions were reached.

Mr. Portillo: At the meeting I made clear our continuing commitment to road safety and to effective methods of reducing casualties. The presidency concluded the discussion of road safety by asking the committee of permanent representatives to draw up a list of further proposals which the Council might pursue, such as the development of standards for fitting seat belts. We believe that there are real opportunities to cut road casualties by better and safer vehicle design.

Motoring Organisations

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many meetings he and his predecessor had over the last year with the British Road Federation and other motoring organisations.

Mr. Atkins: We have met various road user organisations on a number of occasions over the past 12 months to discuss matters of mutual interest.

A47, Leicestershire

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he proposes to establish a pedestrian crossing on the A47 Uppingham road at Thurnby, Leicestershire.

Mr. Atkins: The Department has decided to change the traffic signals at the junction of the A47 Uppingham road and Station road, Thurnby, to include pedestrian facilities.

The work will be carried out as soon as new control equipment can be manufactured, which is expected to take four to six months.

ENVIRONMENT

Housing Co-operatives

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his reply of 4 December concerning circular HC31/88, if he will relax the criteria for housing co-operatives, which at present are outside the scope of the criteria in the circular; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The Housing Corporation is prepared to apply the criteria in circulars HC 31/88 and HC 74/89 (which has just been issued) flexibly. If the hon. Member has a particular case in mind, he may like to take it up with the corporation direct.

Chemically Polluted Land

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the development of a national register for chemically polluted land.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We are reviewing possible registration systems but currently favour the concept of locally held registers of previous land uses which could have given rise to contamination.

Greenhouse Effect

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy at the next meeting of the European Environment Council to introduce policies to reduce the greenhouse effect by restricting road transport use to lower carbon dioxide releases.

Mr. Trippier: We recognise the important contribution which emissions of carbon dioxide from vehicles make to the greenhouse effect. At the Environment Council meeting on 28 November, my right hon. Friend urged the European Commission to bring forward proposals to reduce these emissions.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many tonnes of carbon dioxide have been released into the atmosphere of the United Kingdom in 1987, 1988 and 1989 *(a)* by electricity generating stations, and *(b)* by petrol and diesel-driven road vehicles.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Estimated carbon dioxide emission as carbon from selected sources in 1987 was as follows:

(Million tonnes)

	1987
Power stations	54·7
Petrol-driven road vehicles	19·0
Diesel-driven road vehicles	7·3
All sources	158·6

Figures for 1988 are currently being prepared and will be published in the Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics early next year. Figures for 1989 are not yet available.

Smoking Room (House of Commons)

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the cost of redecorating the Smoking Room in the summer recess; and why the redecoration has taken place.

Mr. Chope: The renovation of the Smoking Room was undertaken in two stages during the 1988 and 1989 summer recesses as part of the planned programme of work in the Palace of Westminster. The cost, which includes some electrical work, was £9,000.

Tritium

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what records he, or Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, has concerning the imports of radioactive tritium from Dall Ridge laboratories in the United States of America to the United Kingdom over the past year.

Mr. Trippier: This Department does not maintain records of tritium imports. Users of tritium must be registered by HMIP under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960. A condition of registration requires that proper records relating to the keeping and use of all radioactive material must be maintained. These records are subject to scrutiny by HMIP inspectors.

Bottle, Can and Paper Banks

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to ensure that supermarket chains co-operate with his recycling policy for bottle, can and paper banks.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Retail groups, including supermarket chains, are represented on the Government's advisory group on recycling which, among other things, considers ways of encouraging the provision of recycling facilities. They also co-operated in drawing up the Government's programme in relation to the 1985 European Directive on Containers of Liquids for Human Consumption which specifically referred to recycling.

Emissions

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the type and amount of toxic emissions *(a)* per mile, *(b)* per minute of transmission, and *(c)* per head of number of passengers per mile or per minute of (i) a family sized car, (ii) a diesel-electric train, (iii) a double decker bus, (iv) a milk float and (v) a bicycle.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere in the United Kingdom have been accounted for *(a)* by electricity generation, and *(b)* by petrol and diesel-driven road vehicles in 1987, 1988 and 1989.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Percentages of carbon dioxide emissions from selected sources in 1987 were as follows:

	1987
Power stations	34·0
Petrol driven road vehicles	12·0
Diesel driven road vehicles	5·0

In 1987 a little more than one third of carbon dioxide emissions in the United Kingdom came from power stations. Approximately 12 per cent. came from motor spirit and a further 5 per cent. from DERV. Figures for 1988 are currently being prepared and will be published in the Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics early next year. Figures for 1989 are not yet available.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of sulphur dioxide into the atmosphere in the United Kindom have been accounted for *(a)* by electricity generation, and *(b)* by petrol and diesel-driven road vehicles in 1987, 1988 and 1989.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Percentage of sulphur dioxide emissions from selected sources was as follows:

	1987
Power stations	73·0
Petrol driven road vehicles	0·2
Diesel driven road vehicles	1·0

Source: Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics, 1988.

In 1987 almost three-quarters of sulphur dioxide emissions in the United Kingdom came from power stations. Only a little more than 1 per cent. came from motor spirit and from DERV. Figures for 1988 are currently being prepared and will be published in the Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics early next year. Figures for 1989 are not yet available.

Housing (Handsworth)

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to issue guidelines to enable Birmingham city council to draw up a proposal for a housing renewal area in central Handsworth to enable a transfer from the existing housing action areas from 1 April 1990.

Mr. Chope: We shall shortly be consulting the local authority associations and other relevant bodies on the matters councils should consider before they declare renewal areas under part VII of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. We aim to issue advice as soon as possible after the consultation has finished, and in any event before the end of March next.

Leicester City Council

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much additional resources he is proposing to allocate to Leicester city council as part of its new green proposals.

Mr. Chope: Local authorities' revenue expenditure is supported generally by rate support grant, or, in future, revenue support grant. This grant is distributed between authorities on the basis of an assessment of the cost for each authority of providing a common level of service. This assessment will be made on the basis of a formula, using statistical indicators applied to all authorities. The grant is unhypothecated and is not paid in support of particular services. It is for each authority to decide its own expenditure priorities, including those on environmental matters.

Ports

Mr. Neil Hamilton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will act upon the recommendation made in the report of the working group on the water transport industry with regard to an early introduction to the statutory ports of conventional assessment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The Government recognise the desirability of providing a common basis for the rating assessment of all parts of the ports industry, and indeed for other industries. We hope to return, so far as practicable, all the formula rated industries to conventional assessment at the 1995 revaluation.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many tonnes of sulphur dioxide have been released into the atmosphere of the United Kingdom in 1987, 1988 and 1989 *(a)* by electricity generating stations and *(b)* by petrol and diesel-driven road vehicles.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Estimated sulphur dioxide emissions from selected sources in 1987 were as follows:

	1987
Power stations	2·830
Power driven road vehicles	0·009
Diesel driven road vehicles	0·037
All sources	3·867

In 1987 almost 3·9 million tonnes of sulphur dioxide were emitted in the United Kingdom. Approximately 2·8 million tonnes came from power stations and less than 50,000 tonnes came from motor vehicles. Figures for 1988 are currently being prepared and will be published in the Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics early next year. Figures for 1989 are not yet available.

Pollution

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had on the concept of making the polluter pay; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: It is an important and well established part of the Government's environmental protection policy that the polluter, not the polluted, should pay. The United Kingdom also subscribe to OECD and European Community recommendations and practice in this respect.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in reducing the pollution levels in the rivers Don and Rother.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 4 December 1989]:* Yorkshire Water is carrying out a major programme to upgrade and extend the main sewage treatment works which discharge into the rivers Don and Rother and to improve the sewerage system in Sheffield. This programme, combined with improvements to industrial effluent discharges is expected to improve river water quality by the mid 1990s.

The National Rivers Authority is responsible for monitoring river and estuarial quality, and for securing any improvements which they consider are needed to meet new statutory water quality objectives to be set by the Secretary of State.

Bradford West End

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the meetings between his officials and 3D's Ltd., regarding the Bradford West End scheme; and if he will make a statement summarising the discussions.

Mr. Moynihan: Members of the Department's team of professional appraisers and other officials have had many discussions on the proposals for the West End development, with representatives of 3D Ltd., and officials from the local authority, at both the regional office and headquarters. Details of the precise dates are not readily available.

Advice given to the developers and local authorities regarding any application for city grant is the standard guidance contained in the city grant guidance notes. For reasons of commercial confidentiality it is not our practice to comment on individual city grant proposals.

Environmental Health Officers

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the numbers of environmental health officers employed by local authorities; whether the resources needed to cover their full range of activities are included in settling the revenue support grant; if he will list the activities considered when deciding the revenue support grant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: In setting the level of revenue support grant my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will consider all services falling to be financed from the general revenues of local authorities. The full range of activities undertaken by environmental health officers is therefore included. It is for local authorities to decide how many officers to employ.

Nirex

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to meet officials from United Kingdom Nirex Limited before the end of the year to discuss present progress in seeking a suitable site for low and intermediate-level radioactive wastes.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no plans to meet representatives of Nirex.

Groundwork Foundation Trust

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 7 December, what funding will be given to the Groundwork Foundation Trust in Bradford in 1990-91 by *(a)* his Department, *(b)* the Countryside Commission and *(c)* the private sector.

Mr. Trippier: The Groundwork Foundation has allocated £40,000 in 1990-91 to the proposed Bradford Groundwork Trust from funds provided by my Department. As I informed the hon. Member in my reply yesterday, the preparation of a firm proposal for the trust is at present in hand. That proposal will be drawn up by a steering group composed of representatives of the local authority, voluntary organisations and private sector in consultation with, among others, my Department, the foundation and the Countryside Commission, and a programme of work and appropriate funding will then be determined.

London Pensions Fund

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will be making further appointments to the board of the London Pensions Fund.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has today appointed Councillor Steve Bullock of the London borough of Lewisham as a member of the board of the London Pensions Fund. This brings the membership of the board to nine. No further appointments are envisaged at this time.

Tenant Participation Grants

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress is being made on the introduction of a new regime for tenant participation grants, as recommended in the review of housing co-operatives; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The then Minister for Housing, the Earl of Caithness, announced on 27 June the Government's acceptance of the recommendation of the report of the committee which reviewed housing co-operatives in England, "Tenants in the Lead".

I have today issued a detailed consultation paper which sets out proposals for a new grant regime under section 16 of the Housing and Planning Act 1986. It proposes that, from April next year, local authority tenants will be able to receive assistance direct from the Department and from their council to develop housing co-operatives and other forms of tenant control considered in the review. The Housing Corporation is already consulting on its new grant arrangements for housing association tenants.

I am pleased to announce that £3·25 million will be available next year for tenant participation grants. Further provision will be made by the Housing Corporation for grants for tenant participation in the housing association sector. This major increase in resources demonstrates the Government's commitment to promote and develop new housing co-operatives and alternative forms of tenant participation.

Local Government Finance

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidelines he is issuing to local authorities regarding seamen who spend much of the year out of the United Kingdom and their requirement to pay the community charge.

Mr. Chope: Guidance on the treatment of Royal Navy personnel was contained in the community charge practice note No. 9 "UK Service Personnel". This was placed in the Library on 10 May 1989. This guidance suggests that married seagoers might be regarded as having their residence with their family except for continuous absences in excess of six months. Single seagoers who have no permanent home address will not be registered for the personal community charge except during periods of shore leave in excess of 61 days, where registration will be deemed to have begun from day 1. The Department issued further guidance which suggested that merchant seagoers might be treated in the same way as their naval counterparts. A copy of this guidance was placed in the Library on 26 October 1989.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list for each charging authority area, attributing grant income received by precepting authorities under the current grant system to each area in proportion to the adult population in that area: *(a)* the rate support grant payable for 1989-90 uprated to 1990-91 prices, in line with the assumptions used in his statement of 6 November and *(b)* the estimated amount of revenue support grant which would be payable in 1990-91 without safety nets or special grants, showing aggregates for each figure for each class of charging authority, for each region, showing inner London, outer London and the rest of the south-east separately, and for each county and metropolitan area;

(2) if he will list for each charging authority area, attributing grant income received by precepting authorities under the current grant system to each area in proportion to the aggregate of rateable values in that area: *(a)* the rate support grant payable for 1989-90 uprated to 1990-91 prices, in line with the assumptions used in his statement of 6 November and *(b)* the estimated amount of revenue support grant which will be payable in 1990-91 with safety nets and special grants, and *(c)* the estimated amount of revenue support grant which would be payable in 1990-91 without safety nets or special grants, showing aggregates for each figure for each class of charging authority, for each region, showing inner London, outer London and the rest of the south-east separately, and for each county and metropolitan area.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 7 December 1989]:* The information requested has been placed in the Library. The figures are consistent with the exemplifications in the consultation paper my right hon. Friend issued on 6 November. Net receipts from the London rate equalisation scheme have been included with rate support grant for 1989-90 which has been scaled to the proposed total for revenue support grant for 1990-91.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list for each charging authority area, attributing business rate income received by precepting authorities under the current system to each area in proportion to the adult population in each area: *(a)* the estimated revenue received in 1989-90 from the non-domestic rate uprated to 1990-91 prices, in line with the assumptions used in his statement of 6 November, and *(b)* the estimated amount which will be paid from the national non-domestic rating pool in 1990-91 to each area, showing aggregates for each figure for each class of charging authority, for each region, showing inner London, outer London and the rest of the south-east separately, and for each county and metropolitan area;

(2) if he will list for each charging authority area, attributing business rate income received by precepting authorities under the current system to each area in proportion to the aggregate of rateable values in that area: *(a)* the estimated revenue received in 1989-90 from the non-domestic rate uprated to 1990-91 prices in line with the assumptions used in his statement of 6 November, and *(b)* the estimated amount which will be paid from the national non-domestic rating pool in 1990-91 for each area showing aggregates for each figure for each class of charging authority, for each region, showing inner London, outer London and the rest of the south-east separately, and for each county and metropolitan area.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 7 December 1989]:* The information requested has been placed in the Library. The figures are consistent with the exemplifications in the consultation paper that my right hon. Friend issued on 6 November. Business rate income is shown for each area: it is not necessary to apportion it from precepting authority level to charging authority level. The total for 1989-90 has been scaled to the non-domestic distributable amount for 1990-91.

Property Services Agency

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the expenditure incurred on property *(a)* owned by the Property Services Agency and *(b)* tenanted by the Property Services Agency in each year since 1983 in Scotland; and what is the expected investment in each category in 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 8 December 1989]:* The expenditure by PSA on major projects on properties held in the name of the Secretary of State for the Environment cannot readily be split between Crown hold and leasehold and a single figure is given for each year. The split is provided below for expenditure by PSA on maintenance and minor new works.

	Major projects	*Minor new works and maintenance*	
		Crown hold	*Leasehold*
	£ million	*£ million*	*£ million*
1984-85	36·4	8·238	3·482
1985-86	30·1	9·166	3·358
1986-87	26·6	7·631	8·527
1987-88	22·0	10·070	3·723
1988-89	19·5	17·258	5·151

With the changed arrangements to be introduced next year, much of this expenditure will be funded by the occupying Departments from their own votes. It is not possible, therefore, to forecast future investment.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total staff complement of the Property Services Agency in Scotland; and what it is expected to be in 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 8 December 1989]:* The number of permanent non-industrial staff in post in the Property Services Agency in Scotland is 1,022. The staff numbes for later years will depend upon the business which PSA Scotland secures.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the value of the assets held by the Property Services Agency and the value of leased properties in Scotland in 1989.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 8 December 1989]:* The capital value of Crownhold properties in Scotland held in the name of the Secretary of State for the Environment, other than very specialised holdings such as museums and courts, is £155 million. The value of properties leased in the name of the Secretary of State for the Environment, is a matter for each owning landlord.

Gipsies

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about redefining the term gipsy as used in the Caravan Sites Act 1968; and what decisions he has reached on those representations.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 11 December 1989]:* Over the past year I have received representations from two local authorities, the County Landowners Association and a travellers' education project. At this stage, I have no proposals to introduce legislation to change the definition in the Act.

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will consider excluding New Age Travellers from alleged gipsy counts when considering applications by a local authority for designation status under the 1968 Act, as is practised in Wiltshire.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 11 December 1989]:* Questions of definitions under the Act are for local councils to decide. My role is to assess whether an authority has satisfied its duty to provide gipsy sites before I grant designation.

Local Government Finance

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the likely grants, targets and level of the community charge in 1990-91 as levied by Suffolk county council.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 11 December 1989]:* From April 1990 revenue support grant will be paid to charging authorities (the district councils in Suffolk). who will also set community charges. The expenditure of county councils will be financed by precepts on the collection fund administered by those charging authorities. Suffolk county council will therefore receive no revenue support grant nor will it set a community charge.

On present proposals, Suffolk county council will have a standard spending assessment for 1990-91 of £294·176 million, about £15·35 million or 5½ per cent. above its equivalent grant related expenditure for 1989-90.

No targets will be set for any local authority.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what amount of block grant was paid in each of the years from 1980-81 to 1989-90 expressed in cash terms and in constant 1989-90 prices for *(a)* each London borough, *(b)* each metropolitan district, *(c)* Inner London education authority, *(d)* former metropolitan counties and the Greater London council up to 1985-86, *(e)* each non-metropolitan county, *(f)* each non-metropolitan district and *(g)* each metropolitan joint board showing in each year the total paid to the respective classes of authority.

Mr. David Hunt: I have today placed this information in the Library.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Public Appointments

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Attorney-General how many persons above the age of *(a)* 60, *(b)* 65 and *(c)* 70 years he has appointed to public bodies in each of the last 10 years.

The Attorney-General: None.

Official Solicitor

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Attorney-General (1) how contractors were obtained, and how many tender prices were received, for recent work carried out at the home of Mr. Freddie Andrews (1976 No. 516);

(2) whether any independent inspection of completed works authorised by the office of the Official Solicitor has taken place; and whether the work was carried out satisfactorily.

The Attorney-General: As I said in an earlier reply to the hon. Member for Antrim, East, (Mr. Beggs), *Official Report* 23 February 1988, column *258*, it is not appropriate to publish details of the affairs of any patient without the leave of the court.

An application may be made to the court by any person concerned about a particular case for disclosure of any information in respect of which the applicant can demonstrate a legitimate interest.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Rate Reform

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what arrangements he is making to enable full-time students to pay the community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: Arrangements made by local authorities to collect the community charge are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. I understand that local authorities have been given guidance on the procedures for ensuring that students are included in the community charge register for the area in which they reside while they are studying.

Full-time students, as defined by the relevant legislation, will be liable for only 20 per cent. of the community charge in their area, and the net impact of this discounted liability is among the factors considered when mandatory student grant rates are decided.

Civil Scientific Research

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of Britain's gross domestic product was devoted to civil scientific research *(a)* in 1978-79 and *(b)* 1988-89.

Mr. Jackson: This information is not available in the form requested since details of spending by industry on civil scientific research are not collected centrally. In 1988-89 public expenditure on civil research and development was estimated to be 0·52 per cent. of gross domestic product compared with about 0·6 per cent. in 1978-79.

Child Abuse

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many education authorities have specifically run courses to teach children about child abuse.

Mr. Alan Howarth: This information is not centrally available.

Teachers' Pay

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science by how much teachers' pay will have increased less than inflation at the present rate of inflation during the period of time the interim advisory committee has been in existence by March 1990.

Mrs. Rumbold: Teachers' pay rose by some 12·5 per cent. between October 1987 and April 1989, the date of the last teachers' pay settlement. As compared with the movement of the RPI over the same period, this represents a real-terms increase of some 1·5 per cent.

The interim advisory committee has been asked to advise on what pay increase should be awarded to teachers for the 12 months beginning April 1990.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much a teacher at the top of the main professional grade will be worse off against the present rate of inflation by March 1990.

Mrs. Rumbold: A teacher at the top of the main scale outside London without an incentive allowance currently earns £14,694. Retail price inflation stood at 7·3 per cent. in October but is expected to fall during next year.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much a teacher's pay on the top of the main professional grade with an allowance has increased during the period that the interim advisory committee has existed; and by how much it is below or above the increase in average earnings over the same period.

Mrs. Rumbold: The first incentive allowances were awarded in October 1987. A teacher at the top of the main scale outside London who has held the same incentive allowance since October 1987 would have seen his pay rise by between 11 per cent. and 13 per cent. by April 1989. A teacher who received one of the 70,000 additional allowances coming on stream in 1988 and 1989 would have seen his salary increase by at least 17 per cent. Average earnings increased by 14·2 per cent. between October 1987 and April 1989.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what factors were used to determine the £600 million level of constraint placed on the interim advisory committee in the current year; and what projected rate of inflation is included in the figure.

Mrs. Rumbold: The IAC's remit reflects the Government's view that teachers' pay should be sufficient to recruit, retain and motivate sufficient teachers of the right quality within what the nation can afford.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the level of constraint on the interim advisory committee in 1988 and 1989 in terms of a percentage rise against those years, inflation rates giving the actual percentage rise for each year and basing the 1989 inflation rate on the present figure.

Mrs. Rumbold: The remits given to the interim advisory committee for the teachers' pay settlements in 1988 and 1989 were £300 million and £385 million respectively. The IAC's recommendations led to increases to the pay bill of 4·75 per cent. in 1988-89 and 6·3 per cent. in 1989-90. When changes already planned are taken into account, the overall pay bill will rise by 7·5 per cent. this year. Retail price inflation stood at 3·9 per cent. in April 1988 and 8 per cent. in April 1989.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will increase the teaching profession's main pay scale to a level that will restore teachers' pay to a competitive position in a graduate labour market.

Mrs. Rumbold: The interim advisory committee has been asked to recommend what general pay increase should be given to teachers in England and Wales, having regard to the Government's view that school teachers' pay should be such as to enable the maintained school system to recruit, retain and motivate sufficient teachers of the required quality within what can be afforded.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what measures are to be taken to secure the position of the common main scale as the central feature of the teachers' pay structure.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend is considering what new pay determination arrangements should be put in place. It is likely that the pay structure resulting from these arrangements will continue to be given statutory force.

National Curriculum

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what he intends to do to ensure that teachers in all schools have time during the school day away from the classroom to deal with the additional duties attributed to the national curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: The organisation of the school day and the duties to be undertaken by teachers in their 1,265 hours of directed time are matters for head teachers. Not all directed time is taken up with contact with pupils in the classroom. There is scope for teachers to spend time on other tasks such as preparing for the national curriculum.

Teachers

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many trained teachers who have left the teaching profession the Government estimate can be persuaded to return to the profession.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The recruitment of qualified teachers returning to the profession has increased steadily in recent years. If the local authority employers support and encourage them, we believe that more will return. Almost 90 per cent. of re-entrants are women and over three quarters of these are aged 30 to 44. In 1986 there were an estimated 191,000 qualified teachers in this group not in full-time service in the maintained sector in England and Wales. We are considering how we might undertake a sample survey of qualified teachers not in service to establish what proportion might return to teaching and what conditions in the teaching profession would encourage more to return.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if a collegiate approach is to be adopted for the teacher staffing structure in schools.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Decisions about staffing structure in maintained schools are matters for LEAs and school governors, and not for my right hon. Friend.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will direct the interim advisory committee on school teachers' pay and conditions to investigate the organisation and management of schools to include a full assessment of the role of the classroom teacher, the role of heads and deputies and the existence of other specific management reponsibilities.

Mrs. Rumbold: The interim advisory committee has been asked to advise on what changes should be made to teachers' pay and conditions in the year beginning 1 April 1990. In so doing it will be considering the evidence that it has received on a wide range of issues.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what arrangements have been made to promote part-time teaching, job-sharing and managed career break arrangements for women returners to the teaching profession.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The Government agree that every effort must be made to encourage former teachers to return to the profession. "Guidelines for Recruitment", published by the teaching as a career (TASC) unit in May 1988, drew to the attention of LEAs the need for such arrangements to attract qualified women returners to the teaching profession. Education support grant for 1990-92 will support the efforts of a number of LEAs in developing such provision.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his estimate of the number of extra teachers needed to supplement existing numbers excluding current vacancies to meet the additional teaching requirements generated by the new national curriculum in *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The implementation of the national curriculum in England and Wales does not imply increased demand for teachers, although it will change the balance of subject specialism. We are supporting in-service training to provide teachers with the additional support they need to ensure delivery of the national curriculum. The Department's memorandum on teacher supply to the Education, Science and Arts Select Committee—a copy of which is in the Library—analyses teacher demand and supply assuming full implementation of the national curriculum.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what means the Government will employ to persuade trained teachers to re-enter the teaching profession.

Mr. Alan Howarth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Members for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) and Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) on 14 November *(Official Report,* column *228).*

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what measures are to be taken to attract sufficient numbers of qualified teachers to fill existing vacancies in British schools.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The recruitment of teachers to specific vacancies is a matter for local education officers, not for my right hon. Friend. The teaching as a career unit (TASC) advises LEAs in England and Wales on recruitment measures. TASC is also involved in publicity to attract qualified teachers back to teaching. The education support grant programme in 1990-91 will support LEA expenditure on local recruitment measures to attract back former teachers and recruit mature entrants with relevant qualifications. Measures eligible for ESG support include "keeping in touch with teaching" schemes and refresher courses, as well as job-share, part-time working and childcare provision.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to ensure that there are sufficient teachers to teach the national curriculum.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. Friend is taking the requirements of the national curriculum fully into account in setting the intakes to initial teacher training, in revising the criteria for initial teacher training courses, in planning the LEA in-service training grants scheme and education support grants and in managing the range of measures being taken on teacher supply.

Incentive Allowances

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many vacancies in teacher-shortage subject areas have been filled by the announcement of the incentive allowance system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Incentive allowances were introduced in October 1987. They may be awarded to teachers who teach subjects in which there is a shortage of teachers, or who are employed in posts which are difficult to fill. There is evidence that an increasing number of allowances is being awarded on these grounds, but it is impossible to estimate how many teacher vacancies would not otherwise have been filled.

Licensed Teachers

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if qualified professional teachers will be paid extra money for providing support and back-up for licensed teachers.

Mrs. Rumbold: It will be for local education authorities to consider whether to exercise for this purpose any of the discretions available to them under the school teachers' pay and conditions document.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what support and back-up will be provided for licensed teachers; and what provision will be made for the help, advice and time of qualified, professional teachers.

Mr. Alan Howarth: It is for the local education authority and school governing body to ensure that appropriate support and training are provided for licensed teachers and that qualified staff are available to offer advice and guidance.

Training and associated costs for licensed teachers, including the provision of supply cover for a mentor teacher, are eligible for grant support under the local education authority training grants scheme.

Support Services

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what measures are being taken to provide increased administrative, technical and ancillary support in British schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend recognises the importance of administrative, technical and ancillary support for the effective running of schools. In England, some activities in the 1989-90 and 1989-91 education support grant programmes—notably some relating to local management of schools (LMS) and the national curriculum—will provide specific grants which can be used to improve such support. Otherwise, it is for local education authorities and, under LMS, their schools to decide for themselves what proportion of available funding to devote to such support. The education standard spending total within the proposed local authority grant settlement for England in 1990-91 allows for priority to be given to such spending, relative to the levels of spending assumed in the comparable total for 1989-90.

Teacher Training

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what measures have been taken to enhance appropriate in-service training for teachers in British schools.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The main instrument of support for in-service training in England and Wales is the local education authority training grants scheme which was introduced in April 1987. In the current financial year it will support LEA expenditure of over £227 million with grant of over £131 million. LEAs and schools are also expected to use at least three of the five non-contact days for in-service training. In addition, two further non-contact days have been made available in 1989 specifically for national curriculum-related training. It is for LEAs to determine appropriate training based on a systematic identification of the training needs of all groups eligible under the scheme.

The position in Scotland and Northern Ireland is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Flexible Pay Schemes

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many local schemes of flexible pay equal to 1 per cent. of the salary bill, resulting from the latest pay settlement for non-clinical academic and academic-related staff in the universities have been approved for funding by the Universities Funding Council; how many have been rejected, and for what reasons; and how many such schemes which have so far been approved have included *(a)* specific elements for improved recruitment and *(b)* earmarked money for specific academic departments.

Mr. MacGregor: I understand that, as at 5 December, the council had approved 39 schemes. At that date, the council had not yet approved six other schemes: five because insufficient detail was available and one because too high a proportion of the institution's professors would have received payments. Eleven of the approved schemes included specific elements for improved recruitment. The earmarking of money for specific departments does not have to be notified to the council.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list (1) the proportion of the total money so far approved for local schemes of flexible pay equal to 1 per cent. of the salary total to be spent on *(a)* promotion of staff to a higher scale, *(b)* accelerating individuals up their scale, and *(c)* moving individuals to discretionary salary points beyond the normal scale maximum, and (2) the proportion of the total money so far approved for such schemes which is to be spent on (i) professional staff, (ii) senior lecturers and readers, (iii) lecturers, (iv) others, and (v) women staff.

Mr. MacGregor: I understand from the Universities Funding Council that, because of the way in which some universities have submitted details of their schemes, the information is not available in the form requested. Of the total to be spent, the division is as follows:

29 per cent. is for increases in professors' salaries;

33 per cent. is for moving senior lecturers, readers and

lecturers to discretionary salary points beyond the normal scale maxima;
14 per cent. is for accelerating senior lecturers, readers and lecturers up their scales;
4 per cent. is for promotions of academic staff;
14 per cent. is for discretionary scale points or accelerated increments for academic-related staff;
1 per cent. is for promotion of academic-related staff;
5 per cent. is for other purposes such as recruitment incentives.

Data are not collected separately for male and female staff.

Physical Education

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to establish the working party for physical education and the national curriculum; and when he expects it to report.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend hopes to make an announcement shortly about the timetable and arrangements for considering physical education within the national curriculum.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to increase the number of places for those waiting to train as physical education teachers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. Friend announced aggregate intake numbers for initial teacher training for 1990-91 earlier this year. For the three-year period 1991-92 to 1993-94 a major planning exercise is taking place. Aggregate intake numbers for these years will be announced next year and will take account of our latest projections of teacher supply and demand.

Child Care Facilities

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to assist local education authorities in developing child care facilities for teachers; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Our proposed education support grant programme for 1990-91 includes support for expenditure of over £2 million on local recruitment measures to attract back more former teachers and to recruit mature entrants. The invitation to bid made it clear that it is for each LEA to develop its own recruitment model, but suggested that models might include the establishment of supporting and flexible working practices together with child care provision. In addition, I have encouraged local education authorities and school governors to respond to requests for the after-hours use of schools for child care.

City Technology Colleges

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether it is now his policy to develop a city technology college in each local education authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: It is a key aim of the CTC programme that the colleges should make a major contribution to the development of higher standards in all schools. Within the last week my right hon. Friend has announced funding for curriculum development work to support the colleges' contribution to higher standards across the education system as a whole. He is also considering a number of other ways in which the lessons of CTCs could be made more widely available.

National Curriculum

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much money has been earmarked to assist schools in the introduction of the national curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: Earmarked expenditure by local authorities to assist schools in introducing the national curriculum is supported at national level through specific grants. This financial year education support grants and the LEA training grants scheme will support some £100 million expenditure for that purpose. Otherwise, it is for each local education authority to determine how to deploy the total resources available to it to meet the requirements of the national curriculum.

Student Numbers

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the numbers of *(a)* university first-degree full-time students, *(b)* polytechnic and other higher education first-degree full-time students, *(c)* part-time university students, *(d)* part-time polytechnic and other higher education students, and *(e)* full-time postgraduate students, with *(c)* and *(d)* expressed in actual numbers and full-time equivalents, in each year since 1979.

Mr. Jackson: The information requested is shown in the following table.

Higher Education students in Great Britain

Thousands

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Full-time first degree students[1]									
University	245·1	251·2	253·4	250·0	244·2	241·7	242·9	246·4	250·7
Polytechnics/Colleges	204·3	208·2	227·8	245·9	261·2	270·1	274·7	280·5	288·1
Part-time first and higher degree students[1]									
University[2]	99·6	99·7	104·2	108·1	110·9	113·4	115·8	120·5	126·5
FTE[3]	34·9	34·9	36·5	37·8	38·8	39·7	40·5	42·2	44·3
Polytechnics/Colleges	168·1	181·1	185·8	188·5	195·3	195·1	210·0	228·4	232·7
FTE[3]	58·8	63·4	65·0	66·0	68·3	68·3	73·5	80·0	81·5
Full-time students									
Postgraduate	60·7	61·0	60·3	57·1	59·6	61·5	65·9	69·1	69·9

[1]—Including sub-degree.

[2]—Including Open University.

[3]—Full-time equivalent (FTE): Conversion factors vary in the different sectors and for different levels of course. An illustrative average of 35 per cent. has been used for all part-time students.

Source: Statistical Bulletin 4/89 "Student Numbers in higher education in Great Britain" published March 1989.

Professional Qualifications

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions there have been between his Department and *(a)* representatives of the academic world, *(b)* representatives of careers officers and *(c)* the student movement regarding the recognition of professional qualifications between member states of the European Economic Community; and what further action he will take between now and January 1991 on (i) raising awareness, (ii) consultation and (iii) resourcing.

Mr. Jackson: There have been no discussions with the groups mentioned. Responsibility for co-ordinating action on the implementation of the general directive on the mutual recognition of professional qualifications rests with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. The Department of Education and Science's responsibilities extend only to the mutual recognition of teachers' qualifications and any wider implications of the directive for higher education. In this connection the Department has issued and will as necessary continue to issue a series of briefing notes on the directive to a range of teacher and other interests directly involved.

Student Exchanges

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions there have been between his Department and *(a)* the University Funding Council, *(b)* the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals and *(c)* the National Union of Students on the subject of student exchanges in western Europe after 1992.

Mr. Jackson: There have been no discussions with the three bodies mentioned on the specific question of student exchanges after 1992. However, the Department maintains frequent contact with the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals on a range of related issues, including the future development of the Erasmus programme.

SCOTLAND

Sheriffs

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many new *(a)* full-time sheriffs, *(b)* temporary sheriffs and *(c)* floating sheriffs were appointed in each of the years 1987 and 1988 and to date in 1989.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is set out in the table:

	1987	*1988*	*1989*[1]
Full-time sheriffs	2	4	3
Temporary sheriffs	30	33	nil
Floating sheriffs	1	1	nil

[1] To 8 December

Trials

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has regarding the number of summary trials in Scotland which were adjourned owing to pressure of business on the trial date between 1 January and 31 October.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In over 90 per cent. of the sheriff courts in Scotland the number of summary criminal trials adjourned due to lack of court time did not exceed 5 per cent. of the total number of trials set down in the period from 1 January 1989 to 30 September 1989. The figure for October is not available.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total number of sheriffs as at 30 November 1989 and 30 November 1987.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is set out in the table:

	1987	*1989*
Sheriff posts as at 30 November		
Full-time sheriffs	[1]91	[1]95
Temporary sheriffs	83	100

[1] This includes 1 sheriff seconded to the Scottish Law Commission, and 1 sheriff seconded to the Lands Tribunal for Scotland.

Parliament House

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the estimated cost of the Cowgate extension of Parliament house; what proportion of the space provided is for courts; and what proportion is accommodation and offices for officials.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The estimated cost of the Cowgate extension is approximately £14 million. The extension, which has been designed to facilitate the more effective use of accommodation in Parliament house and to make provision there for work of the supreme courts which at present is undertaken in out-housed accommodation, will provide court accommodation (11 per cent.), office accommodation for officials of the supreme courts (44 per cent.), and general services and ancillary accommodation (45 per cent.).

Water

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is considering bringing in any statutory procedures regarding disconnection for non-payment of water rates, by either a private or public authority.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We have no proposals to introduce legislation regarding disconnection for non payment for public water supplies. Where water is supplied privately, arrangements depend upon the agreement between the parties concerned and are not subject to statute.

Forestry

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on progress on forestry and farm woodland planting in 1989 over 1988.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Tree planting statistics for the private sector are normally collected and published by the Forestry Commission on the basis of grants paid in each financial year. For the financial years to 31 March 1988 and 31 March 1989, the areas of new planting so recorded were 23,821 hectares and 25,108 hectares respectively, including in the last year 126 hectares planted in association with the farm woodland scheme. In the first six months of the current financial year the figure was 11,992 hectares (including 1,681 hectares under the farm woodland scheme). By comparison, the area of new planting grant-aided in the first full planting season since the forestry tax changes introduced in the 1988 Budget, covering the year to 30 September 1989, was 15,293 hectares; included in that total were 1,825 hectares planted in association with the farm woodland scheme.

Expenditure

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide a detailed analysis of Scottish Office expenditure since 1984-85, using the new definition of the planning total compatible with the tables for the years 1990-91 to 1992-93, *Official Report,* 6 December, column *329-30.*

Mr. Rifkind: Details of expenditure on the new planning total basis for the period prior to 1989-90 will be provided in the Public Expenditure White Paper which will be published next month.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* tables listing his Department's expenditure since 1984-85 *(a)* in cash terms, *(b)* in constant 1988-89 prices and *(c)* as a percentage of the United Kingdom planning total; and if he will publish similar tables for the years 1990-91 to 1992-93 based on the public expenditure plans contained in the Autumn Statement.

Mr. Rifkind: Details of expenditure on the new planning total basis for the period prior to 1989-90 will be provided in the Public Expenditure White Paper which will be published next month. The table below shows the information requested for the period covered by my statement last week (*Official Report,* 6 December, column *328-30.*). The Comparison requested does not take account of expenditure in Scotland on services such as social security and defence, which are not included in my responsibilities.

	(a) *Cash* *£ million*	*(b)* *Constant prices* *£ million*	*(c)* [1]
1989-90 (estimated outturn)	9,051	8,459	5·60
1990-91 (plans)	9,576	8,523	5·35
1991-92 (plans)	10,090	8,677	5·25
1992-93 (plans)	10,400	8,683	5·11

[1] (a) as a percentage of the United Kingdom planning total

Factory Space

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on available factory space in Scotland for the years 1987 to 1989, including the total square footage of factory space built and available, the number of units this represents, indications of the size ranges and the respective numbers of each, indications of the respective location of such space and indications as to the public-private balance of the development and ownership of these units.

Mr. Lang: There is no information available on private owned factories. The latest available figures on public owned factories relate to 1988.

Available factory space in Scotland

Region	*1987* *Number of units*	*1987* *Available space thousand sq. metres*	*1988* *Number of units*	*1988* *Available space thousand sq. metres*
Borders	20	1·8	16	1·3
Central	79	27·9	58	25·9
Dumfries and Galloway	33	1,005·3	22	5,002·0
Fife	69	67·9	69	53·2
Grampian	38	18·1	70	23·7
Highland	28	4·1	21	2·7
Lothian	39	20·3	39	23·5
Strathclyde	640	22,483·2	592	2,334·3
Tayside	59	22·0	67	12·3
Islands	—	—	1	0·2
Not known	1	0·0	49	23·1
TOTAL	1,006	23,650·5	1,004	7,502·0

Number of available factories by floor space size band in Scotland
Floor space range (square metres)

1987

Region	*0-249*	*250-499*	*500-2,499*	*2,500 and over*
Borders	19	1	—	—
Central	44	23	12	—
Dumfries and Galloway	27	4	1	—

Region	*0-249*	*250-499*	*500-2,499*	*2,500 and over*
Fife	34	7	19	9
Grampian	28	4	4	2
Highland	24	3	1	—
Lothian	17	12	8	2
Strathclyde	291	94	201	32
Tayside	48	6	2	3
Not known	1	—	—	—
Total	533	154	248	48

Number of available factories by floor space size band in Scotland
Floor space range (square metres)

1988

Region	*0-249*	*250-499*	*500-2,499*	*2,500 and over*
Borders	14	2	—	—
Central	23	23	11	1
Dumfries and Galloway	14	3	—	—
Fife	40	5	18	6
Grampian	60	4	4	2
Highland	18	3	—	—
Lothian	15	12	10	2
Strathclyde	337	73	163	17
Tayside	57	6	4	—
Islands	1	—	—	—
Not known	30	9	7	3
Total	609	140	217	31

Shellfish Waters

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any proposals to assist regional and islands councils in Scotland to improve their sewage and sewerage discharge systems in order to meet requirements of the European Community directive on shellfish waters.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 11 December 1989]:* Monitoring of waters designated under the European Community Directive on the Quality Required of Shellfish Waters is the responsibility of the river purification authorities. Where such waters fail to meet the standards of the directive, regional and islands councils, as sewerage authorities, may in some circumstances be required to carry out improvement works.

My right hon. and learned Friend announced to the House on 6 December a major increase in investment in Scotland over the next three years. The additional resources announced will mean a programme of £500 million over these years for water and sewerage services. This will allow regional and islands councils, who decide their own priorities in the light of local needs, to make faster progress in further improving the quality of the environment including inshore waters.

Scottish Bus Group

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has decided on the timetable for the sale of the Clydeside and Western subsidiaries of the Scottish Bus Group; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 11 December 1989]:* My right hon. and learned Friend will shortly be publishing a disposal programme which will set out the basis on which the subsidiaries of the Scottish Bus Group will be sold. The first companies are expected to be advertised for sale around the beginning of 1990. It is not, however, possible at this stage to say when Western Scottish Omnibuses Ltd. will be offered for sale.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

C[illegible]bodia

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will take steps to withdraw any direct or indirect help in support of the Cambodian alliance led by the Khmer Rouge.

Mr. Sainsbury: I have nothing to add to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) on 8 November.

El Salvador

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made *(a)* to the El Salvador Government about the impeding of humanitarian work in that country by the army, and *(b)* to the United States President about the role the United States of America could play in helping to bring about a just settlement to the civil war in El Salvador.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 30 November to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton). The United States and Salvadorean Governments are aware of our views.

Vietnamese Boat People

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what funds the Government are making available this financial year towards the cost of accommodation for, and repatriation of, Vietnamese boat people in Hong Kong.

Mr. Maude: We have provided £15·95 million for this purpose. Parliamentary approval for this new service is being sought in the Winter Supplementary Estimate for the vote for other external relations (Class II, Vote 2) which covers expenditure of £5·8 million for Vietnamese boat people. A further £10·15 million will be sought in a spring Supplementary Estimate. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure will be met by further repayable advances of £10·15 million from the contingencies fund.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Excise Duty

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what reduction in the excise duties on beers, wines and spirits would be required to achieve reductions of 0·5 per cent., 0·75 per cent. and 1·0 per cent., respectively, in the retail price index.

Mr. Ryder: It it estimated that the required, across the board, reductions in excise duties on beer, wines and spirits would be as follows:

[1] *Per cent.*	[2] *Per cent.*
0·5	22
0·75	34
1·0	45

[1] Percentage fall in the retail price index

[2] Percentage reduction in excise duty on beer, wines and spirits

Civil Service Recruitment

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what factors he considers when recruiting for the Civil Service outside London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: It is for Departments to judge when and where to recruit staff, in what numbers and at what grades.

Gross Domestic Product

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the value of the gross domestic product per head of the population for each member state of the EEC.

Mr. Ryder: Following is the information requested:

GDP/GNP per capita at purchasing power parities 1988

	US dollars
United Kingdom	13,301
Luxembourg	15,758
Germany	14,185
France	13,670
Denmark	13,593
Italy	12,991
Netherlands	12,971
Belgium	12,750
Spain	9,372
Ireland	7,868
Greece	6,850
Portugal	6,439

Source: OECD

Benefits and Allowances

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will now give confirmed figures for April 1989, showing the rates of child benefit, single person's and married man's tax allowances at 1979 prices, on the same basis as given on 4 April, *Official Report*, column *4*.

Mr. Lilley: The information is in the table.

Rates of Child Benefit as at April 1989

Benefits	*Amount*
Child benefit (£ per week per child)	
Current prices	7·25
1979 prices[1]	3·44
Single person's tax allowance (£ per annum)	
Current prices	2,785
1979 prices[1]	1,322
Married man's tax allowance (£ per annum)	
Current prices	4,375
1979 prices[1]	2,077

[1] Figures converted to 1979 prices using the movement in the RPI between April 1979 and April 1989

Company Cars

Dr. Marek: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give details of the method of computation of the fixed profit car scheme whereby the Inland Revenue calculates the maximum amount of non-taxable benefit employees may receive from their employers for using their cars on their employer's business.

Mr. Lilley: Under the fixed profit car scheme arrangements the Revenue calculates the taxable element of any mileage allowance payable by employers to employees using their own cars on business. The taxable amount is fixed by reference to mileage bands by deducting tax-free mileage rates for various car engine sizes from allowances paid by the employer.

Corporation Tax

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the amount of corporation tax forgone in each of the next five financial years assuming the profit forecasts for the water companies are as set down in listing agreement relating to each of the water holding companies as a result of section 95(8) of the Water Act 1989 precluding the operation of section 400 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 in certain circumstances.

Mr. Lilley: The water companies' tax liabilities over the next five years will depend on their taxable profits during that period. In accordance with normal practice, no estimates of these amounts were included in the prospectus and listing particulars dated 22 November 1989, a copy of which was placed in the Library by my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Water. The disapplication of section 400 was designed to secure maximum flexibility for the Government in establishing the water companies' capital structures and hence to increase proceeds.

Civil Servants' Disturbance Allowance

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what level of disturbance allowance is currently payable to civil servants required to move house for reasons of their employment.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 11 December 1988]:* There is no disturbance allowance payable to civil servants required to move house for reasons of their employment. However, civil servants may be eligible for a range of allowances and other forms of assistance to reimburse expenses and additional costs incurred. The level of assistance is dependent on individual circumstances.

WALES

Rural Areas

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the criteria by which his department assesses the desirability of influencing the extent of inward migration into rural Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: No such criteria are applied. Government policies are directed towards the establishment of economically viable communities within rural areas. Such policies are of substantial benefit in maintaining the fabric of these communities by sustaining local economies and creating jobs for the indigenous population, who might otherwise move away. The creation of new industries may of course require some skills which are not generally available within a particular locality.

Drugs

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on his Department's assessment of the drug crack as it might affect Wales; and if he will increase his financial support of the voluntary agencies who are involved in Wales in the fight against drug abuse.

Mr. Grist: To date there have been no seizures of the drug in Wales but we should not be complacent. The Department, in conjunction with the Welsh committee on drug misuse in Wales, will continue to monitor the situation most carefully.

As to financial support, since the launch of the central initiative to combat drug misuse in Wales in 1986, this Government have made available annually increasing sums to help develop services—both statutory and voluntary—for drug misusers.

The provision for 1990-91 will be announced soon.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on his Department's work concerning drug abuse in Wales.

Mr. Grist: The Welsh Office is involved in the campaign to combat drug misuse in a number of ways. At the all-Wales level, the Department services, and is advised by, the Welsh committee on drug misuse (WCDM). Set up in 1986 to concern itself with the development of preventative measures, treatment, and rehabilitation services in response to the growing menace of drug misuse in Wales, WCDM has been particularly active. As well as meeting with all drug advisory committees in Wales, WCDM has produced advice and guidance on a number of issues.

Since the launch of the central initiative to combat drug misuse in Wales, the Department has made available annually increasing funds to help develop local services—whether statutory or voluntary—for drug misusers. Around £1·5 million is available in 1989-90.

While national publicity campaigns are adapted for use in Wales, the Department is currently developing a specific primary prevention programme in association with WCDM and the health promotion authority for Wales. Preventive education in schools is also most important. The Department supports activities to promote health education under education support grant and recognises measures to prevent drug misuse as a national priority for the local education authority training grants scheme.

Finally, there are clear links between drug misusers and AIDS and it is for that reason that the Department is making available some £180,000 in 1989-90 to facilitate the development of needle and syringe exchange schemes in Wales. These schemes are to be piloted over two years.

Bistre Nursery School

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet Buckley Town Council to discuss the future use of Bistre nursery school consequent upon the closure in 1990 of nursery school facilities in that building; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: This is a matter for resolution locally.

Home Renovation Grants

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the likely expenditure by local authorities on mandatory home renovation grants in 1990-91 in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: In view of the uncertainties of forecasting demand and the likely take-up of the new scheme, [illegible] set no limit on the amount which local authorities can spend on mandatory home renovation grants next year.

Expenditure plans for local authority capital spending in 1990-91 currently include £75 million to cover expenditure on mandatory home renovation grants, together with any improvement grants remaining to be paid under the existing grant system. If in the event demand exceeds that level, additional resources will be made available.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of jobs created by the use of mandatory home renovation grants in Wales in 1989-90 and 1990-91; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: No firm estimates have been made although I am sure that the benefits to the private sector will be considerable.

Housing (Capital Investment)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, if he will list by local authority in cash and 1988-89 prices local authority housing capital investment on *(a)* new building, *(b)* renovation of local authority dwellings, *(c)* renovation grants, and *(d)* other housing capital programmes for (i) each financial year since 1979-80 and (ii) planned capital investment for 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is voluminous. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman to provide tables for each year between 1981-82 and 1989-90 and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House. Similar data for 1979-80 and 1980-81 will require additional clerical, as opposed to computer, analysis and I will provide these statistics as soon as possible thereafter.

For 1990-91, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced housing capital distribution for individual local authorities on 29 November 1989. The distribution is not hypothecated to individual housing services and it is for local authorities themselves to formulate their spending plans within the total resources available to them. For 1991-92 and 1992-93, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced only the Department's total local authority housing expenditure plans. Due to changes in the capital control system for 1990-91 onwards these figures are not directly comparable with those shown in the following tables I am providing for the hon. Gentleman.

Local Authority Housing Capital Investment: Forecast 1989-90

£'000

	Cash Prices				*Constant 1988-89 Prices*			
Local Authority	*[1]New building*	*Renovation of local authority dwellings*	*Renovation grants*	*Other capital programmes*	*[1]New building*	*Renovation of local authority dwellings*	*Renovation grants*	*Other capital programmes*
Alyn and Deeside	2,447	2,488	570	10	2,319	2,358	540	9
Colwyn	0	1,489	1,014	0	0	1,411	961	0
Delyn	0	4,339	400	490	0	4,113	379	464
Glyndwr	215	1,300	700	85	204	1,232	664	81
Rhuddlan	1,287	391	300	875	1,220	371	284	829
Wrexham Maelor	950	7,375	300	150	900	6,991	284	142
Carmarthen	139	2,548	1,450	539	132	2,415	1,374	511
Ceredigion	1,565	1,767	1,500	226	1,483	1,675	1,422	214
Dinefwr	601	1,819	738	469	570	1,724	700	445
Llanelli	1,925	855	2,150	143	1,825	810	2,038	136
Preseli Pembs	1,174	2,063	2,814	1,565	1,113	1,955	2,667	1,483
South Pembroke	63	760	2,065	311	60	720	1,957	295
Blaenau Gwent	859	5,985	2,065	561	814	5,673	1,957	532
Islwyn	897	4,229	2,400	2,484	850	4,009	2,275	2,355
Monmouth	1,715	5,593	525	142	1,626	5,301	498	135
Newport	1,394	6,372	1,525	2,176	1,321	6,040	1,446	2,063
Torfaen	68	9,662	2,550	2,553	64	9,158	2,417	2,420
Aberconwy	0	1,352	550	75	0	1,282	521	71
Arfon	285	1,189	2,753	988	270	1,127	2,609	936
Dwyfor	710	500	652	30	673	474	618	28
Meirionnydd	420	0	450	800	398	0	427	758
Ynys Mon	300	300	850	2,300	284	284	806	2,180
Cynon Valley	75	12	3,300	7,562	71	11	3,128	7,168
Merthyr Tydfil	289	5,487	1,850	186	274	5,201	1,754	176
Ogwr	1,857	3,894	3,000	637	1,760	3,691	2,844	604
Rhondda	0	9,794	5,005	3,413	0	9,283	4,744	3,235
Rhymney Valley	595	4,978	3,691	878	564	4,718	3,499	832
Taff Ely	1,015	7,614	2,000	120	962	7,217	1,896	114
Brecknock	880	643	863	42	834	609	818	40
Montgomeryshire	1,276	1,657	815	0	1,209	1,571	773	0
Radnorshire	713	103	370	0	676	98	351	0
Cardiff	2,408	26,892	9,545	7,585	2,282	25,490	9,047	7,190
Vale of Glamorgan	1,570	1,720	1,700	176	1,488	1,630	1,611	167
Port Talbot	17	10,665	1,400	510	16	10,109	1,327	483
Lliw Valley	2,245	1,415	1,400	1,423	2,128	1,341	1,327	1,349
Neath	2,330	5,896	1,200	81	2,209	5,589	1,137	77
Swansea	1,648	3,021	4,990	409	1,562	2,864	4,730	388
Total Wales	33,932	146,167	69,450	42,422	32,353	138,547	65,830	40,211

[1] Includes acquisition of land

Local Authority Housing Capital Investment: Forecast 1988-89

£'000

	Cash Prices				*Constant 1988-89 Prices*			
Local Authority	*New building*	*Renovation of local authority dwellings*	*Renovation grants*	*Other capital programmes*	*New building*	*Renovation of local authority dwellings*	*Renovation grants*	*Other capital programmes*
Alyn and Deeside	1,076	1,827	748	130	1,076	1,827	748	130
Colwyn	0	893	813	14	0	893	813	14
Delyn	0	2,794	434	1	0	2,794	434	1
Glyndwr	897	735	643	0	897	735	643	0
Rhuddlan	556	175	270	1,438	556	175	270	1,438
Wrexham Maelor	412	4,435	304	44	412	4,435	304	44
Carmarthen	292	1,487	1,811	542	292	1,487	1,811	542
Ceredigion	573	1,085	650	127	573	1,085	650	127
Dinefwr	128	773	506	288	128	773	506	288
Llanelli	2,132	256	1,536	118	2,132	256	1,536	118

Local Authority	Cash Prices New building				Constant 1988-89 Prices New building			
	New building	*Renovation of local authority dwellings*	*Renovation grants*	*Other capital programmes*	*New building*	*Renovation of local authority dwellings*	*Renovation grants*	*Other capital programmes*
Preseli Pembs	448	1,298	1,392	428	448	1,298	1,392	428
South Pembroke	0	557	1,852	855	0	557	1,852	855
Blaenau Gwent	1,237	3,862	1,881	1,832	1,237	3,862	1,881	1,832
Islwyn	451	1,687	4,565	1,718	451	1,687	4,565	1,718
Monmouth	827	3,067	1,280	200	827	3,067	1,280	200
Newport	3,763	2,751	1,985	2,056	3,763	2,751	1,985	2,056
Torfaen	143	6,462	1,528	1,153	143	6,462	1,528	1,153
Aberconwy	0	1,704	563	69	0	1,704	563	69
Arfon	565	725	1,330	308	565	725	1,330	308
Dwyfor	109	275	505	298	109	275	505	298
Meirionnydd	203	271	341	309	203	271	341	309
Ynys Môn	392	2,171	776	1,193	392	2,171	776	1,193
Cynon Valley	103	1,139	3,327	1,679	103	1,139	3,327	1,679
Merthyr Tydfil	789	2,600	2,100	49	789	2,600	2,100	49
Ogwr	1,152	3,120	3,318	935	1,152	3,120	3,318	935
Rhondda	0	8,355	5,203	4,534	0	8,355	5,203	4,534
Rhymney Valley	458	4,830	3,462	1,457	458	4,830	3,462	1,457
Taff Ely	1,886	2,355	1,641	26	1,886	2,355	1,641	26
Brecknock	656	595	573	406	656	595	573	406
Montgomeryshire	585	688	775	121	585	688	775	121
Radnorshire	367	182	383	92	367	182	383	92
Cardiff	582	19,243	10,377	1,949	582	19,243	10,377	1,949
Vale of Glamorgan	692	1,132	1,436	378	692	1,132	1,436	378
Port Talbot	0	3,921	1,620	65	0	3,921	1,620	65
Lliw Valley	667	2,191	1,443	223	667	2,191	1,443	223
Neath	901	2,440	1,169	518	901	2,440	1,169	518
Swansea	1,171	3,378	5,238	205	1,171	3,378	5,238	205
Total Wales	24,213	95,459	67,778	25,758	24,213	95,459	67,778	25,758

Local Authority Housing Capital Investment 1987-88

£'000

Local Authority	Cash Prices				Constant 1988-89 Prices			
	New building	*Renovation of local authority dwellings*	*Renovation grants*	*Other capital programmes*	*New building*	*Renovation of local authority dwellings*	*Renovation grants*	*Other capital programmes*
Alyn and Deeside	1,007	1,583	910	125	1,080	1,699	976	134
Colwyn	0	853	885	24	0	915	950	26
Delyn	0	1,376	636	33	0	1,476	682	35
Glyndwr	90	1,119	553	0	97	1,201	593	0
Rhuddlan	526	301	200	394	564	323	215	423
Wrexham Maelor	571	5,653	244	25	613	6,066	262	27
Carmarthen	575	2,321	1,998	694	617	2,490	2,144	745
Ceredigion	1,224	798	846	24	1,313	856	908	26
Dinefwr	574	805	421	226	616	864	452	242
Llanelli	1,718	482	1,263	227	1,843	517	1,355	244
Preseli Pembs	377	1,352	1,510	5	405	1,451	1,620	5
South Pembroke	9	628	1,920	1,376	10	674	2,060	1,476
Blaenau Gwent	1,718	4,920	3,094	2,742	1,843	5,279	3,320	2,942
Islwyn	1,040	1,870	3,894	1,746	1,116	2,006	4,178	1,873
Monmouth	626	4,317	1,271	31	672	4,632	1,364	33
Newport	8,307	3,619	2,248	1,575	8,913	3,883	2,412	1,690
Torfaen	734	3,242	1,418	781	788	3,479	1,521	838
Aberconwy	30	1,240	388	27	32	1,330	416	29
Arfon	530	1,084	1,597	58	569	1,163	1,714	62
Dwyfor	31	54	537	220	33	58	576	236
Meirionnydd	198	49	265	80	212	53	284	86
Ynys Môn	801	1,492	780	1,154	859	1,601	837	1,238
Cynon Valley	421	1,593	3,904	1,274	452	1,709	4,189	1,367
Merthyr Tydfil	601	3,916	1,503	64	645	4,202	1,613	69
Ogwr	1,039	2,426	2,676	1,797	1,115	2,603	2,871	1,928
Rhondda	2	2,257	5,603	4,202	2	2,422	6,012	4,509
Rhymney Valley	581	4,269	3,778	2,593	623	4,581	4,054	2,782
Taff Ely	1,378	4,263	1,348	134	1,479	4,574	1,446	144
Brecknock	799	246	568	343	857	264	609	368
Montgomeryshire	550	1,392	548	66	590	1,494	588	71
Radnorshire	75	126	368	60	80	135	395	64
Cardiff	1,792	14,342	11,831	1,564	1,923	15,389	12,694	1,678
Vale of Glamorgan	766	1,721	1,364	739	822	1,847	1,464	793
Port Talbot	0	4,169	1,822	3	0	4,473	1,955	3
Lliw Valley	726	1,907	1,504	210	779	2,046	1,614	225

Local Authority	*Cash Prices*				*Constant 1988-89 Prices*			
	New building	*Renovation of local authority dwellings*	*Renovation grants*	*Other capital programmes*	*New building*	*Renovation of local authority dwellings*	*Renovation grants*	*Other capital programmes*
Neath	1,166	2,041	1,609	932	1,251	2,190	1,726	1,000
Swansea	1,230	4,153	3,972	176	1,320	4,456	4,262	189
Total Wales	31,812	87,979	69,276	25,724	34,134	94,400	74,332	27,601

Local Authority Housing Capital Investment: 1981-82

£'000

Local Authority	*Cash Prices*				*Constant 1988-89 Prices*			
	New building	*Renovation of local authority dwellings*	*Renovation grants*	*Other capital programmes*	*New building*	*Renovation of local authority dwellings*	*Renovation grants*	*Other capital programmes*
Alyn and Deeside	675	852	231	284	976	1,232	334	411
Colwyn	408	602	290	18	590	870	419	26
Delyn	131	760	317	35	189	1,099	458	51
Glyndwr	1,252	129	135	111	1,810	186	195	160
Rhuddlan	652	83	49	1	943	120	71	1
Wrexham Maelor	1,067	1,248	160	117	1,542	1,804	231	169
Carmarthen	1,687	228	559	193	2,439	330	808	279
Ceredigion	1,621	222	335	14	2,343	321	484	20
Dinefwr	263	349	183	0	380	505	265	0
Llanelli	690	570	293	386	997	824	424	558
Preseli	409	900	480	66	591	1,301	694	95
South Pembroke	109	254	436	319	158	367	630	461
Blaenau Gwent	2,550	1,210	533	638	3,686	1,749	771	922
Islwyn	863	820	493	97	1,248	1,185	713	140
Monmouth	1,382	190	227	128	1,998	275	328	185
Newport	3,898	927	1,353	766	5,635	1,340	1,956	1,107
Torfaen	1,230	1,630	223	387	1,778	2,356	322	559
Aberconwy	183	331	295	0	265	479	426	0
Arfon	725	1,108	679	123	1,048	1,602	982	178
Dwyfor	263	58	243	15	380	84	351	22
Meirionnydd	550	28	206	21	795	40	298	30
Ynys Môn	1,008	272	186	15	1,457	393	269	22
Cynon Valley	139	611	268	587	201	883	387	849
Merthyr Tydfil	730	648	407	701	1,055	937	588	1,013
Ogwr	1,659	731	937	975	2,398	1,057	1,355	1,409
Rhondda	912	1,554	1,336	1,194	1,318	2,247	1,931	1,726
Rhymney Valley	1,655	422	611	479	2,393	610	883	692
Taff Ely	1,820	916	1,294	541	2,631	1,324	1,871	782
Brecknock	428	237	236	127	619	343	341	184
Montgomeryshire	229	286	135	9	331	413	195	13
Radnorshire	270	71	135	8	390	103	195	12
Cardiff	6,358	1,564	1,488	1,529	9,191	2,261	2,151	2,210
Vale of Glamorgan	835	286	476	145	1,207	413	688	210
Port Talbot	250	285	280	174	361	412	405	252
Lliw Valley	1,685	303	612	63	2,436	438	885	91
Neath	801	318	324	139	1,158	460	468	201
Swansea	1,988	2,930	1,597	146	2,874	4,236	2,309	211
Total Wales	41,375	23,933	18,042	10,551	59,813	34,598	26,082	15,253

Local Authority Housing Capital Investment: 1982-83

£'000

Local Authority	*Cash Prices*				*Constant 1988-89 Prices*			
	New building	*Renovation of local authority dwellings*	*Renovation grants*	*Other capital programmes*	*New building*	*Renovation of local authority dwellings*	*Renovation grants*	*Other capital programmes*
Alyn and Deeside	1,507	1,170	529	409	2,035	1,580	714	552
Colwyn	514	596	602	54	694	805	813	73
Delyn	91	581	546	60	123	784	737	81
Glyndwr	906	349	606	223	1,223	471	818	301
Rhuddlan	832	154	111	15	1,123	208	150	20
Wrexham Maelor	1,340	1,657	307	115	1,809	2,237	414	155
Carmarthen	1,926	244	1,107	429	2,600	329	1,495	579
Ceredigion	1,240	714	959	76	1,674	964	1,295	103
Dinefwr	480	695	224	68	648	938	302	92
Llanelli	666	923	732	170	899	1,246	988	230
Preseli Pembs	178	1,806	696	26	240	2,438	940	35
South Pembroke	109	506	1,101	66	147	683	1,486	89

Local Authority	Cash Prices				Constant 1988-89 Prices			
	New building	Renovation of local authority dwellings	Renovation grants	Other capital programmes	New building	Renovation of local authority dwellings	Renovation grants	Other capital programmes
Blaenau Gwent	1,478	5,351	2,295	516	1,995	7,224	3,098	697
Islwyn	648	2,442	1,282	358	875	3,297	1,731	483
Monmouth	1,407	256	877	316	1,900	346	1,184	427
Newport	2,092	2,655	3,460	1,128	2,824	3,584	4,671	1,523
Torfaen	2,240	2,382	426	443	3,024	3,216	575	598
Aberconwy	483	433	414	2	652	585	559	3
Arfon	461	890	938	281	622	1,202	1,266	379
Dwyfor	82	107	695	164	111	144	938	221
Meirionnydd	619	112	450	31	836	151	608	42
Ynys Mon	1,156	603	674	97	1,561	814	910	131
Cynon Valley	252	801	1,076	364	340	1,081	1,453	491
Merthyr Tydfil	425	1,363	876	196	574	1,840	1,183	265
Ogwr	952	1,809	1,905	944	1,285	2,442	2,572	1,274
Rhondda	131	1,981	2,918	1,719	177	2,674	3,939	2,321
Rhymney Valley	1,790	1,414	1,597	415	2,417	1,909	2,156	560
Taff Ely	1,613	1,376	2,903	350	2,178	1,858	3,919	473
Brecknock	650	196	555	135	878	265	749	182
Montgomeryshire	431	230	627	7	582	311	846	9
Radnorshire	897	195	342	29	1,211	263	462	39
Cardiff	5,703	3,898	2,703	771	7,699	5,262	3,649	1,041
Vale of Glamorgan	734	1,383	1,614	209	991	1,867	2,179	282
Port Talbot	93	1,243	285	324	126	1,678	385	437
Lliw Valley	1,611	630	1,252	164	2,175	851	1,690	221
Neath	904	1,107	1,362	317	1,220	1,495	1,839	428
Swansea	1,716	3,744	3,830	211	2,317	5,055	5,171	285
Total Wales	38,357	45,996	42,876	11,202	51,784	62,097	57,885	15,123

Local Authority Housing Capital Investment: 1983-84

£'000

Local Authority	Cash Prices				Constant 1988-89 Prices			
	New building	Renovation of local authority dwellings	Renovation grants	Other capital programmes	New building	Renovation of local authority dwellings	Renovation grants	Other capital programmes
Alyn and Deeside	899	1,260	801	405	1,160	1,626	1,034	523
Colwyn	461	733	1,112	11	595	946	1,435	14
Delyn	0	1,122	1,140	64	0	1,448	1,471	83
Glyndwr	335	670	1,533	2	432	864	1,978	3
Rhuddlan	762	94	115	114	983	121	148	147
Wrexham Maelor	1,510	2,355	533	92	1,948	3,039	688	119
Carmarthen	1,933	529	6,295	102	2,494	683	8,122	132
Ceredigion	2,660	1,165	2,969	43	3,432	1,503	3,831	55
Dinefwr	1,003	202	1,370	1	1,294	261	1,768	1
Llanelli	714	1,311	2,269	282	921	1,692	2,928	364
Preseli Pembs	25	1,474	2,430	104	32	1,902	3,135	134
South Pembroke	399	520	2,630	94	515	671	3,393	121
Blaenau Gwent	549	3,385	6,230	308	708	4,368	8,038	397
Islwyn	1,357	2,848	2,838	335	1,751	3,675	3,662	432
Monmouth	2,186	592	3,165	84	2,821	764	4,084	108
Newport	3,476	2,770	4,083	1,163	4,485	3,574	5,268	1,501
Torfaen	1,963	2,080	1,589	487	2,533	2,684	2,050	628
Aberconwy	405	1,118	808	0	523	1,443	1,043	0
Arfon	698	1,406	1,966	117	901	1,814	2,537	151
Dwyfor	187	120	2,586	89	241	155	3,337	115
Meirionnydd	575	319	2,630	27	742	412	3,393	35
Ynys Môn	1,545	993	3,950	185	1,993	1,281	5,097	239
Cynon Valley	563	655	2,626	577	726	845	3,388	744
Merthyr Tydfil	373	1,453	2,449	251	481	1,875	3,160	324
Ogwr	1,897	2,907	2,823	964	2,448	3,751	3,642	1,244
Rhondda	56	2,148	9,131	1,660	72	2,772	11,782	2,142
Rhymney Valley	2,471	1,461	2,974	381	3,188	1,885	3,837	492
Taff Ely	1,988	1,176	5,947	459	2,565	1,517	7,673	592
Brecknock	480	383	2,076	269	619	494	2,679	347
Montgomeryshire	424	460	2,596	14	547	594	3,350	18
Radnorshire	743	141	926	17	959	182	1,195	22
Cardiff	7,409	3,890	10,797	762	9,560	5,019	13,931	983
Vale of Glamorgan	341	779	3,455	294	440	1,005	4,458	379
Port Talbot	11	1,505	540	263	14	1,942	697	339
Lliw Valley	1,720	858	1,348	191	2,219	1,107	1,739	246
Neath	932	695	2,658	439	1,203	897	3,430	566
Swansea	1,799	2,724	5,902	333	2,321	3,515	7,615	430

Local Authority	Cash Prices				Constant 1988-89 Prices			
	New building	Renovation of local authority dwellings	Renovation grants	Other capital programmes	New building	Renovation of local authority dwellings	Renovation grants	Other capital programmes
Total Wales	44,849	48,301	109,290	10,983	57,86[illegible]	62,322	141,014	14,171

Local Authority Housing Capital Investment: 1984-85

£'000

Local Authority	Cash Prices				Constant 1988-89 Prices			
	New building	Renovation of local authority dwellings	Renovation grants	Other capital programmes	New building	Renovation of local authority dwellings	Renovation grants	Other capital programmes
Alyn and Deeside	1,115	1,428	876	351	1,371	1,756	1,077	432
Colwyn	439	461	715	74	540	567	879	91
Delyn	849	0	495	17	1,044	0	609	21
Glyndwr	26	1,023	1,547	15	32	1,258	1,902	18
Rhuddlan	709	131	215	93	872	161	264	114
Wrexham Maelor	1,524	2,186	439	67	1,874	2,688	540	82
Carmarthen	1,040	322	2,799	204	1,279	396	3,441	251
Ceredigion	927	289	1,861	323	1,140	355	2,288	397
Dinefwr	510	269	858	0	627	331	1,055	0
Llanelli	1,374	144	1,836	247	1,689	177	2,257	304
Preseli Pembs	367	1,442	2,537	1	451	1,773	3,119	1
South Pembroke	467	244	3,109	36	574	300	3,823	44
Blaenau Gwent	1,931	2,310	3,568	789	2,374	2,840	4,387	970
Islwyn	760	2,638	2,530	1,515	934	3,243	3,111	1,863
Monmouth	2,072	586	1,079	178	2,548	721	1,327	219
Newport	4,290	2,727	2,159	393	5,275	3,353	2,655	483
Torfaen	1,090	2,710	2,116	367	1,340	3,332	2,602	451
Aberconwy	599	966	594	0	736	1,188	730	0
Arfon	536	569	1,957	71	659	700	2,406	87
Dwyfor	194	86	1,205	13	239	106	1,482	16
Meirionnydd	95	314	3,104	38	117	386	3,816	47
Ynys Môn	803	33	1,116	61	987	41	1,372	75
Cynon Valley	306	456	1,362	621	376	561	1,675	764
Merthyr Tydfil	96	1,454	1,421	153	118	1,788	1,747	188
Ogwr	1,882	1,952	3,160	808	2,314	2,400	3,885	993
Rhondda	54	1,093	9,640	1,697	66	1,344	11,853	2,087
Rhymney Valley	1,200	1,843	3,351	628	1,475	2,266	4,120	772
Taff Ely	411	942	3,724	142	505	1,158	4,579	175
Brecknock	192	502	1,002	225	236	617	1,232	277
Montgomeryshire	421	477	1,114	6	518	586	1,370	7
Radnorshire	284	51	560	5	349	63	689	6
Cardiff	2,563	4,392	7,088	3,605	3,151	5,400	8,715	4,432
Vale of Glamorgan	603	803	2,548	383	741	987	3,133	471
Port Talbot	13	1,887	391	58	16	2,320	481	71
Lliw Valley	739	972	1,115	94	909	1,195	1,371	116
Neath	983	235	1,393	219	1,209	289	1,713	269
Swansea	1,363	4,968	5,865	243	1,676	6,108	7,211	299
Total Wales	32,827	42,905	80,449	13,740	40,362	52,753	98,914	16,894

Local Authority Housing Capital Investment: 1985-86

£'000

Local Authority	Cash Prices				Constant 1988-89 Prices			
	New building	Renovation of local authority dwellings	Renovation grants	Other capital programmes	New building	Renovation of local authority dwellings	Renovation grants	Other capital programmes
Alyn and Deeside	722	1,682	371	223	841	1,960	432	260
Colwyn	210	965	799	34	245	1,125	931	40
Delyn	33	858	441	10	38	1,000	514	12
Glyndwr	12	924	600	0	14	1,077	699	0
Rhuddlan	740	34	131	0	862	40	153	0
Wrexham Maelor	1,013	3,046	366	7	1,181	3,550	427	8
Carmarthen	665	659	1,922	1[illegible]0	775	768	2,240	221
Ceredigion	962	724	1,148	161	1,121	844	1,338	188
Dinefwr	422	433	443	0	492	505	516	0
Llanelli	1,867	269	812	304	2,176	314	946	354
Preseli	299	1,311	1,265	50	348	1,528	1,474	58
South Pembroke	106	495	1,917	6	124	577	2,234	7
Blaenau Gwent	629	2,533	1,259	1,516	733	2,952	1,467	1,767
Islwyn	455	1,548	2,688	645	530	1,804	3,133	752

Local Authority	*Cash Prices*				*Constant 1988-89 Prices*			
	New building	*Renovation of local authority dwellings*	*Renovation grants*	*Other capital programmes*	*New building*	*Renovation of local authority dwellings*	*Renovation grants*	*Other capital programmes*
Monmouth	2,003	2,296	682	0	2,334	2,676	795	0
Newport	4,705	3,470	2,502	396	5,483	4,044	2,916	462
Torfaen	757	2,733	1,195	469	882	3,185	1,393	547
Aberconwy	266	808	570	0	310	942	664	0
Arfon	217	594	1,901	125	253	692	2,216	146
Dwyfor	160	59	390	0	186	69	455	0
Meirionnydd	21	0	1,477	13	24	0	1,721	15
Ynys Môn	662	118	1,205	439	772	138	1,404	512
Cynon Valley	117	638	1,157	449	136	744	1,348	523
Merthyr Tydfil	151	904	1,266	72	176	1,054	1,475	84
Ogwr	973	1,975	1,780	671	1,134	2,302	2,075	782
Rhondda	60	603	6,068	512	70	703	7,072	597
Rhymney Valley	779	2,026	1,683	388	908	2,361	1,961	452
Taff Ely	571	874	1,830	156	665	1,019	2,133	182
Brecknock	439	603	382	382	512	703	445	445
Montgomeryshire	399	299	473	0	465	348	551	0
Radnorshire	205	206	420	70	239	240	489	82
Cardiff	435	8,379	7,616	2,039	507	9,765	8,876	2,376
Vale of Glamorgan	479	385	1,175	330	558	449	1,369	385
Port Talbot	6	1,085	452	2	7	1,265	527	2
Lliw Valley	587	1,033	965	78	684	1,204	1,125	91
Neath	1,011	1,202	786	346	1,178	1,401	916	403
Swansea	612	3,899	5,188	36	713	4,544	6,046	42
Total Wales	23,750	49,670	55,325	10,119	27,680	57,888	64,479	11,793

Local Authority Housing Capital Investment: 1986-87

£'000

Local Authority	*Cash Prices*				*Constant 1988-89 Prices*			
	New building	*Renovation of local authority dwellings*	*Renovation grants*	*Other capital programmes*	*New building*	*Renovation of local authority dwellings*	*Renovation grants*	*Other capital programmes*
Alyn and Deeside	1,125	1,918	595	322	1,270	2,166	672	364
Colwyn	134	1,280	790	22	151	1,445	892	25
Delyn	0	1,741	730	18	0	1,966	824	20
Glyndwr	6	1,108	483	74	7	1,251	545	84
Rhuddlan	589	286	155	72	665	323	175	81
Wrexham Maelor	854	4,815	336	47	964	5,437	379	53
Carmarthen	907	775	1,938	715	1,024	875	2,188	807
Ceredigion	1,196	439	1,638	51	1,351	496	1,850	58
Dinefwr	848	403	385	15	958	455	435	17
Llanelli	1,504	356	940	204	1,698	402	1,061	230
Preseli Pembs	578	1,353	1,570	63	653	1,528	1,773	71
South Pembroke	122	428	1,789	0	138	483	2,020	0
Blaenau Gwent	694	6,586	2,393	1,075	784	7,437	2,702	1,214
Islwyn	1,639	1,617	3,600	1,627	1,851	1,826	4,065	1,837
Monmouth	1,052	3,295	1,235	475	1,188	3,721	1,395	536
Newport	1,682	3,366	2,909	2,869	1,899	3,801	3,285	3,240
Torfaen	911	4,506	1,425	475	1,029	5,088	1,609	536
Aberconwy	5	1,131	436	0	6	1,277	492	0
Arfon	382	648	1,813	94	431	732	2,047	106
Dwyfor	71	101	678	104	80	114	766	117
Meirionnydd	27	44	953	32	30	50	1,076	36
Ynys Mon	662	1,476	779	1,129	748	1,667	880	1,275
Cynon Valley	221	943	2,111	820	250	1,065	2,384	926
Merthyr Tydfil	85	2,231	1,388	57	96	2,519	1,567	64
Ogwr	366	1,827	2,309	1,250	413	2,063	2,607	1,412
Rhondda	14	668	5,931	2,661	16	754	6,698	3,005
Rhymney Valley	404	3,990	2,629	684	456	4,506	2,969	772
Taff Ely	1,257	2,399	2,065	235	1,419	2,709	2,332	265
Brecknock	659	527	438	417	744	595	495	471
Montgomeryshire	453	1,213	548	45	512	1,370	619	51
Radnorshire	318	196	300	123	359	221	339	139
Cardiff	350	7,025	9,705	2,279	395	7,933	10,959	2,574
Vale of Glamorgan	545	1,682	2,085	487	615	1,899	2,354	550
Port Talbot	0	1,580	842	8	0	1,784	951	9
Lliw Valley	385	1,343	1,394	68	435	1,517	1,574	77
Neath	847	1,583	972	625	956	1,788	1,098	706
Swansea	1,146	3,904	5,566	302	1,294	4,409	6,285	341
Total Wales	22,038	68,783	65,853	19,544	24,886	77,672	74,364	22,070

Craft Initiative

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much financial assistance will be offered to the craft initiative between April 1988 and March 1991; to which organisations this money has been distributed in Wales; and if he will give a detailed breakdown.

Mr. Peter Walker: Funds are provided towards the promotion of the craft industry from a wide range of public bodies which co-operate in the craft initiative. It is estimated that in financial year 1988-89 approximately £250,000 of public funds was devoted to promoting the crafts industry, and this is likely to rise to around £500,000 this financial year.

Student Exchanges

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions there have been between his Department and *(a)* Welsh Advisory Board, *(b)* the Welsh Committee of the University Funding Council and *(c)* the National Union of Students in Wales on the subject of student exchanges within Western Europe; and what financial assistance he will offer to colleges of further and higher education so that such exchanges can be promoted.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: We have not had discussions on this subject with any of the bodies mentioned. Student exchanges are the responsibility of the institutions at which students are registered. Financial assistance for student exchanges is available under the European Community's ERASMUS programme.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the operation of the new community charge system from April 1990 onwards, with regard to whether anyone in Wales should expect an increase, in poll tax payment compared to rate payment, of over £25 in the first year; and to whom the safety net applies.

Mr. Peter Walker: I will be making a statement shortly.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Early-day Motions

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Lord President of the Council what was the estimated cost incurred by the tabling of early-day motions for the Session 1988-89.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The estimated cost for Session 1988-89 of printing early-day motions is £763,000.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Lord President of the Council what was the estimated cost of responding to all parliamentary questions, oral and written, for the parliamentary Session 1988-89.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It is not possible to provide the information in the form requested. However, over the period (November 1988 to November 1989) the average cost of answering written and oral questions was £53 and £87 respectively. During the 1988-89 Session a total of 39,540 written questions were answered. The total number of oral questions put down for answer was 23,932, but this figure includes a substantial proportion of engagement questions to the Prime Minister which are not answered unless the Member otherwise requests.

Refreshment Department (Pay)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he has any proposals to increase the pay of the staff in canteens or bars in the Palace of Westminster; and if he will make a statement on the present salary scales.

Mr. Beith: I have been asked to reply.

The salaries of permanent Refreshment Department staff are linked to industrial Civil Service pay scales and will be reviewed on 1 July 1990.

Line of Route

Mr. Lee: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many strangers were given conducted tours of the line of route in the latest year for which he has figures.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: In 1988, 128,084 visitors toured the line of route.

Satellite Television

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make it his policy to buy transponder space on the television satellite to be launched in October 1990 in order that a dedicated satellite channel for Parliament can be established; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: No, Sir. The establishment of a dedicated channel for coverage of parliamentary proceedings is an objective whose desirability has been underlined both by the Select Committee on Televising of Proceedings of the House and its report, and by many other Members. For this reason, the recent experiment with continuous broadcasting of the House's proceedings, using some of the spare channels on the Astra satellite, was widely welcomed. I understand, however, that this experiment, which depended on the donation of facilities by the organisations involved, has now come to an end. For the longer term, as the Select Committee made clear in its report, any such development must be a matter for the commercial judgment of the broadcasters, in the absence of public funding. So far as the Government are concerned, that remains the position.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Police (Complaints)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the total numbers of complaints made against the police for the last 10 years, year by year, the numbers subsequently upheld and the number resulting in disciplinary action.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information relating to the total number of complaints investigations completed, the total number of complaints substantiated and the total number resulting in disciplinary action is published annually in the reports of Her Majesty's chief inspector of constabulary and of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, except for the commissioner's 1988 annual report. Owing to a change of format the Commissioner's 1988 report did not contain information relating to the number of complaints investigations completed or the number of complaints substantiated.

Information relating to the total number of complaints made each year is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Copies of the reports can be found in the Library.

Newspapers (Code of Conduct)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about the code of conduct instituted by the editors of national newspapers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We have not as yet received any representations about the code of practice.

Crime Prevention Panels

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many crime prevention panels are in existence in England and Wales.

Mr. John Patten: At the end of June 1989 there were 398 senior crime prevention panels and 209 youth crime prevention panels in England and Wales.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Board

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff were employed by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board from the date of its inception; what is its current staffing level; and what has been the percentage change.

Mr. John Patten: The number of staff in post on 31 March 1965, at the end of the first financial year's operation of the CICB, was 11. The number now is 327, an increase of 2,882 per cent.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the regional breakdown of cases that form the backlog of cases for the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board.

Mr. John Patten: The board does not keep information in this form.

Association of Chief Police Officers

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on how many former members of ACPO have subsequently taken up employment in banking security over the last 10 years.

Mr. John Patten: No record is kept of the employment taken up by former police officers after they have left the police service.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what practical steps he is taking to help the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board to reduce the backlog of applications.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) on Friday 8 December 1989 at columns *409-417*.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the administration costs of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board for 1988-89; and what percentage increase that represents since the date of its inception.

Mr. John Patten: Expenditure on the board's administration in 1988-89 was £7,469,000, an increase of 12,445 per cent. over the cost of the first full year of operation to 31 March 1965 (£59,537).

Prisons

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which four proposed new prisons have been eliminated from the new building programme for the mid-1990's.

Mr. Mellor: No new prisons have been eliminated from the building programme. Out of the full programme of 28 new prisons there are six on which construction or preliminary work has not yet started. Construction will begin on two of these in 1991-92 and 1992-93 as previously planned. It is decisions on when and where to build the remaining four which have been deferred.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Age-related Personal Allowances

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the age-related personal allowances within income support for the April 1989 uprating in current and April 1988 prices.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information requested is as follows:

	April 1989 Rates £	*April 1989 Rates at October 1989 prices* £[1]	*April 1989 Rates at April 1988 prices* £[2]
Single:			
under 18	20·80	21·31	19·75
18 to 24	27·40	28·07	26·01
25 or over	34·90	35·75	33·13
Lone Parent:			
under 18	20·80	21·31	19·75
18 or over	34·90	35·75	33·13

	April 1989 Rates £	*April 1989 Rates at October 1989 prices* £[1]	*April 1989 Rates at April 1988 prices* £[2]
Couple:			
both under 18	41·60	42·62	39·49
one/both 18 or over	54·80	56·14	52·03
Dependent children:			
under 11	11·75	12·04	11·16
11 to 15	17·35	17·77	16·47
16 to 17	20·80	21·31	19·75
18	27·40	28·07	26·01

Based on the movement in the index of Retail Prices (less housing) between:

[1] April 1989 and October 1989 (the latest date for which the index is available).

[2] April 1988 and April 1989.

Income Support

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will seek to amend section 8 of the Income Support Regulations 1987 to enable calculation of income support for single parents to take into account, as an expense, any child care fees paid by the single parent.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We have no plans to do so. Housing benefit and family credit are the main benefits for single parents in work and have never provided help with child care costs. Nor is there any direct subsidy of such costs for people in work generally.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will review the workings of the attendance allowance system to give recognition to the fact that many of the elements of increased cost arising from severe illness or disability arise during the first six months following the development or diagnosis of that condition; and if he will take steps to assist such people to meet the financial burdens placed upon them during this time.

Mr. Scott: We are looking at the workings of the attendance allowance scheme as part of the re-examination of disability benefits following the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys disability surveys. We have already announced our intention to abolish the six-months qualifying period for people with terminal illness.

Child Benefit and Allowances

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish figures showing *(a)* child benefit and *(b)* child dependency additions payable with invalidity benefit and widowed mother's allowance in April 1979 and 1989 (i) at cash prices, (ii) at April 1979 prices and (iii) at April 1989 prices.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The figures are as follows:

Benefit	*April 1979 rate* £	*April 1979 rate at April 1989 prices*[1] £	*April 1989 rate* £	*April 1989 rate at April 1979 prices*[1] £
Child Benefit	4·00	8·42	7·25	3·44
Child Dependency Additions payable with Invalidity Benefit and Widowed Mothers Allowance	5·35	11·26	8·95	4·25

[1] Based on the movement in the index of retail prices between April 1979 and April 1989.

War Widows

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give a breakdown by region of the numbers of women who are in receipt of war widows pensions paid by his Department.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The estimated numbers, grouped by War Pensions Committee areas, are:

	Numbers
Scotland	5,550
North East	8,250
North West	8,150
Midlands	6,350
London North	7,350
London South	10,400
South West	5,050
Wales	3,100
Belfast	1,450
Dublin	618
Isle of Man	145

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security upon which date pensions paid by his Department to war widows from the First World War were increased to the level of the pensions which were paid to war widows from the Second World War; on what grounds it was decided that the increase did not set a precedent for other groups of pensioners; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Until 1946 the rate of the pension paid to widows from the first world war was higher than the rate paid to those from the second. In February 1946, following a general review of war pensions, it was decided that the standard rate of all war widows pensions administered by the Department should be the same and this has been the situation since.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many war widows were receiving war widows' pension in October 1975; and how many are receiving it currently.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: On 30 September 1975, 91,000 war widows were receiving a war widow's pension from this Department. On 30 September this year, the number was 56,176.

Disability

Mr. Blenkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he intends to bring forward proposals on benefits for people with disabilities, arising from the office of population censuses and surveys report, before the turn of the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) on 14 November at column *167*.

PRIME MINISTER

Hollingbourne

Q7. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to visit Hollingbourne.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Fishing

Q29. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Prime Minister if Her Majesty's Government have any proposals to improve both the occupational safety of United Kingdom fishermen and the safety of their fishing vessels as they go about their business.

The Prime Minister: The Fishing Vessels (Safety Provisions) Rules 1975 are currently under review. The review will take into account the provisions of the Torremolinos International Convention for the Safety of Fishing Vessels 1977 and any subsequent variations thereto which may be necessitated by the protocol to that convention which is currently under consideration by the International Maritime Organisation. Regulations made under the Safety at Sea Act 1986 to introduce safety training for entrants into the industry came into force during March this year.

Growth Rates

Q65. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Prime Minister what steps she has taken to assess the sustainability of different growth rates of the British economy.

The Prime Minister: An assumption for the medium term rate of growth of output that is consistent with declining inflation is given in chapter 2 of the 1989 Financial Statement and Budget Report.

St. Andrew's House, Edinburgh

Q68. **Mr. Harry Ewing:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to visit St. Andrew's house, Edinburgh.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Teesside

Q74. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to visit Teesside.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Private Charity

Q92. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Prime Minister what recent representations she has received on the development of private charitable activity.

The Prime Minister: I regularly meet business people and other individuals concerned with private charitable activity. My attention has also been drawn to the 12th edition of "Charitable Trends" recently published by the Charities Aid Foundations who have suggested ways of increasing further charitable giving by both private individuals and companies. I know that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and my noble Friend the Paymaster General have had contact with the Council for Charitable Support and others on this subject.

President Gorbachev

Q129. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next expects to meet President Gorbachev.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Prime Minister when she will next have a meeting with the President of the Soviet Union.

The Prime Minister: I expect to visit the Soviet Union for talks with Mr. Gorbachev next June.

Engagements

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 12 December.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 12 December.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 12 December.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 12 December.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 12 December.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others, including one this morning at which I joined the task force of Westminster residents designed to improve and protect the environment in Westminster. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Turkey (Human Rights)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Prime Minister how many times she has raised the issue of human rights in Turkey in the meetings of the Council of Ministers over the past two years; and whether she will raise this matter again following the Commission's report on Turkey and the European Economic Community.

The Prime Minister: I have not raised Turkey's human rights record at a European Council meeting in the last two years. The European Commission's report on Turkey's EC application has not yet been submitted to the Council. When it is, we and other member states will consider it carefully, taking into account all relevant factors, including human rights.

Foreign Heads of Government

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Prime Minister whether written notes are kept of conversations between herself and foreign heads of Government.

The Prime Minister: Yes.

European Regional Fund

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Prime Minister whether payments made by the European Commission in respect of objective 2 and objective 5(b) of the European regional fund will be treated in accordance with the correct application of the additionality principle; and if she will ensure that Community funds make a contribution over and above that of spending already planned within the United Kingdom.

The Prime Minister: I confirm that receipts from the European regional development fund will be treated in accordance with the correct application of the additionality principle (article 9 of regulation (EEC) No. 4253/88). The Government's public expenditure plans naturally take account of the expected level of receipts from the Community.

Constitution

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list those Ministers who are responsible for constitutional matters; and what those responsibilities are.

The Prime Minister: Ministerial responsibilities are set out in "The List of Ministerial Responsibilities" published by the Cabinet Office.

Official Ministerial Residences

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Prime Minister (1) if she will list the names and locations of the official ministerial residences in her gift; and the cost of *(a)* upkeep and *(b)* entertaining for each year from 1977 to the present year for each building;

(2) to which Ministers the official residences in her gift were allocated in 1988; and to which Ministers they are allocated today.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 11 December 1989]:* In addition to 10 Downing street, 11 Downing street and 1 Carlton gardens, the Government own a number of other properties in London, including Admiralty house, which are used by Ministers who require them for their official duties. Chevening and Dorneywood are also available as ministerial residences under the terms of their trust deeds. Chevening in Kent was occupied from June 1983 until August 1989 by my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord President; from August 1989 to November 1989 it was occupied by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor; and is now occupied by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. Dorneywood in Buckinghamshire was occupied from May 1979 to January 1988 by Lord Whitelaw; from February 1989 to August 1989 it was occupied by the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson); and is now occupied by my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord President.

Information on the costs of upkeep and entertaining is not held centrally.

High Technology Export Controls

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister what consideration was made of the role of strengthened high technology export controls to prohibit nuclear weapons proliferation at the European Economic Community Council of Heads of Government in Strasbourg on 8 December.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 11 December 1989]:* This subject was not considered at the European Council meeting in Strasbourg.

EMPLOYMENT

Earnings

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will publish in the *Official Report*, comparable figures for journalists to those given in his answer of 15 November, *Official Report*, column 279, together with a table showing (i) actual earnings in each case in April, (ii) comparable earnings figures for manuals and non-manuals, (iii) the percentage of journalists earning less than £200, £300, £400 and £500, (iv) the average earnings of those earning more than £500 and (v) the number represented by the sample.

Mr. Nicholls: The increases in real earnings for journalists are provided in the table. The remaining available information is published in tables 86 and 92 of the 1979 and 1989 new earnings survey reports, copies of which are available in the Library. Figures of the average earnings of those earning more than £500 are not available.

Full-time adult male journalists in Great Britain

	Percentage increase
Lowest decile	28
Lower quartile	35
Median	47
Higher quartile	67
Highest decile	52
Average earnings	48

Note: The increases shown are for April 1979 to April 1989 and do not relate to the same individuals at the different dates.

Source: New Earnings Survey data deflated by the RPI (all items).

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table providing similar information to that given in his written answer of 15 November, *Official Report*, column *279*, concerning the increase in real earnings of male manual and non-manual workers in the decade to April.

Mr. Nicholls: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 15 November 1989 (*Official Report*, column *279*).

Restart

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were referred from restart interviews between July and September, inclusive, to *(a)* a job, *(b)* a job club, *(c)* EAS, *(d)* a restart course, *(e)* employment training and *(f)* to any other specific outcomes; and how many were interviewed in the same period.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested is given in the table.

Restart Counselling: July-September 1989

	Number
Interviews	505,626
Referred to:	
(a) a job	68,942
(b) jobclub	46,222
(c) EAS	18,176
(d) Restart course	15,775
(e) Employment Training	88,886
(f) Other specific outcomes	145,500

Key Training

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employees of his Department, and of what grades, are currently seconded to Key Training of 10 Eaton place, Reading.

Mr. Eggar: No members of staff are currently seconded to Key Training.

Martin Report

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment pursuant to his answer of 23 November, *Official Report*, column *19*, what proportion of staff he estimates had the opportunity to read the Martin report.

Mr. Nicholls: All staff in HSE will have had the opportunity to read the Martin report. Over 2,000 copies were printed and circulated freely within the organisation.

Training (Disabled People)

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what requirement training and enterprise councils have to monitor the number of disabled people participating in Government-funded training and enterprise schemes.

Mr. Eggar: It will be a contractual requirement for TECs to monitor the number of people with disabilities participating in the training and enterprise programmes which they run, and to provide regular information to the Department of Employment.

Training, Blyth Valley

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many persons in the Blyth Valley constituency are currently registered on the employment training scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: Information is not available for Blyth Valley constituency. The latest information available is that there are 5,614 trainees on employment training in the area covered by North Tyne area office, which includes Blyth Valley.

Oxford Polytechnic

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment why the section on graduate supply in the Training Agency's labour market report for Oxfordshire omits reference to the degree-level students at Oxford polytechnic; and what action he will take to remedy this omission.

Mr. Eggar: This was a most unfortunate omission. I understand that the Training Agency area manager concerned is writing urgently to all recipients of the report apologising for the omission and including details of the significant contribution which Oxford polytechnic makes to the supply of graduates.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Animal Slaughtering

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the implications for members of the Licensed Slaughterers and Animal Salvage Association of new Common Market health regulations.

Mr. Maclean: The proposal, if implemented as drafted, would have severe implications for members of the Licensed Slaughterers and Animal Salvage Association. We are therefore liaising closely with them in seeking arrangements to secure their long-term future under any new Community rules.

Agriculture Council

Mr. Amos: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Agriculture Council meeting on 11 December in Brussels, with particular regard to hill livestock compensatory allowances.

Mr. Curry: The Agriculture Council is meeting on 11 and 12 December. The Minister will report as usual to the House on the outcome.

Animal Feedstuffs

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the ban on feeding certain animal protein to cattle will continue beyond 31 December.

Mr. Gummer: I recently made the Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (No. 2) Order 1989 (S.I. 1989/2326) which will extend indefinitely the ban on the use of animal protein derived from ruminants in feed for cattle and other ruminants.

The current prohibition, which was due to expire on 31 December this year, was introduced to prevent this practice which is considered to be the probable cause of BSE. It was made clear when the original ban came into effect that it would be continued unless processing methods sufficient to destroy the causal agent were identified and were widely available. At present no such method of processing has been indentified and further research is needed on the time-temperature combinations necessary to destroy the BSE agent.

DEFENCE

Public Appointments

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many persons above the age of *(a)* 60, *(b)* 65 and *(c)* 70 years he has appointed to public bodies in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Neubert: The information is not available in the form requested and could not be provided without disproportionate cost.

Premature Voluntary Release

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the figures for premature voluntary release from the Army for the second and third quarters of 1989 in the form of the reply on 18 May, *Official Report*, columns *275-76*.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information that my hon. Friend has requested is as follows:

Army premature voluntary release figures for second and third quarters of 1989

	Male Officers	*Female Officers*	*Servicemen*	*Servicewomen*
1989				
Second quarter	194	11	1,051	32
Third quarter	238	11	1,018	26

Army Exercises, West Germany

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Army exercises in West Germany have been (i) prohibited and (ii) limited by central or local government in 1987 and 1988 and what has been the effect on the training programme of the British Army of the Rhine and the Berlin Brigade.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I am not aware of any Army exercise in West Germany that was prohibited by central or local government in 1987 or 1988. All Army exercises in the Federal Republic and Berlin are planned and developed in close consultation with the appropriate central and local government agencies. Wherever possible, and taking due account of the need to maintain operational readiness, the Army has been more than willing to take their views into account when planning exercises, so as to minimise the impact of Army training on local communities and the environment. This has resulted—both in the Federal Republic and elsewhere—in increasing constraints which affect the realism and hence training value of some exercises. However, with careful and sensible planning it has been possible to work within these limitations.

SA80 Rifles

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many SA80 rifles have been delivered for use by the Army; how many have been subsequently found to be defective; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: At the 8 December 1989, Royal Ordnance plc had delivered 91,640 SA80 individual weapons. Of those, 2,106—that is 2·3 per cent.—have been returned or are awaiting return to Royal Ordnance plc for rectification.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total value of SA80 rifle purchases to date and the value of those rejected, after delivery, as defective.

Mr. Alan Clark: It is not the practice of the Ministry of Defence to release information that may be used to calculate details of costs, as these are commercial in confidence.

Army Pay and Allowances

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the purchasing power of the salary and local overseas allowance of the following ranks stationed in the British Army of the Rhine at 1 April in each of the past 10 years (i) private, (ii) staff sergeant, (iii) 2nd lieutenant, (iv) captain, (v) major and (vi) lieutenant-colonel.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The purchasing power in Germany of the salaries of service personnel, when taken together with their local overseas allowance, is broadly comparable with the purchasing power of their salaries alone when in the United Kingdom. Local overseas allowance is reviewed regularly to take account of changes in prices, both in the United Kingdom and in Germany, and of changes in the exchange rate.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the basic rates of pay for (i) corporal 1st class band 6 on technicians rate of pay, and (ii) sergeant 1st class vehicle mechanic on trade pay.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Corporal technicians are paid in either band 2 or 3 depending on trade. Their pay also varies with their length of engagement. Sergeants are no longer classified as 1st or 2nd class for pay purposes and their pay rates vary only with pay band and length of engagement. Vehicle mechanics are in pay band 5 or 6 depending on the types of vehicles on which they are trained.

Daily rates of pay introduced with effect from 1 April 1989 for corporal 1st class technicians are as follows:

	Band 2 £	*Band 3* £
Scale A (less than 6 years)	32·55	35·78
Scale B (6 to 9 years)	32·85	36·08
Scale C (9 years or more)	33·30	36·53

Current daily rates of pay for sergeant vehicle mechanics are as follows:

	Band 5 £	*Band 6* £
Scale A	35·54	39·07
Scale B	35·84	39·37
Scale C	36·29	39·82

Non-commissioned Officers

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether, in view of the current shortage of personnel, he will give approval for non-commissioned officers with 22 years or more to be appointed second-in-command at company level in the Army.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Army does not post even its most senior non-commissioned officers as second-in-commands at company level because to do so would mean that in many cases they would be filling posts ranking above junior officers. Opportunities do, however, exist for suitable warrant officers and senior non-commissioned officers to be commissioned.

Challenger Tanks

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Challenger tanks are at the moment out of commission in the British Army of the Rhine because of lack of spares; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The level of operational availability of the Challenger main battle tank is classified information. Problems have been encountered in relation to the supply of certain spares, but appropriate measures are in hand to restore the situation.

AS1 Rifle

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the precise causes of delays experienced because of the unreliability of the new AS1 rifle in bringing it into general use; when it will be reliable enough to be issued; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The designation "AS1 rifle" is not one which we use: the individual weapon now being issued is the SA80 of which nearly 90,000 are currently in service. Of these, 2·3 per cent. will be returned to the manufacturer for rectification following mechanical defects which have become apparent during extreme service use.

Warrior Personnel Carriers

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he estimates that the steering and braking difficulties with Warrior armoured personnel carriers will be remedied; what effect these have had on their in-service use; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The difficulties have now been remedied, although some further work will be carried out on the cooling oil circuit over the coming year. The effect on service use has been minor.

War Widows

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the basis for awarding ex-gratia payments to the widows of service men killed in Northern Ireland prior to 1973; on what grounds it was decided that those payments did not set a precedent for other groups of pensioners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The extra payments were designed mainly to help the widows and families of those younger men who had no entitlement under the occupational pension scheme, which was at the time under review. Where entitlement did exist under the occupational scheme, this was taken fully into account in determining the size of ex-gratia payment to be made. Some account was also taken of any lump sums awarded as compensation by the Northern Ireland Courts. These arrangements applied to those regular service men or members of the Ulster Defence Regiment killed or injured as a result of terrorist activity in Northern Ireland, and were designed to recognise the exceptional circumstances at that time. They did not represent retrospection of the revised provisions which were introduced within the armed forces pension scheme for those who gave service on or after 31 March 1973.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what would have been the cost since October 1975 of paying pensions to those war widows widowed before 1973 at the same rate as post-1973 widows, for each year for which figures are available.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The figures requested are not available on a year-by-year basis. Broad estimates of the cost of paying attributable forces family pensions to the widows of service men whose last day of service was before 31 March 1973, at the level of awards current at the time of estimation, have been made on a limited number of occasions. The most recent such estimate is that the cost would now be in the region of £200 million a year.

HEALTH

Health Care, Liverpool

4. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to improve the provision of health care in the Liverpool district health authority.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health expects to announce regional health authority cash allocations for 1990-91 very shortly. Regions can then decide on allocations to districts. There will be no reduction in resources for Mersey region despite a falling population.

Junior Hospital Doctors

13. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to reduce the number of hours worked by junior hospital doctors.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Reports have been received recently from regional health authorities on the results of our initiative launched in 1988 to reduce onerous rota commitments. These are being analysed but it is already clear that significant reductions have been achieved. I intend to invite representatives of the profession to discuss with me, early in the new year, what further action needs to be taken to tackle the remaining onerous rotas.

Abortion

14. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the most recent statistics on the numbers of abortions performed on girls aged 16 years and under.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In England and Wales in 1988 a total of 10,081 abortions were carried out on resident girls aged 16 and under.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give a breakdown by numbers of *(a)* previous children and *(b)* previous abortions of the total number of abortions performed in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 29 November 1989]:* The number of abortions performed under the Abortion Act 1967 upon usually resident women by numbers of *(a)* previous liveborn or stillborn children and *(b)* previous abortions[1] in England and Wales 1988 are shown in the tables.

Table 1

Number of abortions performed under the Abortions Act 1967, upon usual residents of England and Wales, 1988 by numbers of previous live and stillborn children

Previous live/ stillborn children	*Abortions*
0	100,644
1	24,616
2	26,005
3	10,931
4	3,480
5 plus	1,663
Unknown	959

Table 2

Number of abortions performed under the Abortion Act 1967, upon usual residents of England and Wales, 1988 by previous legal terminations and spontaneous miscarriages.[1]

Previous number	*Legal terminations*	*Spontaneous miscarriages*
0	133,103	154,525
1	29,206	10,230
2	4,078	1,876
3	719	440
4	170	164
5+	63	104
Unknown	959	959

[1] The notification form for abortions carried out under the Abortion Act 1967 requires information about previous abortions to the woman concerned to be recorded, distinguishing between spontaneous miscarriages and legal terminations.
The table shows the information requested for abortions performed in England and Wales in 1988 for those women having had one or more previous spontaneous miscarriage or legal termination.
Notifications having at least one previous spontaneous miscarriage and also at least one previous legal termination, and women having more than one abortion under the Act in 1988 will be counted more than once in the statistics.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give a breakdown of the numbers and percentages of abortions performed on pregnancies of 18 weeks or more gestation in England and Wales in the latest year for which figures are available by *(a)* age of mother, *(b)* residency of mother, *(c)* grounds for abortions, *(d)* marital status of mother, *(e)* numbers of previous children and *(f)* numbers of previous abortions; and if he will indicate the numbers and percentages of those abortions which were performed in the public and private sectors.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 29 November 1989]:* Numbers and percentages of abortions performed under the Abortion Act 1967 at 18 weeks or more gestation on residents and non-residents of England and Wales in 1988 by age of mother, residency of mother, grounds of abortions, marital status of mother, number of previous children and numbers of previous abortions.

Conditions	[1]*Number*	[2]*Per cent.*
Age of mother		
All ages	9,711	5·3
Under 15	143	15·5
15	282	9·8
16-19	3,071	7·5
20-24	3,189	5·4
25-29	1,540	4·1
30-34	751	3·4
35-39	470	3·4
40-44	229	4·1
45 and over	35	7·5
Residency		
Residents	168,298	91·6
Non-residents	15,500	8·4
Statutory grounds[3]		
All grounds	9,711	5·3
1 (with any other)	25	5·1
2 (alone)	8,551	5·2
3 (with or without 2)	434	2·4
4 (alone)	633	52·1
4 (with any other except 1, excluding 4 alone)	66	11·8
5 or 6	2	18·2
Marital status		
Single	7,346	6·0
Married	1,490	3·6
Widowed/divorced/separated	668	3·9
Not stated	207	6·8
Number of previous children		
0	6,693	6·0
1	1,535	5·8
2	854	3·1
3	376	3·2
4	152	4·0
5 and over	78	4·1

[1] Number of abortions at gestation weeks 18 and over

[2] As a percentage of all abortions

[3] Statutory grounds

1. The continuance of pregnancy would involve risk to the life of the pregnant woman greater than if the pregnancy were terminated.

2. The continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk of injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman greater than if the pregnancy were terminated.

3. The continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk or injury to the physical or mental health of any existing child(ren) in the family of the pregnant woman greater than if the pregnancy were terminated.

4. There is a substantial risk that if the child were born it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped.

5. To save the life of the pregnant mother.

6. To prevent grave permanent injury to the physical or mental health of the child.

Number of previous legal terminations and spontaneous miscarriages[1]

Previous number	*Legal terminations*		*Spontaneous miscarriages*	
	Number	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*
0	8,146	5·6	9,143	5·4
1	1,346	4·3	444	4·1
2	168	3·9	83	4·2
3	34	4·4	14	3·1
4	4	2·2	11	6·5
5+	2	2·8	5	4·5
Unknown	23	2·3	23	2·3

[1] The notification form for abortions carried out under the Abortion Act 1967 requires information about previous abortions to the women concerned to be recorded, distinguishing between spontaneous miscarriages and legal terminations.
Notifications having at least one previous spontaneous miscarriage and also at least one previous legal termination, and women having more than one abortion under the Act in 1988 will be counted more than once in the statistics.

Yorkshire Regional Health Authority

15. **Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for health when he last met the chairman of the Yorkshire regional health authority; and what was discussed.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State last met the chairman of the Yorkshire regional health authority on the 14 November 1989 to discuss matters relating to the management of the NHS.

52. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to meet the chairman of the Yorkshire regional health authority; and what matters he proposes to discuss.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health will be meeting all regional chairmen on 17 January 1990 to discuss matters relating to National Health Service management.

NHS Reform

19. **Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy to hold a referendum in health authority areas which propose to opt out of their local hospitals.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Government do not consider that it would be sensible for the proposed management changes in the NHS to be the subject of any ballot. There is no question of any hospital opting out of the NHS.

118. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give his latest assessment of the expert and lay public support for his National Health Service modernisation proposals.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have been greatly encouraged by the constructive support that I have received for the proposed improvements to the Health Service. Many of the individual letters I have received from members of the public endorse some or all of the proposals. The proposals are being increasingly backed by members of the health professions. The Health Reform Group, recently formed under the chairmanship of Professor Richard Lilford, is a good example of medical support for the reforms. The long established Hospital and Consultants Association has publicly disassociated itself from and disapproved of the BMA's campaign against the reforms. The National Association of Health Authorities has always given general support to our proposals.

72. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received from the Health Reform group, under the chairmanship of Professor Richard Lilford, concerning the proposals contained in the White Paper on reform of the National Health Service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have received representations on the detail of the reform process by the Health Reform Group. A meeting between Ministers and the group is planned early in the new year when further contributions from members of the group will be received.

I am pleased to welcome the formation of this and indeed any Group of those working within the health Service who wish to propose constructive dialogue on the detail of Health Service reforms.

46. **Mr. Maples:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on progress on the implementation of National Health Service reforms.

73. **Mr. Quentin Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress is being made on the implementation of the proposed reforms of the National Health Service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We are making good progress in putting into action the changes outlined in the White Paper "Working for Patients". I am confident that the NHS will be ready to implement the basic elements of the new and better systems of matching growth and resources with expansion of patient services by April 1991 once Parliament approves the necessary legislation. We have made £82 million available to finance progress towards implementation this year with a further £257 million available for initiatives in 1990-91.

We have issued detailed guidance on many subjects including the new contracting system for all district health authority hospitals and community units and on education and training for non-medical staff. We shall be publishing shortly a GP fund holder programme which will give more details about the operation of a GP practice fund.

We have recently launched a project to support district health authorities in detailed work in developing the key role which DHA's will have under the new system of identifying and obtaining the best pattern of services which will most effectively meet all the health needs of the population they serve.

We have received more than 180 expressions of interest from potential NHS hospital trusts. Seventy nine of them are proceeding towards being the first wave of applicants for trust status within the NHS in April 1991 and I expect many more to be ready for later waves of applicants in future years.

We have made £2 million available for implementation of medical audit this year. A £4·5 million scheme has been launched to develop information technology skills. Demonstration projects, aimed at improving the quality of care and services to patients, have been announced for five out-patient departments. The principles of general management are being introduced into the family practitioner committee system.

Good progress is also being made in relation to medical education and research. As I explained in a speech on 10 July, since sent to all hospital doctors, I intend to take powers to ensure, for instance the continuation of high standards of undergraduate, postgraduate and continuing medical education and research in all NHS hospitals. I will also ensure that postgraduate training posts are provided in NHS hospital trusts in accordance with the national objectives set out in "Achieving a Balance". Medical education and research will be further enhanced by the proposed increase in the service increment for teaching (SIFT) to meet 100 per cent. of the median excess costs of teaching hospitals. This will be distributed by Regions in consultation with universities.

The National Health Service and Community Care Bill is now before the House.

41. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about the units which have applied to become National Health Service hospital trusts.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No units will apply for NHS trust status until Parliament has approved the necessary legislation.

38. **Mrs. Rosie Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what criteria he intends to use in assessing applications by district health authority units, hospitals and related services for self-governing status when such applications if successful would result in all of a district health authority services becoming self-governing.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No units will apply for NHS trust status until Parliament has approved the necessary legislation. The key criteria were set out in working paper No. 1, "Self-governing Hospitals" and the outline application document circulated under EL(89)MB/148, which has been placed in the Library, set out the criteria in more detail. Each application will be judged on its own merits taking into account local circumstances. It may be sensible for services in some relatively small, cohesive districts to apply for trust status as a single entity. In any such case I would need to consider the overall size and manageability of the proposed trust; the extent to which services and management were integrated; the implications for patient choice and competition; and the views of staff and local people.

28. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether there are any experiments taking place to assess how the proposed National Health Service reforms would work.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Health Service is undertaking a wide range of projects designed to inform the implementation of the Government's proposals to improve services.

Social Workers

20. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the extent to which social worker qualifications will be recognised across the European Community after 1992.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Under the first EC directive on the mutual recognition of qualifications, social workers holding a qualification awarded on completion of at least three years higher education and training preparing them for the profession will be entitled to have their qualification recognised by any member state which requires such a qualification. They may in some circumstances be required to have professional experience or to undergo an adaptation period. A second directive covering qualifications awarded upon completion of courses of less than three years has been proposed and is currently under consideration in Brussels.

Health Promotion and Education

21. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will increase the level of investment in health promotion and health education programmes.

Mr. Freeman: The importance that the Government attach to health education and health promotion is demonstrated by the increases to the Health Education Authority's budget. This stands at £28 million, nearly three times the 1986 budget of its predecessor the Health Education Council. The allocation for the coming financial year is still to be determined. In addition, health authorities spend an unquantifiable amount of their resources on a whole range of educative and promotional activity.

Drugs

22. **Mr. Robert B. Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his latest estimate of the savings to the National Health Service drugs bill as a result of the limited list of drugs.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In 1985-86 the selected list scheme saved £75 million on the drugs bill. It is not possible to make meaningful estimates for subsequent years but there is every reason to believe that significant savings continue to be made.

32. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he intends making any new recommendations on the labelling of drugs available *(a)* on prescription and *(b)* over the counter to the general public.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have commented on a European Community (EC) Commission consultative document suggesting, amongst other things, revision of EC directive requirements on medicines labels. The EC Commission is expected to put a formal proposal for a directive to the Council of Ministers early in the New Year. It would be counterproductive and contrary to our EC obligations to revise the United Kingdom Medicines (Labelling) Regulations before the adoption of the new directive.

Ambulance Dispute

23. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will meet representatives of ambulance staff to discuss pay and conditions.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave earlier today.

75. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions have been held by his Department with the Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel concerning the present ambulance dispute.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Ministers and officials held several meetings with representatives of the Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel before I decided on 1 December to accept a body comprising the Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel and representatives of the employing authorities and health departments as a negotiating body for ambulancemen and women.

25. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a further statement on the ambulance dispute.

26. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will make a statement about the ambulance service dispute.

45. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last met ambulance crews' union representatives about the pay dispute.

47. **Mr. Barry Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received concerning the ambulance men's dispute; and if he will make a statement.

96. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about the ambulance dispute.

123. **Mr. Buckley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, if he will meet representatives of ambulance staff to discuss pay and conditions.

130. **Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will meet representatives of ambulance staff to discuss pay and conditions.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friends and the hon. Members to the reply that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State gave to my hon. Friends the Members for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) and for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) and the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) earlier today.

Spastics Society

24. **Mr. Hood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to meet the Spastics Society to discuss community care.

51. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he next expects to meet the Spastics Society; and what matters he hopes to discuss.

91. **Mr. Frank Cook:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to meet the Spastics Society to discuss community care.

95. **Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to meet the Spastics Society to discuss community care.

127. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to meet the Spastics Society to discuss community care.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has no plans to meet the Spastics Society in the immediate future. However, my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and with responsibility for the disabled met representatives of the society on Monday 11 December to discuss conductive education.

Stockport Hospitals

27. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to visit Stockport to inspect its hospitals.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has no plans to visit Stockport. However, I hope to visit Stockport sometime early next year.

Clegg Report

29. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will establish an independent tribunal to investigate any changes in ambulance men's duties since the Clegg report.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: One of the suggestions made in 1979 in the Clegg report for joint examination by the employers and unions was the possibility of introducing, at no overall increase in cost, an all-in salary for qualified ambulance men and women. Such a salary was introduced at substantial additional cost in 1986 and led to radical changes in working practices. The offer made to the trade unions includes a joint review of the 1986 agreement in the light of three years' experience.

"The Future of Medicine in Liverpool"

30. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received in respect of proposals contained in the report "The Future of Medicine in Liverpool", commissioned by the Mersey regional health authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have received various representations. These proposals are a matter for the health authorities concerned. I understand that the Liverpool and South Sefton health authorities are considering the report's recommendations.

Hip Replacements

31. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hip replacement operations per year are being carried out by the National Health Service now; and what was the figure in 1979.

Mr. Freeman: The estimated number of total hip replacement and other arthroplasty of hip operations performed on in-patients discharged from NHS non-psychiatric hospitals in England in 1986 (the last year for which information is available centrally) and 1979 were 40,900 and 30,730 respectively.

115. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hip replacement operations were carried out in the Yorkshire regional health authority area in the five years between 1974 and 1979 and between 1983 and 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is given in the table. 1986 is the last year for which information is available centrally.

Estimated number of total hip replacement and other arthroplasty of hip operations performed on in-patients discharged from NHS non-psychiatric hospitals, Yorkshire regional health authority

	Number
1974	1,550
1975	1,700
1976	1,790
1977	1,630
1978	1,740
1979	1,870
1983	2,620
1984	2,540
1985	2,470
1986	2,700

Hospitals, Central Manchester

33. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the proposals for opting out by hospitals in central Manchester.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The decision on whether or not to prepare a formal application for National Health Service trust status, when Parliament has approved the necessary legislation, is a matter for the sponsors of the expression of interest in the unit concerned. There is no question of any hospital "opting out" of the National Health Service.

Community Care

34. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received concerning the impact of the community care White Paper on the mental health services.

Mr. Freeman: We have received two representations concerning the impact on mental health services of the Government's White Paper on community care, and are considering both carefully.

35. **Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to meet the Association of Metropolitan Authorities to discuss the role of local authorities in community care policy formulation.

70. **Mr. Wall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to meet the Association of Metropolitan Authorities to discuss the role of local authorities in community care policy formulation.

80. **Mr. Litherland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to meet the Association of Metropolitan Authorities to discuss the role of local authorities in community care policy formulation.

90. **Mr. John Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he next expects to meet the Association of Metropolitan Authorities; and what matters he hopes to discuss.

110. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to meet the Association of Metropolitan Authorities to discuss the role of local authorities in community care policy formulation.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I met representatives of the Association of metropolitan Authorities (AMA) on 2 November and again on 16 November to discuss community care. Officials have been meeting regularly with officers of the association over recent months to discuss a range of community care issues, including detailed financial matters. We shall continue to engage in regular consultation with the AMA and the other Local Authority Associations as we plan the implementation of our proposals for community care which were set out in our recent White Paper, "Caring for People" (Cm. 849).

36. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what comments he has received on the White Paper on community care.

78. **Mr. Adams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what comments he has received on the White Paper on community care.

82. **Mr. Cunliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what comments he has received on the White Paper on community care.

108. **Mr. Andrew Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what comments he has received in response to the community care White Paper.

119. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what comments he has received on the White Paper on community care.

120. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received since the

publication of the White Paper on Community care and the publication of the National Health Service and Community Care Bill.

121. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received in the White Paper on community care; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have received several representations following publication of our White Paper "Caring for People: Community Care in the Next Decade and Beyond'. Most have expressed a general welcome for our proposals. Some have raised detailed concerns about a number of implementation issues which we shall be discussing with representatives of the local authority associations and other interested parties as part of our preparations for implementation in April 1991.

37. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on services for disabled patients and the Government's proposals for community care.

94. **Sir David Price:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about care for the disabled and the elderly.

Mr. Freeman: The Government's policies for improving health services and community care for all are set out in our White Papers, "Working for Patients" (Cm 555) and "Caring for People" (Cm 849). Under the proposals for NHS services district health authorities will be responsible for seeing that the needs of all their resident population, including elderly people and those with disabilities, are met and that patients have access to a comprehensive range of high quality, value for money services. Paragraph 2.12 of "Caring for People" sets out our particular priorities for health and community care for elderly people and people with disabilities. They are to promote positive and healthy lifestyles, promote coherent networks of local services designed to assist people to live dignified and independent lives in their own homes, provide a full range of appropriate health care facilities for those who require it, avoid unnecessary institutional care by ensuring that decisions on the provisions of services are made on the basis of assessed need, and ensure improved access to information about local and national facilities including respite care, and a greater involvement of patients, clients and carers in the development of services. In addition under our new contract for general medical practitioners GPs will be expected to offer a visit to those aged 75 or over to see their home environment, find out whether carers and relatives are available and to assess social, physical and mental well-being.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will make it his policy to provide adequate financial resources to ensure that care in the community is matched to the needs of individuals in each community.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 6 December 1989]:* We recognise that local authorities will need adequate resources for their enhanced responsibilities under the community care proposals outlined in our White Paper "Caring for People: Community Care in the Next Decade and Beyond", published on 16 November. This will be achieved by transferring to the local authorities the resources that the Government would otherwise have provided to finance care through social security payments to people in residential and nursing homes. We also recognise that the numbers of people needing support are growing, so the transfer will take account of demographic factors. With funding coming principally through the revenue support grant, local authorities will be able to make their own decisions on individual community care needs based on local knowledge.

124. **Mr. Arbuthnot:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on mentally ill patients and the Government's proposals for community care.

Mr. Freeman: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) on 14 November at column *193*, following which the Government's White Paper on community care entitled "Caring for People" was published.

103. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a further statement on the provision of community care for the mentally ill.

Mr. Freeman: Our recent White Paper on community care entitled "Caring for People", published on 16 November, sets out the Government's position on the provision of community care for mentally ill people.

101. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the general practitioner services required by disabled people who have left hospitals and institutions to live in the community are considered to be part of a general practitioner's obligation under the National Health Service or to be so exceptional as to require extra payment.

Mr. Freeman: Within the National Health Service, a general practitioner is obliged to provide to his patients all necessary and appropriate personal medical services. This includes arranging for the referral of patients, as appropriate, to any other services provided under the NHS, such as the community nursing services, or by a local social services authority. We have no plans for extra payments to general practitioners for providing these services to disabled patients who are returning to live in the community.

48. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals he has in mind to acknowledge and ascertain the views of carers on policy formulation on community care.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We intend to ensure that representatives of carers are consulted on, and involved in, planning for the implementation of our community care proposals. Officials at the Department meet regularly with national organisations representing carers to discuss matters of common concern and we have already received some initial views on how best to secure the involvement of carers in the implementation process.

Patients

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many out-patients are being treated per year by the National Health Service now and what was the figure in 1979.

39. **Mr. Burt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total number of patients being treated per year by the National Health Service now; and what was the figure in 1979.

43. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many day patients are being treated per year by the National Health Service; and what was the figure in 1979.

116. **Mr. Irvine:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many in-patients are being treated by the National Health Service at the present time; and what was the figure in 1979.

125. **Mr. Hanley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many in-patients were treated on the National Health Service in the years 1978 and 1988.

Mr. Freeman: The information will be contained in a statistical bulletin which is currently being prepared for publication. Copies of the bulletin will be placed in the Library.

Joint Planning

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is planning to take to improve joint planning in England and Wales.

40. **Mr. Ray Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is planning to take to improve joint planning in England and Wales.

49. **Mr. Jack Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is planning to take to improve joint planning in England and Wales.

111. **Mr. Caborn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is planning to take to improve joint planning in England and Wales.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The changes proposed in the White Papers, "Working for Patients" and "Caring for People", provide new and stronger incentives for joint planning. We are currently considering further measures to ensure effective joint planning.

National Health Service Funding

42. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a further statement on the funding announced for the National Health Service for the year 1990-91.

56. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much funding the National Health Service will receive in 1990-91; and how much funding it received in 1978-79.

57. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what will be the level of funding for the National Health Service in the next financial year; and what it was in 1979.

79. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much the Government will spend on the National Health Service 1990-91; and how much it spent in 1978-79.

Mr. Freeman: In 1990-91 the Government plan to spend nearly £22 billion on the National Health Service in England, which taken together with income from land sales, charges and other receipts means that gross expenditure next year will be over £23·3 billion. In addition, if health authorities do no more than they have achieved in recent years they will have a further £150 million from their cost improvement programmes.

In 1978-79 Government spending on the NHS amounted to £6·3 billion and gross expenditure totalled £6·5 billion. Planned expenditure for 1990-91 represents an increase of 45 per cent. in real terms over and above general inflation.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received on the level of funding for the National Health Service in the northern region.

Mr. Freeman: We have received no recent representations on the allocation of funds to the Northern regional health authority.

102. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the increase in funding to the National Health Service northern region between 1983 and 1989; and what increase has occurred in the number of in-patients, out-patients and day case patients.

Mr. Freeman: The information is given in the tables.

Increase in revenue funding of Northern regional health authority between 1982-83 and 1989-90

Cash terms Per cent.	*Real terms Per cent.*
65·4	14·5

Patients treated in NHS hospitals, Northern regional health authority, 1983 and 1988-89

	1983	*1988-89*	*Change Number*	*Per cent.*
In-patient cases	409,115	461,033	51,918	13
Day cases[1]	66,093	90,445	24,352	37
New out-patients	557,120	591,378	34,253	6
Total out-patient attendances	2,451,627	2,474,700	23,073	1

[1] 1988-89 figure is provisional

Source: 1983, SH3 return, 1988-89 SH3a, KP70, KH09, KH18 returns.

53. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of gross domestic product was spent on the National Health Service in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what was the percentage in 1978.

Mr. Freeman: The percentage of gross domestic product spent on the National Health Service was 4·9 per cent. in 1978 and 5·2 per cent. in 1988, the most recent year for which the figures are available.

Radiation (Compensation)

44. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he will pay the outstanding portion of compensation to those damaged by excessive doses of radiation administered as chemotherapy at the Royal Devon and Exeter hospital, Exeter; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Settlements are being reached under agreed arrangements between Exeter health authority and representatives of the patients concerned. Some settlements have been made and others are expected to follow shortly. Meanwhile agreed "out of pocket" expenses have been paid without delay.

63. **Sir Peter Emery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health on what basis the two senior physicians, who were responsible for the errors that resulted in 207 patients receiving a severe overdose of radiation, have been granted compensation for the loss of their jobs; and how much compensation has been awarded to each individual.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The severance arrangements for the two physicists concerned are a matter for Exeter health authority.

General Practitioners

50. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received about the general practitioner contract.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) on 28 November 1989 at column *222*.

71. **Mr. John Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average size of general practitioners' patients lists at the current time; and what it was in 1979.

104. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients there are on the average general practitioners' list now and in 1979.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The average number of patients on the list of unrestricted principals in England at 1 October 1988 was 1,999, compared with 2,286 in 1979.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he expects new money to be made available for those general practitioners who will work harder in order to gain from the new contract.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: General practitioners who work hardest in providing a comprehensive service and thereby attract and keep patients on their lists will be better paid in future. The cost of the new contract is a matter on which the Government is awaiting the advice of the review body on doctors' and dentists' remuneration. The review body's report is expected early in 1990.

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many general practitioners there are in the National Health Service now and in 1979.

107. **Mr. Gale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of general practitioners employed by the National Health Service now and in 1979.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The number of unrestricted principals in England at 1 October 1988 was 25,322 compared with 21,357 in 1979.

85. **Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total number of support staff employed by general practitioners at present and in 1979.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The total number of staff qualifying for direct reimbursement under the ancillary staff scheme increased by 70 per cent. from 33,721 (20,121 whole-time equivalents) in 1979 to 57,410 (33,863 whole-time equivalents) in 1988. A few general practitioners employ support staff outside the scope of the present scheme; information about these staff is not collected centrally.

Nurses and Midwives

54. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many regrading appeals by midwives and nurses in England and Wales have been considered; and how many remain outstanding.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information on appeals to district health authorities in England is not collected centrally. The position in Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

129. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many representations he has received in support of the Commons Select Committee on Social Services recommendation on midwives' grading; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have received a number of representations in connection with the midwives' lobby of Parliament on 23 November. The Government made clear our position on the Select Committee's recommendations in the response that we published in June.

126. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last met representatives of the midwifery profession to discuss their grading.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I and my ministerial colleagues have met representatives of midwives on a number of occassions to discuss a range of matters. The issue of grading was specifically raised most recently when the Royal College of Midwives met my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State in December last year.

122. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many nurses are employed by the National Health Service now and in 1979.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There were 380,260 whole-time equivalent nursing staff (including agency staff, learners and unqualified staff but excluding midwifery staff) employed in the National Health Service in England at 30 September 1988 compared to 338,070 whole time equivalents at 30 September 1979. The 1979 figure has not been adjusted to take account of the reduction in the nurses working week (from 40 to 37½hours) during 1980-81.

83. **Sir Marcus Fox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many midwives are employed by the National Health Service now and in 1979.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There were 23,620 whole time equivalent midwifery staff (including agency staff and students) employed in the National Health Service in England at 30 September 1988 compared to 20,380 whole time equivalents at 30 September 1979. The 1979 figure has not been adjusted to take account of the reduction in the nurses working week (from 40 to 37½hours) during 1980-81.

Medical Negligence

55. **Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people received compensation either out of court or after litigation for medical negligence in the past year.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

British Medical Association

58. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last met the chairman of the British Medical Association; and what matters they discussed.

131. **Mr. Day:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last met members of the British Medical Association: and what matters were discussed.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friends to the reply that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) and to the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) earlier today.

Trent Regional Health Authority

59. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he next expects to meet the chairman of the Trent regional health authority to discuss allocation of resources to the National Health Service.

Mr. Freeman: At the moment, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has no plans to meet Sir Michael Carlisle specifically to discuss resource allocation. However, my right hon. and learned Friend will be meeting all regional chairman in January to discuss a wide range of issues.

Eye Tests

60. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research has been carried out on the impact of the number of people seeking eye tests following the introduction of the charge.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We plan to commission a survey shortly into the number of sight tests being carried out. At present the market is still very unsettled and it is too early yet to assess accurately any impact of recent sight testing legislation.

62. **Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of the reduction in eye examinations following the introduction of charges in the Sunderland, Durham and Hartlepool health authorities.

93. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of the reduction in eye examinations, following the introduction of charges.

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of the change in the number of eye examinations following the introduction of charges.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the number of general ophthalmic service sight tests carried out since April will be known.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information is now collected from family practitioner committees on a six-monthly basis. Data for the period April to September 1989 is not yet available; the Department is still awaiting statistical returns from some family practitioner committees.

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of the reduction in eye examinations following the introduction of charges.

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of the reduction in eye examinations, following the introduction of charges.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Such estimates have not been made.

Self-governing Hospitals

61. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress is being made by those hospitals which have expressed an interest in becoming National Health Service self-governing hospitals.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A total of 188 units have expressed interest in NHS trust status. In the reply that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) on 3 November at columns *389-90* he indicated that 79 units currently intended to prepare draft applications for NHS trust status in 1991. This remains the situation. The decision on whether or not to prepare a formal application for NHS trust status is a matter for the sponsors of the expression of interest in the unit concerned. Applications will not be invited until Parliament has approved the necessary legislation.

Cataract Operations

64. **Mr. David Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cataract operations each year are being carried out by the National Health Service at the present time; and what was the figure in 1979.

Mr. Freeman: The estimated number of operations on eye lenses (mainly cataract) performed on in-patients discharged from NHS non-psychiatric hospitals in England in 1986 (the last year for which information is available centrally) and 1979 were 62,200 and 40,110 respectively.

Paramedics

65. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to set up a new paramedics service separately from hospital drivers.

86. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to restructure the ambulance service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is, and will remain, for health authorities to decide the form and extent of patient transport services which best meet their needs.

Organ Transplants

66. **Dame Jill Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to improve the supply of human organs for transplant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: On 16 November I held a seminar on ways of improving the voluntary donation of organs. The discussion covered several alternative approaches to organ donation. Participants discussed the implications of recent research, particularly the audit of deaths in intensive care units which was initiated by the Department of Health. The seminar highlighted a number of questions, mainly of a medical and ethical nature, which require further consideration by those involved in organ donation.

I will shortly be studying the transcript of the proceedings before deciding what further steps may be necessary. I am grateful to my hon. Friend and many others for taking part in the seminar.

Hospital Bed Shortages

67. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects present hospital bed shortages to be reduced to 1979 levels.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The treatment of patients is more important than bed numbers. Since 1979, the number of inpatient admissions has risen by over 22 per cent. and the number of day case admissions by over 48 per cent. (both to March 1988), while waiting lists, taken on a comparable basis, have fallen by 6 per cent. (to March 1989).

National Health Service and Community Care Bill

68. **Mr. Hayes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the National Health Service and Community Care Bill and services to patients.

99. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on patient care and the National Health Service and Community Care Bill.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The aim of our proposals is to raise the level of services in all parts of the National Health Service closer to the standards already achieved by the best and so produce a better quality of care for all patients. District health authorities will have the specific responsibility of ensuring the availability of a full range of services for all patients living within their boundaries. They will use contracts to specify the nature and quality of the services to be provided. Hospitals will have more freedom to manage their own affairs and so will be able to respond better and more quickly to individual patients and their general practitioners. Our plans will improve the service on admission to hospital by providing: more reliable appointment times; better facilities for waiting and counselling; more information about services available and on clinical matters concerning their own care as well as a wider range of optional extras and amenities.

The effect of these, and the other proposals will be to make the National Health Service more patient conscious and better able to provide high quality services.

North Western Regional Health Authority

69. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the financing of the North Western regional health authority in 1990-91.

Mr. Freeman: Allocations to regional health authorities for 1990-91 will be announced later this month in the usual way. All regions will benefit from the extra £2·6 billion resources available for the health service next year in the United Kingdom.

West Midlands Regional Health Authority

74. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last met the chairman of the West Midlands regional health authority; and what matters were discussed.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State last met the chairman of West Midlands regional health authority, together with other regional chairmen, at one of his regular meetings with them on 15 November. A number of matters of interest to them were discussed.

Community Hospitals

76. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what general guidance he intends to give to regional health authorities regarding the provision of a full range of services in small community hospitals serving rural areas; and whether he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It will be for district health authorities to ensure that a comprehensive range of services is provided for their resident populations. In placing contracts, districts will take into account the services offered by community hospitals.

Infertility

77. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many district health authorities provide infertility investigations and treatment.

92. **Mr. Eadie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many district health authorities provide infertility investigations and treatment.

112. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the provision of infertility investigations and treatment.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not held centrally. It is for local health authorities to determine the priorities and resources to be given to infertility in the light of local needs and circumstances.

Liverpool Area Health Authority

81. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many beds have been closed by Liverpool area health authority in each of the past three years.

Mr. Freeman: We do not hold this information centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of Liverpool health authority.

Acute Hospital Beds

84. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the number of acute hospital beds in the west midlands *(a)* in 1979 and *(b)* in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Freeman: In 1979 there were 14,669 average daily available acute beds within NHS hospitals in West Midlands regional health authority. The corresponding figure for the 1988-89 financial year was 12,528. In the same period, acute in-patient cases rose from 434,673 to 530,580 (provisional) and the number of acute day cases rose from 50,678 to 97,950 (provisional).

Private Hospitals

87. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what figures he has for the number of patients treated in private hospitals in 1988; and what proportion of all non-emergency surgical operations were carried out in such hospitals.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We do not collect this information centrally.

West Norfolk and Wisbech HA

88. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received from West Norfolk and Wisbech health authority about the current level of waiting lists.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: None.

Rugby HA

89. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients were treated by the Rugby health authority in *(a)* 1988-89 and *(b)* 1978-79.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The available information is given in the table.

Patients treated, NHS hospitals, Rugby district health authority 1978, 1988-89

	[1]*1978*	*1988-89*
In-patient cases treated	7,658	11,160
Day case admissions	407	910
New out-patients	11,501	13,773

Source: 1978 SH3, 1988-89 SH3a, KP70, KH09 returns.

[1] In 1978, the area covered by the current Rugby DHA was a district within Warwickshire area health authority.

Beds and Operation Lists

97. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on the number of district health authorities that will be cutting beds and operations lists before the end of the financial year.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We do not hold the information requested centrally. The provision of local health services is the responsibility of local health authorities subject to local needs and priorities.

Doctors

98. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many doctors are employed by the National Health Service now and in 1979.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The numbers are as follows:

	England Number
1979	61,554
1988	70,866

Includes permanent paid and honorary staff. Excludes hospital practitioners and para 94 appointments in the hospital and community health services (clinical assistants) and includes GPs.

Operations (Costs)

100. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has as to the comparable costs of identical operations in different health districts and hospitals.

Mr. Freeman: The costs of particular operations are not collected centrally.

Haemophiliacs

105. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations he has received on the question of compensation for haemophiliacs who have been infected with HIV as a consequence of treatment in the National Health Service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department has received more than 300 representations on this question but compensation is a matter for the courts.

Recently we announced that an additional £19 million has been offered to the Macfarlane Trust, again on an entirely ex gratia basis. For the details I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. and learned Friend gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) on 23 November at columns *11-12*.

Tranquillisers

109. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what impact he expects the National Health Service reforms to have on the prescription of tranquillisers and other anxiety-reducing drugs by general medical practitioners.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Indicative prescribing budgets will encourage GPs to examine critically all of their prescribing to ensure that it is clinically justified. GPs are already well aware of the need to prescribe tranquillisers with great care as demonstrated by the reduction in the number of prescriptions for benzodiazepines from 30·9 million in 1979 to 23·2 million in 1988 in Great Britain. We expect this trend to continue.

Health Advisory Service

114. **Mr. Alexander:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received on the working of the Health advisory service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Two representations have been received in the last year, one from a health authority and one from a journalist. The Department of Health is currently examining the work of the Health Advisory Service to identify how it might be undertaken effectively following implementation of the proposals in the White Paper "Working for Patients".

Elderly People

106. **Mr. Charles Wardle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the National Health Service and Community Care Bill and elderly patients.

Mr. Freeman: Elderly patients will have much to gain from our proposals to improve the Health Service. The Government are fully aware of the special needs of the increasing numbers of elderly people. District health authorities will have specific responsibility to ensure the availability of a full range of services for all the people living within their boundaries, including elderly people. Health authorities will enter into contracts with those hospitals which can best provide the quality of care needed with the minimum of delay. Our proposals in the Bill as well as in the new GPs contract regulations are designed to bring about better quality health care for all patients, including elderly people.

117. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the future of local authority residential care for the elderly.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Our policy on local authority residential care is set out in our recent White Paper, "Caring for People".

Brittle Bone Disease

128. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence he has as to the extent of brittle bone disease amongst older women.

Mr. Freeman: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to the condition of osteoporosis which primarily, but not exclusively, affects women after the menopause. There is little data available on trends in osteoporosis. One marker which is, however, used is hospital episodes* for hip fractures (fracture of neck of femur). The figures for hospital episodes for fracture of neck of femur (ICD 820) for 1987-88 are:

i. estimated number of persons (all ages) 44,780;
ii. estimated number of females (all ages) 35,360;
iii. estimated number of females (75 years and over) 27,020.

* A hospital episode is a period of continuous care in the same district under one consultant.

Beds (Nottingham DHA)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many National Health Service beds there are in Nottingham district health authority area at the present time and how many there were in 1979.

Mr. Freeman: During the 1988-89 financial year there were on average 3,520 available beds in Nottingham district health authority. The corresponding figure for 1979 was 4,198. During this period there was a 67 per cent. increase in through put (in-patient per available bed), from 17·6 to 29·5, and a 38 per cent. increase in in-patient and day cases treated, from 81,292 to 112,018.

Stillbirths

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many stillbirths occurred in 1987 at *(a)* 24 weeks', *(b)* 25 weeks', *(c)* 26 weeks', and *(d)* 27 weeks' gestation; and how many suffered from handicaps.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is not available.

Under the Births and Deaths Registration Act of 1953 a stillbirth is defined as

"a child which has issued forth from its mother after the twenty-eighth week of pregnancy and which did not at any time after being completely expelled from its mother breathe or show any signs of life, and the expression 'stillbirth' shall be construed accordingly".

West Lambeth Health Authority

Ms. Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how much money and fees have been paid to the Industrial Society or its consultants by the West Lambeth health authority over the past year;

(2) how much money has been paid out in voluntary redundancy payments to senior management in St. Thomas's hospital and who authorised these payments;

(3) how much money has been spent on the employment of management consultants between February and October by the West Lambeth health authority; how this expenditure was authorised and what tendering procedures were followed.

Mr. Freeman: The detailed information requested is not collected centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of the West Lambeth health authority who may be able to assist.

Market Research

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many market research and sample surveys were carried out by or for his Department in the past 12 months; what was the cost of each; what was the total cost; how many were carried out in-house; how many were carried out for his Department by outside organisations; and what percentage of the total expenditure was paid to outside organisations.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A total of 25 market research and sample surveys were completed during the last 12 months. The surveys are listed in the table along with the cost:

Survey title	*Cost* £
Smoking Among Secondary Schoolchildren	59,094
Why Children Smoke	79,299
Adult Dental Health	264,390
General Household Survey 1988-89	69,277
NOP Omnibus—Questions on Smoking	16,987
Discount Survey (of NHS Drugs Purchases) amongst Retail Chemists	61,000
Sample Surveys of the Earnings and Expenses of General Medical Practitioners, General Dental Practitioners and the Earnings of Hospital Doctors (3 surveys)	135,240
Sample survey of non-associate dentists to confirm their non-associate status	7,500
Sample survey of associate dentists to confirm their associate status and obtain dates of their accounting year	12,500
Sample survey of associate dentists to obtain earnings and expenses	11,000
Use made by GPs of Computers	5,000
NHS Road Show Research	8,832
Drugs 89-90 Strategy Research	25,185
Nursing Tracking 1989-90	18,584
Male Nursing Recruitment	22,954
Drugs 88-89 Campaign Evaluation	41,745
Drugs 88-89 Campaign: Qualitative Evaluation	42,500
General Medical Practitioners Computing Survey	16,500
Nursing Careers: 1988 Tracking Study	36,409
Cold Weather Campaign Evaluation 1988-89	17,802
Nursing Recruitment Campaign Telephone Response Follow up	7,389
Residential Care (Staff and Residents)	5,200
Home Care	3,275

Survey title	*Cost* £
The total actual and estimated cost of these surveys was	967,662

Eighteen of these surveys were carried out by outside organisations and data on two surveys carried out in house was processed by outside organisations; 90 per cent. of the total expenditure was paid to outside organisations (which included other Government Departments such as the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys).

European Community

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what changes will be made to the residence conditions for local authority welfare services in respect of citizens of other member states of the European Community following the completion of the internal market in 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No changes are proposed. EC citizens with the right of residence in the United Kingdom and who are ordinarily resident here will as now be eligible for local authority personal social services.

Cancer Screening

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the average period of time from testing and screening of women for *(a)* cervical cancer, and *(b)* breast cancer until the results are known in the Sunderland, Durham and Hartlepool area health authorities; and what is the comparable figure for the rest of the country;

(2) what is the average period of waiting for patients who are to receive radio therapy from the time of the results of the breast screening test and treatment in the Durham, Sunderland and Hartlepool area health authorities, and what is the comparable figure for the rest of the country.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information on the processing of cervical screening tests is not available in the form requested. Our guidance to health authorities states that laboratories must aim to send results to the doctor who submitted a smear within one month of receiving it. Laboratory processing times are monitored by the Department on a quarterly basis. The information collected relates only to those district health authorities (DHAs) which are failing to meet this one month target time. As at September 1989 (the latest data available) over 75 per cent. of DHAs were meeting this target. Laboratories in South West Durham and Hartlepool DHAs were taking eight and six weeks respectively to report on smears. I understand, however, that the December return is expected to show an improvement.

Information on the average time taken to notify women of the result of their screening test and of waiting for radiotherapy treatment under the breast screening programme is not collected centrally.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will encourage his Department to initiate a call and re-call scheme for women of 40-plus years to test for ovarian cancer.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It has yet to be demonstrated that such a scheme would lead to a reduction in mortality. The Department will keep this matter under review.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what resources are being made available to the Northern regional health authority to provide a mass mammogram screening service in the North-East.

Mr. Freeman: Northern regional health authority has received a total of £3,618,000 over the years 1987-88 to 1989-90 to introduce and run breast cancer screening by mammography. This represents both capital and revenue allocations. Additional revenue allocated recurrently in each of these three years was built into the authority's baseline for subsequent years. At the end of the three year implementation period the amount now built into the region's baseline is £1,531,000 at 1989-90 prices.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to ensure that all women in the Northern region are invited to attend specialist breast screening units; what call and re-call systems have been set up on the Northern region to date; and in what respects these re-call systems are different from those in the rest of the country.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Arrangements for inviting women age 50-64 in the Northern regional health authority (RHA) to attend for screening under the National Health Service breast screening programme are similar to those used elsewhere in the country: women in this age group who are registered with a general practitioner will be invited, using the national computer system, for a screening test every three years. Northern RHA has also financed health education programmes, public information and publicity through a variety of media to encourage women in its region to take up their screening invitations.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has any plans to provide a mobile breast and cervical screening unit in the Durham, Sunderland and Hartlepool area health authorities; and if he will list the locations in the United Kingdom where such mobile units are operating.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The decision to use mobile units to deliver the National Health Service breast screening service for women aged 50 to 64 years is a matter for regional health authorities to determine.

I understand that women in Sunderland will be invited to attend a static unit located at the Sunderland general hospital and that mobile units will be used to provide the service to women in Durham and Hartlepool. If the hon. Member requires any further information about the breast screening service in the Northern regional health authority he might contact Ms. Barbara Howe, the region's programme co-ordinator.

The table lists the district health authorities in England where mobile units are either in use or planned as part of those screening programmes operational as at 13 November 1989. A further 31 screening programmes are expected to become operational by March 1990 a number of which are expected to use mobile units.

Mobile screening units serving district health authorities as part of those screening programmes operational as at 13 November 1989

Screening programme	*District*
Northern	
Gateshead	Durham
	South Tyneside

Screening programme	*District*
Newcastle	Newcastle
	North Tyneside
	Northumberland
	North West Durham
Yorkshire	
Huddersfield	Calderdale
	Dewsbury
	Huddersfield
Hull	Hull
	East Yorkshire
	Grimsby
	Scunthorpe
York	York
	Scarborough
	Northallerton
Trent	
Nottingham	Bassetlaw
Leicester	Leicestershire
Sleaford	North Lincolnshire
	South Lincolnshire
East Anglian	
Kings Lynn	West Norfolk and Wisbech
Ipswich	East Suffolk
	West Suffolk
	Great Yarmouth and Waveney (part)
Peterborough	Peterborough
Norfolk	Norwich
	Great Yarmouth and Waveney (remainder)
North West Thames	None
North East Thames	
Epping	Redbridge
Colchester	Mid-Essex
Leytonstone (Whipps Cross)	Waltham Forest
South East Thames	
Canterbury	Canterbury and Thanet
Lewes	Brighton
South West Thames	
Guildford	Mid-Surrey
	North West Surrey
	South West Surrey
	West Surrey and North East Hampshire
	East Surrey
Worthing	Worthing
	Chichester
	Mid-Downs
Wessex	
Southampton	Salisbury
Portsmouth	Portsmouth and South East Hampshire (part)
Oxford	
Aylesbury	Aylesbury Vale
Northampton	Northampton
High Wycombe	Wycombe
Milton Keynes	Milton Keynes
South Western	
Truro	Cornwall and Isles of Scilly
Bristol	Southmead
Plymouth	Plymouth
	North Devon
West Midlands	
Stoke-on-Trent	Mid Staffordshire
	South East Staffordshire
Coventry	Rugby
	South Warwickshire
	Solihull
Dudley	Dudley
	Wolverhampton
Walsall	Walsall
	Sandwell
Birmingham	North Birmingham
	East Birmingham
	West Birmingham
Mersey	None
North Western	
Manchester	North Manchester
	Central Manchester
	South Manchester

Screening of women aged 20 to 64 for cervical cancer is performed by general practitioners or at NHS clinics.

Information on the services in the other parts of the United Kingdom is the responsibility of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and for Northern Ireland and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Laboratory Facilities (Veterinary Use)

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total income accrued to the Durham area health authority arising from the letting of laboratory facilities at Dryburn hospital for veterinary use in the years 1987-88, and 1988-89.

Mr. Freeman: This information is not available centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of Durham health authority.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which health authorities currently permit their clinical laboratory facilities to be used for veterinary purposes outside normal working hours as a means of generating additional income; and what is the nature of the veterinary work undertaken at such clinical laboratories.

Mr. Freeman: We are aware that Durham health authority lets some of its laboratory facilities to a private company outside normal working hours. The veterinary work in the laboratory takes the form of microbiological tests on animal samples.

Appointments

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the number of persons he currently appoints in the Health Service; and what were the numbers which were appointed in 1979.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State is presently responsible for appointing the chairmen of 14 regional health authorities, 190 district health authorities, 90 family practitioner committees, and eight special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals. My right hon. and learned Friend is also responsible for appointing members of regional health authorities in such numbers as he sees fit (usually 16), 30 members of each family practitioner committee, 19 members of each of the SHAs for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals (except the Eastman dental hospital which has 15 members), and the trustees (usually five) to the 22 bodies of special trustees appointed under section 95 of the NHS Act 1977 to administer trust property.

The information for 1979 is not directly comparable because of the restructuring of the National Health Service in 1982. The Secretary of State was then responsible for appointing the chairmen of 14 regional health authorities, 90 area health authorities, and 12 preserved boards of governors. He was also responsible for the appointment of members of regional health authorities, the governors of the preserved boards, and special trustees.

In addition, my right hon. and learned Friend makes some 2,000 other appointments to a variety of other public and advisory bodies whose work is related to the National Health Service.

Health and Social Services (Expenditure)

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give per capita spending on health and personal social services in cash terms and at 1987-88 prices in each year since 1979 to the latest available date for *(a)* all ages, *(b)* births, *(c)* 0 to 4 years, *(d)* 5 to 15 years *(e)* 16 to 64 years *(f)* 65 to 74 years and *(g)* 75 years and over, giving the amount spent on (i) hospital and community health services, (ii) family practitioner services, (iii) personal social services, and (iv) total in England.

Mr. Freeman: Estimates of gross current expenditure per head of population on health and personal social services, in cash and at 1987-88 prices for each year between 1979-80 and 1986-87, the latest year for which these estimates are available are given in the table.

These figures are derived through successive estimations starting with the Department's programme budget analysis, details of which are provided to the Social Services Committee and are published by the Committee in minutes of evidence associated with its report on Public Expenditure on the Social Services 1987 (HC 413). Expenditure on each of the services identified is then apportioned to different age groups from data on the use of services. Due to changes in sources and definitions, data for the earliest years may not be fully consistent with those for later years.

Estimated gross current expenditure per head of population[1]

(England)

Personal social services

£ (cash)

	All age groups	*Births*	*0-4*	*5-15*	*16-64*	*65-74*	*75+*
1979-80	35	15	45	45	10	55	210
1980-81	40	15	55	55	15	60	260
1981-82	45	20	60	65	15	65	275
1982-83	50	20	65	70	15	65	305
1983-84	55	20	70	75	20	75	330
1984-85	60	25	75	75	20	80	345
1985-86	60	25	80	80	20	80	355
1986-87	65	25	90	90	25	90	380

[1] Data rounded to nearest £5.

Family practitioner services

£ (cash)

	All age groups	*Births*	*0-4*	*5-15*	*16-64*	*65-74*	*75+*
1979-80	35	40	30	25	35	45	85
1980-81	45	50	40	30	40	60	105
1981-82	50	60	50	40	45	65	115
1982-83	66	65	55	50	50	75	125
1983-84	65	70	60	55	55	85	135
1984-85	70	80	70	60	60	100	150
1985-86	75	85	75	65	65	100	150
1986-87	80	90	85	70	70	105	160

Hospital and community health services

£ (cash)

	All Age Groups	*Births*	*0-4*	*5-15*	*16-64*	*65-74*	*75+*
1979-80	115	625	120	50	65	220	545
1980-81	145	790	145	60	80	290	710
1981-82	160	915	150	70	85	325	770
1982-83	175	1,005	160	75	90	340	840
1983-84	185	1,025	160	75	95	370	875
1984-85	195	1,075	175	80	100	395	925
1985-86	200	1,110	185	90	105	390	970
1986-87	215	1,185	195	95	110	415	1,030

Total for above services

	All Age Groups	*Births*	*0-4*	*5-15*	*16-64*	*65-74*	*£ (cash)* *75 +*
1979-80	185	180	195	120	110	320	840
1980-81	230	855	240	145	135	410	1,075
1981-82	255	995	260	175	145	455	1,160
1982-83	285	1,090	280	195	155	480	1,270
1983-84	305	1,115	290	205	170	530	1,340
1984-85	325	1,180	320	215	180	575	1,420
1985-86	335	1,220	340	235	190	570	1,475
1986-87	360	1,300	370	255	205	615	1,570

Estimated gross current expenditure per head of population[1] (England)
Personal social services

£ 1987-88 prices[2]

	All age groups	*Births*	*0-4*	*5-15*	*16-64*	*65-74*	*75 +*
1979-80	60	25	75	75	20	95	365
1980-81	60	25	85	85	20	85	390
1981-82	60	25	85	85	20	90	370
1982-83	65	25	85	90	20	85	385
1983-84	65	25	85	90	25	90	395
1984-85	65	25	85	90	25	90	395
1985-86	65	25	85	85	25	90	390
1986-87	70	30	95	95	25	100	405

[1] Data rounded to nearest £5.

[2] Adjusted in line with the GDP deflator at market prices.

Family practitioner services

£ 1987-88 prices[1]

	All age groups	*Births*	*0-4*	*5-15*	*16-64*	*65-74*	*75 +*
1979-80	65	70	55	45	60	80	150
1980-81	70	75	60	45	60	85	155
1981-82	70	80	65	55	60	90	155
1982-83	75	85	70	60	65	95	155
1983-84	80	85	75	65	70	105	160
1984-85	80	95	80	70	70	115	170
1985-86	80	95	85	70	70	110	160
1986-87	85	95	90	75	75	110	165

[1] Adjusted in line with the GDP deflator at market prices.

Hospital and community health services

£ 1987-88 prices[1]

	All age groups	*Births*	*0-4*	*5-15*	*16-64*	*65-74*	*75 +*
1979-80	200	1,095	205	85	110	385	960
1980-81	220	1,170	215	90	120	430	1,055
1981-82	220	1,235	200	95	120	440	1,040
1982-83	220	1,265	200	90	115	430	1,055
1983-84	220	1,235	195	90	115	445	1,055
1984-85	220	1,230	200	90	115	455	1,060
1985-86	220	1,210	200	95	110	425	1,060
1986-87	230	1,245	205	100	115	435	1,085

[1] Adjusted in line with the GDP deflator at market prices.

Total above services

£ 1987-88 prices[1]

	All age groups	*Births*	*0-4*	*5-15*	*16-64*	*65-74*	*75 +*
1979-80	325	1,190	335	205	190	560	1,475
1980-81	350	1,270	360	220	200	600	1,600
1981-82	350	1,340	350	235	200	620	1,565
1982-83	360	1,375	355	240	200	610	1,595
1983-84	365	1,345	355	245	210	640	1,610
1984-85	365	1,350	365	250	210	660	1,625
1985-86	365	1,330	370	250	205	625	1,610
1986-87	385	1,370	390	270	215	645	1,655

[1] Adjusted in line with the GDP deflator at market prices.

Osteoporosis

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will recognise the need for additional and adequate funding for research into the treatment of metabolic bone disease with particular reference to osteoporosis.

Mr. Freeman: The Department recognises the significance of research in this area and has recently agreed to fund an economic evaluation of hormone replacement therapy, which will look at its costs and benefits in relation to osteoporosis, cardiovascular disease and breast cancer.

However, the main agency through which the Government fund medical research is the Medical Research Council (MRC), which receives its grant-in-aid from the Department of Education and Science. The MRC has for some time been supporting a programme of clinical and basic research to encourage the development of more rational treatments for metabolic bone diseases, including osteoporosis. A number of areas are being explored. The MRC has also set up a sub-group of the physiological systems board to review the need for further research on osteoporosis. This group is examining in particular the feasibility of mounting a multicentre prospective trial of screening methods to identify at risk women who are likely to benefit from hormone replacement therapy.

Dental Services

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in the period since dental charges for examination came into operation, what are the monthly breakdown figures for courses of treatment in the following categories (i) under 18 years of age, (ii) those who are over 18 years but are fully exempt from dental charges, (iii) those over 18 years who are partially exempt from dental charges and (iv) those who are over 18 years but are fully liable for dental charges.

Mr. Freeman: The information is available on a quarterly basis only. The figures for England are shown in the table.

	Number of courses of treatment		
	March quarter	*June quarter*	*September quarter*
(i) Patients under 18	2,592,260	2,560,600	2,508,830
(ii) Patients over 18 but fully exempt from dental charges	892,710	957,580	932,900
(iii) Patients over 18 partially exempt from dental charges	14,100	16,740	16,970
(iv) Patients over 18 fully liable for dental charges	5,212,440	4,996,760	4,665,620

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the monthly breakdown figures for courses of dental treatment completed since charges for dental examinations came into operation earlier this year *(a)* on a national basis and *(b)* on the most convenient regional basis.

Mr. Freeman: The information is available on a national basis only. The figures for England are shown in the table.

Month	*Number of courses of dental treatment*
January 1989	2,882,850
February 1989	2,923,917
March 1989	2,904,716
April 1989	2,789,026
May 1989	2,978,174
June 1989	2,764,940
July 1989	2,722,924
August 1989	2,722,530
September 1989	2,678,527
October 1989	2,815,278

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the inquiry into the provision of dentures has been completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 11 December 1989]:* In November 1988, the Department asked the Dental Estimates Board (now the Dental Practice Board) to carry out a study of patients' and dentists' satisfaction with the provision of dentures under the National Health Service. The study has not yet been completed. Its primary purpose is to inform the work of the dental rates study group in relation to setting fees for the provision of full dentures.

Nottinghamshire Health Authority

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the budget for the Nottingham health authority during the last 15 years in real terms and in money terms.

Mr. Freeman: The table gives details of Nottingham health authority's net revenue expenditure in cash and 1989-90 price terms since the authority's inception in 1982-83. Figures for earlier years are not comparable since they applied to the much larger Nottingham area health authority.

£'s million

	Cash[1]	*1989-90 prices*
1982-83	112·3	162·2
1983-84	118·0	162·9
1984-85	126·0	165·8
1985-86	133·9	167·0
1986-87	142·3	171·9
1987-88	155·5	178·5
1988-89	172·5	184·6

[1] Excludes transfers from revenue to capital and includes any additional central allocations and additions from reserves.

Ex-psychiatric Patients

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many ex-psychiatric patients have been released into the community in each of the last three years; what arrangements have been made for their continued care in the community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The information in the form requested is not collected centrally. The table shows the number of discharges to the community from NHS mental illness hospitals and units in England after a stay of one year or more for the last three years for which information is currently available.

Year	*Number of discharges*
1984	3,928
1985	3,441
1986	3,751

It is for health and local authorities to determine service requirements and expenditure priorities within policy guidelines. From 1 April 1991, health authorities will be required to introduce the care programme approach to ensure the proper assessment of the needs of patients both in the community and in hospital.

St. Ann's Hospital, Tottenham

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he will announce his decision regarding the closure of acute wards at St. Ann's hospital in Tottenham.

Mr. Freeman: Proposals for the closure and transfer of acute beds at St. Ann's and the North Middlesex hospital are closely linked to the plans for major capital development on the North Middlesex site. I understand that as a result of decisions taken by North East Thames regional health authority on 27 November the redevelopment of the North Middlesex site is unlikely to start until after 1995-96. The RHA has recently completed a review of their capital programme in the light of their latest forecasts of income from land sales, and of higher than expected increases in building costs. This has involved some rescheduling of schemes over a longer timetable than originally envisaged. This rescheduling will of course be kept under review to take into account changes in forecasts for land sale income.

We will need to consider the proposals for the closure and transfer of acute beds put forward by North East Thames regional health authority in the light of this new information. I will of course write to the hon. Member when a decision has been reached on the closures.

Live Births

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the figures for the number of live births at less than 28 weeks gestation with the estimated gestation for 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is not available; information on gestation is not collected at live birth registration.

Ministerial Note Paper

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on what day the printing of a slogan on his headed ministerial note paper was introduced.

Mr. Freeman: Ministerial notepaper bearing the words "Caring for the 1990s" was introduced in October 1989.

Hospices

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take action to match pound for pound the financial support given by the public to hospices.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) on 6 December at column *277*.

Hospital Contracts

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether community health councils were included in the distribution of documents on contracts for hospital services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Community health councils were sent copies of the White Paper "Working for Patients" which set out the Government's proposals on contractual arrangements and the subsequent working paper "Funding and Contracts for Hospital Services". Detailed aspects of these proposals were addressed in two more recent documents "Contracts for Health Services: Operational Principles" and "Contracts for Health Services: Pricing and Openness". Copies of these were sent to the Association of CHCs in England and Wales and to individual CHCs, including Bradford, which expressed particular interest. Decisions on the distribution of further documents to CHCs will be made in the light of their contents.

Infant Mortality

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were, for each of the last three years at convenient dates (i) the number of premature births, 21 to 28 weeks, where the baby survived for less than one week, one to four weeks, four to 13 weeks, above 13 weeks and (ii) the number of abortions after the 21st week where, following resuscitation, survival was less than one week, one to four weeks, four to 13 weeks, above 13 weeks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is not available: information on gestation is not collected at live birth registration.

Diet

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to publish the report on Dietary Sugars and Human Disease from the Chief Medical Officer's Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy (COMA).

Mr. Freeman: The COMA report "Dietary Sugars and Human Disease" is being published today. Copies have been placed in the Library. I welcome this important scientific document which, I know, has been awaited with great interest by doctors, dentists, nutrition scientists, consumer groups and food manufacturers. I congratulate Professor Keen and his team on the way they have dealt with this very complex and controversial issue. They have produced what, I believe, will be seen as a definitive statement on present knowledge of the relationship between dietary sugars and health.

The report's conclusions and recommendations are important and far reaching. It does not support the view, which some people would have us believe, that sugars at usual intake have direct adverse effect on general health. But it leaves no room for doubt that dietary sugars are by far the most important cause of dental caries, and recommends for this reason we should restrict our sugars intake.

Publication of the report reaffirms the Government's policy on increasing scientific and public knowledge about diet and health. Action is being taken on the majority of the report's recommendations. In particular the HEA recently announced that nutrition would be a major component of their public health education strategy of which the report's recommendations will form an integral part. A range of health professionals will be made aware of the Report so that they can take account of its recommendations when dealing with their patients. We are also committed to improving the quality of information about nutritional status in relation to general and dental health and making it available so that people can make sensible choices about their diet.

Neuroblastoma

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many babies were born with neuroblastoma in each of the last five years for which figures are available; and how many children died of the condition over the same period.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 27 November 1989]:* The latest available data on newly reported cases of childhood neuroblastoma cover the years 1971-80, and indicate that during that period 374 new cases were reported for males aged 0-14 years and 277 cases for females.

The number of deaths from neuroblastoma during this period, or for a later five-year period, could be determined only at disproportionate cost.

Homelessness

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy that local authorities receive a sum in their budget to cover the estimated costs of treatment to homeless people in the area; and if he will take steps to ensure that this allocation will be used to secure services suitable for, and available to, homeless people.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 11 December 1989]:* No. It is for the relevant statutory authorities to ensure that appropriate health and personal social services are provided within their resources and in the light of their assessment of local needs. The Department has, however, taken several central initiatives, including the funding of voluntary organisations helping the homeless and of two projects in London designed to promote new models of primary care for homeless people. An evaluation of the projects has been drawn to the attention of all health authorities, local authorities and family practitioner committees.

Mental Handicap

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health wh[illegible]s the total spending of his Department on research in mental handicap in each of the years 1979 to 1989; and how much was spent on new starts to projects in each of the past five years.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 11 December 1989]:* The total spending of the Department on research on mental health in each of the years 1979 to 1989 was as follows:

Year	*Spending on mental handicap £k*
1978-79	360
1979-80	394
1980-81	573
1981-82	789
1982-83	657
1983-84	669
1984-85	674
1985-86	692
1986-87	456
1987-88	615
1988-89	773

These sums of money are inclusive of expenditure on new starts to projects. A separate annual figure for new starts is not readily available.

Microbiology and Research

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about the future of the centre for applied microbiology and research at Porton Down near Salisbury.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 11 December 1989]:* My colleagues and I are currently studying a report by a team of consultants who were asked to give professional advice on options for the future status of the centre for applied microbiology and research. We have not yet reached any decision.

Health Spending (OECD)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has as to the increase in real terms in health spending in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries for the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 11 December 1989]:* The increase in total health expenditure in real terms between 1983 and 1984 in each of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development member states is shown in the table.

The latest year, 1984, for which all the data required to make the necessary calculations are available for all Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development member states (with the exception of Turkey, for which 1984 data are not available, and Luxembourg, for which complete data are not available).

Total expenditure on health care in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development member states in 1983 and 1984 in 1980 prices (national currencies)

	1983	*1984*	*Percentage real terms change*
Australia	9,982,601	10,509,122	5·3
Austria	81,285,812	83,227,616	2·4
Belgium	254,891,104	258,690,637	1·5
Canada	27,474,068	28,584,524	4·0

	1983	*1984*	*Percentage real terms change*
Denmark	25,691,817	25,489,971	−0·8
Finland	13,710,825	14,608,122	6·5
France	234,997,462	247,842,846	5·5
Germany	118,990,277	124,304,462	4·5
Greece	72,887,620	71,762,841	−1·5
Iceland	1,295,891	1,230,064	−5·1
Ireland	780,630	809,263	3·7
Italy	26,496,847,100	26,728,840,302	0·9
Japan	18,346,992,730	18,679,250,559	1·8
Luxembourg	n/a	n/a	n/a
Netherlands	28,855,940	28,700,618	−0·5
New Zealand	1,608,559	1,551,831	−3·5
Norway	20,570,550	20,721,468	0·7
Portugal	70,952,300	71,978,498	1·4
Spain	984,321,170	954,041,204	−3·1
Sweden	52,051,498	53,144,748	2·1
Switzerland	13,331,083	13,563,983	1·7
Turkey	175,230,226	n/a	n/a
United Kingdom	14,666,297	15,049,874	2·6
United States	294,609,865	309,909,452	5·2

Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.
Luxembourg excluded due reported inconsistencies in its national accounts.

Ambulance Service

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations he has received regarding the quota system operated by Lancashire ambulance service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[pursuant to her reply, 6 December 1989, c. 276]:* A representation regarding the system of quotas introduced in 1986 by the Lancashire ambulance service for non-urgent journeys was made in a letter from the hon. Member dated 25 October 1989. I have replied to that letter and I regret that, through an oversight, my earlier reply did not refer to this representation.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to review the organisation of the ambulance service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Health authorities are reviewing their management arrangements taking into account the proposals set out in the White Paper, "Working for Patients" (Cm. 555).

132. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health in how many areas has there been either a shortage of ambulance staff or a reliance upon overtime working during the last 12 months.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested is not collected centrally and could not be obtained except at disproportionate cost.

113. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make an official visit to the Plaistow ambulance station.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Romania

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has to arrange export credits with Romania for the sale of environmental clean-up technology and industrial pollution abatement technology developed in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Redwood: ECGD cover for Romania is at present available only for short term credits on secured terms of payment. There has been no approach for medium term credits and such an approach would seem unlikely as the Romanian Government have a policy of not accepting any more such credits.

British Standards Institute

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what changes are being proposed in the operation of the British Standards Institute and its various advisory committees on information technology standards; what decisions have been taken by Government so far; and by what means he proposes to consult the commercial and other private interests concerned.

Mr. Forth: My Department, in co-operation with the British Standards Institution, is undertaking a consultation process with industry and commerce to determine the feasibility of establishing new arrangements for IT standardisation activities in the United Kingdom falling within the framework of BSI.

A steering group drawn from industry and commerce is overseeing this feasibility work and a project team comprising officials, industry secondees, BSI staff and consultants has been assembled. Industry and other interests are being consulted to determine the degree of commitment by business and others in supporting new arrangements. Methods of consultation include direct interviews, group meetings and by correspondence. The primary objective of any new arrangements would be the more effective use of United Kingdom resources to contribute to the development of European and international IT standards. If sufficient commitment is forthcoming, clear proposals would be put to BSI next year.

Civil Aviation Authority

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will order an independent efficiency scrutiny of the Civil Aviation Authority to be carried out; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 6 December 1989]:* A reference under section 11 of the Competition Act 1980 has today been sent to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission to investigate the efficiency of the Civil Aviation Authority and the effectiveness of its provision of navigation and air traffic control services with particular emphasis on the effectiveness of its management and planning systems in respect of its major new investment programme. A copy of the reference has been placed in the Library.

The success of the Government's privatisation programme means that there are fewer statutory bodies open to scrutiny under section 11 of the Competition Act 1980. In future, therefore, the practice of announcing annually a programme of references will be discontinued and instead each reference will be announced as it is made.

British Aerospace (Rover Deal)

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will now publish the final terms of the agreement between British Aerospace and the Government on tax, cash and assets.

Mr. Ridley: I have already written to the hon. Member explaining how I am handling requests for documentation relating to the sale of the Government's shareholding in Rover Group to British Aerospace.

I have placed copies of my letter in the Library of the House.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will publish any notes or correspondence involving his Department over the tax affairs of British Aerospace;

(2) if he will publish the letters between his Department and British Aerospace on tax matters relating to the Rover deal.

Mr. Ridley: Tax matters of British Aerospace are for the Inland Revenue and would be subject to normal confidentiality rules; however, to assist understanding of this matter arrangements have been made exceptionally and with the agreement of British Aerospace to provide to the Public Accounts Committee and the Trade and Industry Select Committee copies of the exchange of letters between the accountants of BAe and the Inland Revenue which is referred to in the letter of 12 July 1988 from the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to the chairman of British Aerospace. Copies of this exchange are available in the Library of the House with my letter today to the hon. Member.

The Department of Trade and Industry of course has no direct locus in such tax matters and its dealings with British Aerospace on tax were therefore concerned with the contractual arrangements by which Rover Group was effectively denied the benefit of pre-acquisition carried forward trading tax losses in excess of £500 million to which Rover Group was entitled under the normal rules applying to United Kingdom companies. Contractual arrangements had also been inserted in the original conditional sale agreement in March 1988 by which the use of disclaimed capital allowances and capital losses were effectively ring-fenced within Rover Group; this restriction was lifted in the final terms so that the situation on these tax benefits was no more, and no less, restrictive than that determined by tax law.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish correspondence relating to the side-letter offered by the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Mr. Ridley: The side-letter on on-sale offered by the former Secretary of State in his letter of 12 July 1988 to the BAe chairman was finalised on 14 July and copies have been made available to the Public Accounts Committee and Trade and Industry Select Committee and placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish the memorandum of understanding between the British Government and the European Commission over the sale of Rover.

Mr. Ridley: The Commission's decision under article 93(2) of the treaty of Rome in respect of the aid proposal to Rover Group in the context of its sale to BAe was published in the *Official Journal of the European Communities* on 28 January 1989.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, in negotiations over the sale of Rover, he was made aware that British Aerospace would seek to accelerate use of tax losses through the creation of leasing companies.

Mr. Ridley: The Department was aware that this was one idea which British Aerospace was looking at, and one that it might seek to implement subject to normal tax law.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions took place on launch aid for Airbus as part of the negotiations over the sale of Rover.

Mr. Ridley: There were no discussions on launch aid for Airbus as part of the negotiations over the sale of the Rover Group.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions took place on military and civil contracts unrelated to Rover as part of the negotiations over the sale of Rover.

Mr. Ridley: In the negotiations over the sale of the Rover Group the only discussions about contracts unrelated to the Rover Group concerned the Columbus programme, as set out in my statement of 30 November (*Hansard,* columns *859-60*).

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the cash value of the deferred payment of £150 million for 20 months for the Rover Group; and at what rate of interest the value is calculated.

Mr. Ridley: Our most recent estimate of the net cost of deferring the £150 million consideration from the date of completion (12 August 1988) until the end of March 1990 is £22 million, calculated at a post-tax rate of interest in line with base rate. The £22 million estimate made at the time was a gross calculation which made no allowance for tax.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the estimate of the value to British Aerospace of the capital losses incurred by the Rover Group.

Mr. Ridley: The Government were not in a position to calculate what use British Aerospace might make in future of tax benefits arising from its acquisition of Rover Group and available to it under normal tax law; such valuations are highly subjective and dependent on assumptions of future taxable capacity of the enlarged British Aerospace group. The Touche Ross valuation commissioned and published by the NAO put a nil or negligible value on these losses.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the final amount of trading tax losses written off in the final agreement between British Aerospace and the Government.

Mr. Ridley: Rover Group's trading tax losses remain precisely what they are entitled to under normal tax law. However, the contractual sale arrangements between DTI and British Aerospace provide that if in post-acquisition tax computations Rover Group claims the benefit of pre-acquisition trading tax losses in excess of £500 million, such benefit will be 100 per cent. clawed back.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the Government's calculation of the tax benefits to British Aerospace of the final contract with British Aerospace.

Mr. Ridley: As I have explained in my letter today to the hon. Member, the Government were not in a position authoritatively to calculate the value to British Aerospace of tax benefits arising from its acquisition of Rover Group and available to it under normal tax law. Such values would depend on the extent and timing of taxable events in the future and estimates are highly subjective—as, is shown by the differing valuations of certain of these tax benefits discussed in the Comptroller and Auditor-General's report on the sale.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the value of the capital allowances pool from Rover that could be set against tax *(a)* in March 1988 and *(b)* in August 1988.

Mr. Ridley: The Government were not in a position to calculate what use British Aerospace might make in future of tax benefits arising from its acquistion of Rover Group and available to it under normal tax law; such valuations are highly subjective and dependent on assumptions of future taxable capacity of the enlarged British Aerospace group. The only change in treatment of the Rover Group capital allowance pool between the dates referred to was a contractual one. Under the March conditional terms future use by British Aerospace (where permitted under normal tax law) of disclaimed Rover Group capital allowances outside the Rover Group would result in the benefit being 100 per cent. clawed back by the contractual sale arrangements. Under the final terms of the sale this clawback was lifted.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether any disclaimers of capital allowances were made by Rover within the statutory time limits.

Mr. Ridley: That is a matter for Rover Group. Such disclaimers are a normal feature of tax practice available to any company and the Inland Revenue's normal rules of tax confidentiality apply.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 13 December 1989

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Malaysia

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Malaysian Government concerning the introduction of public whipping for those who have changed from Islam to other faiths.

Mr. Sainsbury: We are aware that certain Malaysian states, not the federal Government, have introduced laws providing for the whipping of apostates. We know of no cases to date of such whipping being carried out. We have, nonetheless, registered our concern with the Malaysian authorities.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Malaysian Government concerning the censoring of the Bible, and the banning of other Christian literature.

Mr. Sainsbury: We are aware that some Malaysian states, not the federal Government, have introduced laws for the "Control and Restriction of the Propagation of Non-Islamic Religions" forbidding the use of several religious words and phrases in the Malay language by non-Muslims. We understand that this has led to difficulties in the production and distribution of Bibles published in Malay. We have registered our concern with the Malaysian authorities.

Cameroon

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether in considering his support for the application by Cameroon for membership of the Commonwealth he will take into account the human rights record of Cameroon.

Mr. Waldegrave: Following Cameroon's application, the question of membership of the Commonwealth was referred to a group of 10 Heads of Government appointed in Kuala Lumpur and of which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is a member. The group will report to the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in 1991. We welcome the increasing prominence given to the observance of human rights in the Kuala Lumpur communiqué.

High Technology Equipment

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will now make it his policy to answer questions on the export of high-technology equipment that could be used for military purposes.

Mr. Maude: Our policy in answering such questions remains unchanged.

Antarctica

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many abandoned British bases there are in Antarctica; and what steps have been taken to retrieve the waste generated there.

Mr. Sainsbury: Twelve British bases were abandoned over the period 1946-75. The United Kingdom is urgently developing a strategy to implement the recommendation on waste disposal following the XV Antarctic treaty consultative meeting in Paris in October 1989. We shall start to implement this new policy and, in particular, prepare a timetable for waste disposal in 1990.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many operating British bases there are in Antarctica.

Mr. Sainsbury: There are five—Bird Island, Signy, Rothera, Faraday and Hailey.

Contracts

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many contracts over £92,500 have been let by his Department in the 1988-89 financial year and in the current financial year to date; and how many of these were *(a)* automatically renewed and *(b)* open to competition by advertisement throughout the European Community.

Mr. Sainsbury: The number of contracts awarded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and covered by the provisions of the European Community supplies directive, for which the current threshold is £92,000, was 13 in the 1988-89 financial year and seven in the current financial year, to date. Of these, three were awarded following advertisement in the Official Journal of the European Community. The other 17 were let following the use of the "negotiated" procedure laid down by the directive. In these cases there was either only one possible supplier or the contracts were for additional goods that had to be purchased from the original suppliers for technical reasons.

Accountancy Firms

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many outside accountancy firms are employed by his Department; whether such employment is subject to any guidelines; and whether he takes steps before employing an accountancy firm to discover whether that firm has been censured by the Department of Trade and Industry in their inquiries under the Companies Acts.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office does not currently employ any outside accountancy firms.

Tibet

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when a representative of Her Majesty's Government was last in Lhasa; and what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to monitor the human rights situation in Tibet.

Mr. Maude: A member of the British embassy in Peking visited Lhasa from 27 to 30 October. The imposition of martial law in Lhasa has reduced the flow of information, but we use all available channels to follow closely developments in Tibet.

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further representations Her Majesty's Government have made to China over its human rights violation in Tibet.

Mr. Maude: I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave on 29 November to the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth).

Human Rights

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many letters have been sent out by his Department in the last 12 months to foreign Governments indicating dissatisfaction with their human rights record; and if he will list the Governments concerned.

Mr. Sainsbury: We condemn human rights abuses wherever they occur. We have in the last 12 months made many representations, both orally and in writing, bilaterally, with our European Community partners and in international fora, to bring our concerns on human rights to the attention of many countries. The detailed information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Broadcasting

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received on the operation of the Broadcasting Act in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Mellor: We have recently received representations from the hon. Member and others about questions of taste and decency raised by one programme. The Government do not have powers to intervene in the content of programmes.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will review the rules concerning circumstances in which pensioners have reduced cost television licences, so as to provide that everyone on a basic state pension and no other income can obtain a reduced price colour television licence.

Mr. Mellor: No.

Immigration

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were refused leave of entrance to the United Kingdom at seaports or airports in 1989 from *(a)* the Soviet Union, *(b)* the Democratic Republic of Germany, *(c)* Poland, *(d)* Romania, *(e)* Bulgaria, *(f)* Hungary, *(g)* Czechoslovakia, *(h)* Libya, *(i)* India, *(j)* Pakistan, *(k)* Bangladesh, *(l)* South Africa and *(m)* Hong Kong.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The latest available information is given in the table:

Passengers refused leave to enter and removed from the United Kingdom—January to September 1989

Nationality	*Number*
USSR	41
German Democratic Republic	4
Poland	107
Romania	13
Bulgaria	13
Hungary	20
Czechoslovakia	16
Libya	21
India	350
Pakistan	256
Bangladesh	325
South Africa	306
BDTC Hong Kong	127

Drugs

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's attitude towards requests for the legalislation of soft drugs.

Mr. Mellor: The Government have no intention of legalising any drugs presently controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. I am glad to see that this view was shared by the Home Affairs Committee in its report "Drug trafficking and related serious crime" (HC 370).

Prisons

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the weekly food cost allowance for inmates in prisons in England and Wales.

Mr. Mellor: The quantity of food for inmates is determined not by reference to cash budgets but to dietary scales designed to meet agreed nutritional requirements. Ingredients are supplied primarily from centrally negotiated contracts and from prison farms and gardens. The notional cost per inmate per week totalled £6·30 in the quarter ended 30 September 1989.

Prison Capacity

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list all the prisons in the United Kingdom in order of the number of prisoners they currently hold, stating the numbers they are built to hold and the percentage overcrowding.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is set out in the table in respect of prison service establishments in England and Wales. Responsibility for prisons in Scotland and Northern Ireland rests with my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Northern Ireland respectively.

Establishment	*Population*[1]	*Certified normal accommodation*[2]	*Percentage overcrowding*
Kirklevington	13	0	—
Campsfield House	59	68	−13
Haslar	70	95	−26

Establishment	*Population*[1]	*Certified normal accommodation*[2]	*Percentage overcrowding*
Werrington	78	110	−29
East Sutton Park	83	84	−1
Blantyre House	86	87	−1
Downview	88	91	−3
Eastwood Park	92	134	−31
New Hall	92	120	−23
Finnamore Wood	94	116	−19
Send	101	101	0
Guys Marsh	104	180	−42
Askham Grange	106	134	−21
Latchmere House	10	127	−13
North Sea Camp	110	202	−46
Cookham Wood	18	120	−2
Aldington	123	127	−3
Huntercombe	123	180	−32
Hewell Grange	127	136	−7
Swinfen Hall	133	124	7
Whatton	134	167	−20
Portsmouth (Kingston)	140	150	−7
Usk (Prescoed)	145	238	−39
Thorp Arch	146	156	−6
Bullwood Hall	147	126	17
Lowdham Grange	152	304	−50
Morton Hall	153	192	−20
Pucklechurch	159	159	0
Hatfield	167	180	−7
Thorn Cross	168	300	−44
Northallerton	172	127	35
Wetherby	179	196	−9
Ashford	181	374	−52
Dorchester	197	152	30
Oxford	197	124	59
Spring Hill	210	210	0
Erlestoke	214	218	−2
Brockhill	220	161	37
Grendon	220	261	−16
Northeye	226	249	−9
Drake Hall	231	288	−20
Castington	233	300	−22
Dover	236	247	−4
Parkhurst	238	271	−12
Shepton Mallet	240	173	39
Styal	241	258	−7
Shrewsbury	256	174	47
Lancaster	257	186	38
Low Newton	263	185	42
Swansea	269	229	18
Aylesbury	272	296	−8
Wellingborough	275	344	−20
Reading	282	178	58
Coldingley	296	303	−2
Stocken	298	302	−1
Gloucester	304	200	52
Rochester	306	374	−18
Bedford	312	178	75
Rudgate	313	378	−17
Gartree	315	320	−2
Nottingham	316	245	29
Haverigg	323	337	−4
Onley	339	352	−4
Leicester	341	205	66
Hollesley Bay	344	451	−24
Everthorpe	347	304	14
Mount	348	484	−28
Canterbury	352	230	53
Stoke Heath	361	360	0·3
Exeter	364	310	17
Risley	364	318	15
Chelmsford	367	242	52
Albany	381	389	−2
Leyhill	383	384	−0·3
Hindley	384	312	23
Ranby	390	404	−3
Frankland	393	447	−12
Deerbolt	394	420	−6
Standford Hill	399	444	−10

Establishment	*Population*[1]	*Certified normal accommodation*[2]	*Percentage overcrowding*
Full Sutton	400	432	−7
Ashwell	404	404	0
Blundeston	405	405	0
Long Lartin	419	432	−3
Acklington	442	448	−1
Cardiff	449	337	33
Holloway	471	517	−9
Preston	478	428	12
Littlehey	481	484	−1
Portland	482	527	−9
Wayland	484	484	0
Camp Hill	497	461	8
Garth	498	512	−3
Swaleside	501	504	−1
Ford	504	536	−6
Channings Wood	533	538	−1
Sudbury	542	601	−10
Maidstone	553	550	1
Lewes	554	371	49
Featherstone	561	509	10
Kirkham	578	632	−9
Bristol	593	552	7
Verne	595	600	−1
Lincoln	596	391	52
Dartmoor	614	615	−0·2
Norwich	617	485	27
Hull	649	402	61
Glen Parva	656	600	9
Winchester	668	471	42
Wakefield	722	756	−4
Feltham	725	846	−14
Wymott	765	816	−6
Lindholme	797	1,001	−20
Stafford	814	588	38
Highpoint	822	825	−0·4
Pentonville	916	641	43
Birmingham	992	578	72
Wormwood Scrubs	1,010	1,024	−1
Durham	1,030	729	41
Brixton	1,054	729	45
Leeds	1,180	627	88
Liverpool	1,310	967	35
Wandsworth	1,545	1,275	21
Manchester	1,575	997	58

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[1] Population figures are as reported by establishments on Friday 1 December 1989.

[2] Details of Certified Normal Accommodation (CNA) relate to the position on 8 October 1989, the latest date for which figures are currently available.

Gaelic Broadcasting

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when he expects to announce his plans for Gaelic broadcasting; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when he expects to respond to Comunn na Gaidhlig's proposal for a Gaelic broadcasting council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Representations for special support for Gaelic broadcasting remain under consideration. We hope to announce our conclusions on this as soon as possible.

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information is available to him as to the date on which Detective Chief Superintendent Graham Melvin is expected to retire from the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: None; this is a personal matter for Mr. Melvin.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Part-time Work (EC Directive)

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will seek to introduce legislation to incorporate the proposals included in the EC Council directive on part-time work (Com. (81) 775 as amended (Com. (82) 830).

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. Northern Ireland legislation on part-time work is in line with that in the rest of the United Kingdom.

Roads

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Antrim, South on 5 December, if he will now carry out, at the earliest possible moment, a traffic census on Killead road, Killead village; and if he will indicate the number of heavy commercial vehicles included in the Ballyrobin road, Killead road and Oldstone road traffic census.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 8 December 1989]:* Traffic flows between December and March are normally lower than during the rest of the year and may not give a reliable indication. The Department of the Environment does not intend to carry out a traffic census at this location at present.

When the last classified traffic census was carried out in 1984 the number of heavy commercial vehicles using these roads was as follows:

Number of heavy commercial vehicles per 16-hour day

Road	*Number*
Ballyrobin road	465
Killead road	1,105
Oldstone road	544

ENERGY

Carbon Dioxide Emissions

125. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the Government's estimate for carbon dioxide emissions from energy use in Britain in 1988; and what are the latest estimates for carbon dioxide emissions in *(a)* 2000 and *(b)* 2025.

Mr. Peter Morrison: In 1987, the latest year for which I have estimates, United Kingdom energy-related carbon dioxide emissions, expressed as carbon, were 163 million tonnes.

My Department's study, "An Evaluation of Energy Related Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Measures to Ameliorate Them", estimates emissions in the years 2000 and 2020 for a wide range of scenarios. These figures range between 174 and 206 million tonnes carbon in the year 2000 and between 188 and 316 million tonnes in 2020.

The scenarios are not predictions of the future, but are intended to provide a framework for assessing possible response options. They cover a wide range of assumptions on economic growth and world fuel prices. Full details can be found in the report, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

126. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what projections the Government have made of the level of carbon dioxide emissions in Britain by the year 2005 from *(a)* transport, *(b)* energy, *(c)* industry and *(d)* in total.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Future carbon dioxide emissions will depend on many factors such as economic growth and consumer choices. Last month my Department completed a study entitled "An evaluation of Energy Related Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Measures to Ameliorate Them". That report included a range of possible future emission scenarios and is available in the Library of the House.

The figures in the table, for energy-related emissions of carbon dioxide, are taken from that report. They assume a growth rate of 2·25 per cent. per annum and cover two alternative sets of assumptions on world fuel prices. Further details can be found in the report.

Scenarios for United Kingdom Energy Related CO_2 Emissions in 2005

	Low price case	*High price case*
Electricity Supply Industry	67	68
Other Industry	56	52
Transport	49	46
Domestic	27	25
Miscellaneous	14	14
Total	212	204

Notes:

1. Central Growth Assumption of 2·25 per cent. per annum.
2. Emissions expressed as million tonnes carbon.
3. All figures rounded.
4. Industry includes agriculture.
5. Transport includes marine bunkers and aviation.

Contracts

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many contracts over £92,500 have been let by his Department in the 1988-89 financial year and in the present financial year to date; and how many of these were *(a)* automatically renewed and *(b)* advertised and therefore open to competition throughout the European Community.

Mr. Wakeham: The number of contracts awarded by my Department and covered by the provisions of the EC supplies directive, for which the current threshold is £92,000, was three in the 1988-89 financial year and one in the current financial year to date. Three of the contracts were let, and advertised, in accordance with the EC supplies directive.

Energy Efficiency Office

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will place in the Library the review of the Energy Efficiency Office which led to the announcement of new objectives on 9 June 1988, *Official Report*, columns *632-33*.

Mr. Wakeham: The objectives of the EEO are reviewed regularly. It is not normal practice to publish advice to Ministers.

Nuclear Power Stations

Mr Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what steps are being taken to set aside funds to deal with stage three decommissioning of nuclear power stations.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The nuclear generators will be making provisions in their accounts to deal with the decommissioning of their nuclear power stations.

Magnox Reactors

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the amount set aside by the Central Electricity Generating Board to deal with the decommissioning costs of the Magnox reactors in *(a)* 1985, *(b)* 1986, *(c)* 1987, *(d)* 1988 and *(e)* 1989.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The annual reports and accounts of the Central Electricity Generating Board show the provisions made to meet expenditure on the decommissioning of nuclear facilities, the long-term reprocessing of irradiated nuclear fuel, and the treatment, storage and disposal of the resulting waste products. These reports are available in the Library of the House.

The amount of provisions for decommissioning costs of the Magnox reactors is a matter for CEGB. I will ask the chairman of the CEGB to write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority last reviewed the decommissioning costs of Magnox reactors; and if he will publish their figures.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The UKAEA reviewed the CEGB's estimates of the costs of decommissioning its Magnox reactors in May of this year. A report was submitted to the Department. Figures cannot be published because of the report's commercial confidentiality.

Flue Gas Desulphurisation

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when all large power station plants will be fitted with flue gas desulphurisation equipment.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Government are committed to ensuring that the reductions in SO_2 emissions required by the EC large combustion plant directive are achieved. The CEGB estimates that this will require the fitting of flue gas desulphurisation (FGD) equipment to 12GW of capacity, equivalent to six large power stations, at a cost of about £2 billion. There is no requirement that all existing large power stations should be fitted with FGD equipment.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Exchange Rate Mechanism

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many times currencies in the exchange rate mechanism have been adjusted, giving the dates and the currency and its value before and after in each case.

Mr. Lilley: There have been 11 occasions on which exchange rates of currencies in the ERM have been realigned. For the detail I refer the hon. Gentleman to table 6 of "The European Monetary System: Recent Developments", IMF occasional paper number 48, and annex VIII of "The EMS: Ten Years of Progress in European Monetary Co-operation", both of which are in the Library of the House.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the arrangements for reviewing the levels of currencies in the exchange rate mechanisms; and when revaluations take place.

Mr. Lilley: Reviews are carried out through consultation in the appropriate Community bodies. I refer the hon. Gentleman to paragraph 3.2 of the resolution of the European Council of 5 December 1978 on the establishment of the European Monetary System (EMS) and related matters.

Stamp Duties

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what deliberations have been held on the future of stamp duties in the light of the consultative document issued in 1983.

Mr. Lilley: Following the response to the consultative document, numerous changes have been made. Since 1985 we have abolished a number of stamp duties, including capital duty and unit trust instrument duty, and streamlined procedures for those that remain.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what plans he has to streamline the levying of stamp duty on unit trusts;

(2) whether he will consider removing stamp duty from unit trust transactions;

(3) whether he will eliminate stamp duty on the sale and re-purchase of trusts within a unit trust.

Mr. Lilley: I cannot anticipate my right hon. Friend's Budget Statement.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about the future of stamp duty being levied on unit trusts.

Mr. Lilley: I have received a number of representations from the unit trust industry suggesting altering the stamp duty charge on unit trusts.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what volume of share transactions attract the minimum rate of stamp duty each year.

Mr. Lilley: I regret the information is not available.

Benefits and Allowances

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the documents produced by his Department available to hon. Members on the subject of the effects of ending *(a)* income tax allowances and *(b)* personal income tax allowances.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 12 December 1989]:* A list of the direct revenue costs of tax allowances and reliefs is given in table 21.1.25 of "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1989-90 to 1991-92" (Cm. 621); but the figures cannot in general be interpreted as the tax yield from withdrawing a particular allowance or relief, because of the difficulty of estimating the behavioural changes which might result from such a move. The Financial Statement and Budget Report sets out the effects of proposed amendments to the tax system each year; and the Autumn Statement sets out the revenue effects of illustrative tax changes.

British Aerospace

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish any notes or correspondence involving the Inland Revenue over the tax affairs of British Aerospace.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 12 December 1989]:* The tax affairs of British Aerospace are subject to the normal confidentiality rules. However, in order to assist understanding of this matter, arrangements have been made exceptionally, with the agreement of British Aerospace, to provide to the Public Accounts Committee and the Trade and Industry Committee copies of the exchange of letters between the accountants of British Aerospace and the Inland Revenue which is referred to in the letter of 12 July 1988 from the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to the chairman of British Aerospace.

Charities

Mr. Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether value added tax is payable for expenditure by charities (i) on indirect publicity, such as cost of adverts and (ii) on direct publicity, such as cost of envelopes for sending educational or fund raising material to inquirers.

Mr. Ryder: Printed media advertising supplied to charities for raising money for their work or for making known their aims and objectives is relieved of value added tax. Zero-rating also applies to envelopes and other stationery items, but only when these are printed with such fund-raising or educational publicity material.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Special Needs Pupils

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to allocate time in the core curriculum to independence training for special needs pupils and to follow up the programme.

Mr. Alan Howarth: It is for schools themselves to determine how they deliver independence training and other elements of personal and social education. There is scope to do so within the targets and programmes of study of the core and foundation subjects, or as an independent subject, or as a cross-curricular theme.

Some pupils with special educational needs (SEN) will have a statement which can modify or disapply the requirements of the national curriculum and so provide an individual curriculum which might include appropriate training for adult life.

Pupil-teacher Ratios, Leicestershire

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the pupil-teacher ratios in Leicestershire primary schools for the years 1978 and 1988.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The pupil-teacher ratios within maintained primary schools in Leicestershire were 24 and 22·9 in 1978 and 1988 respectively.

Accountancy Firms

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many outside accountancy firms are employed by his Department; whether such employment is subject to any guidelines; and whether he takes steps before employing an accountancy firm to discover whether that firm has been censured by Department of Trade and Industry inspectors in their inquiries under the Companies Act.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department has consultancy contracts with four of the major accountancy firms. All the contracts have been arranged in accordance with the Treasury guidelines for the appointment to audit and other accountancy assignments in the public sector. The Department does not routinely consult the Department of Trade and Industry, but would do so it it were planning to employ a firm whose reputation was not well established.

Pupil Expenditure

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the spending per pupil for each local education authority in England and Wales for the latest available financial year.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The latest information for local education authorities in England is for 1987-88 and is given in the table. Figures for Wales are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Net institutional expenditure[1] *per pupil*[2]
Cash Terms

Local Education Authority	*Primary* £	*Secondary* £
Barking	1,155	1,745
Barnet	1,195	1,7675
Bexley	1,030	1,530
Brent	1,305	2,195
Bromley	1,070	1,645
Croydon	1,040	1,825
Ealing	n/a	n/a
Enfield	1,005	1,580
Haringey	n/a	n/a
Harrow	1,070	1,775
Havering	1,005	1,670
Hillingdon	1,075	1,675
Hounslow	1,175	1,675
Kingston-upon-Thames	1,055	1,720
Merton	1,020	1,470
Newham	1,205	1,880
Redbridge	990	1,600
Richmond-upon-Thames	1,075	1,475
Sutton	980	1,420
Waltham Forest	1,235	2,345
ILEA	1,585	2,610
Birmingham	940	1,490
Coventry	990	1,705
Dudley	915	1,570
Sandwell	1,055	1,630
Solihull	925	1,450
Walsall	1,080	1,645
Wolverhampton	1,070	1,575
Knowsley	1,050	1,735
Liverpool	1,105	1,730
St. Helens	965	1,505
Sefton	930	1,460
Wirral	920	1,480
Bolton	890	1,425
Bury	1,045	1,615
Manchester	1,095	1,785
Oldham	1,005	1,395
Rochdale	940	1,650
Salford	985	1,625
Stockport	935	1,500
Tameside	995	1,525
Trafford	965	1,525
Wigan	955	1,675
Barnsley	985	1,470
Doncaster	1,045	1,500
Rotherham	1,050	1,440
Sheffield	n/a	n/a
Bradford	1,060	1,410
Calderdale	950	1,440
Kirklees	985	1,415
Leeds	1,030	1,370
Wakefield	1,070	1,495
Gateshead	1,080	1,560
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	1,140	1,725
North Tyneside	1,090	1,660
South Tyneside	1,060	1,585
Sunderland	925	1,505
Isles of Scilly	1,540	2,355
Avon	975	1,435
Bedfordshire	1,030	1,455
Berkshire	N/A[3]	N/A[3]
Buckinghamshire	970	1,505

Local Education Authority	*Primary* £	*Secondary* £
Cambridgeshire	910	1,315
Cheshire	900	1,390
Cleveland	970	1,545
Cornwall	900	1,345
Cumbria	1,060	1,510
Derbyshire	990	1,530
Devon	905	1,380
Dorset	950	1,320
Durham	1,050	1,405
East Sussex	930	1,385
Essex	920	1,420
Gloucestershire	935	1,385
Hampshire	950	1,405
Hereford and Worcester	930	1,330
Hertfordshire	975	1,490
Humberside	995	1,460
Isle of Wight	935	1,350
Kent	855	1,290
Lancashire	890	1,450
Leicestershire	960	1,565
Lincolnshire	900	1,280
Norfolk	955	1,385
North Yorkshire	915	1,375
Northamptonshire	885	1,375
Northumberland	945	1,390
Nottinghamshire	1,020	1,540
Oxfordshire	1,035	1,560
Salop	945	1,470
Somerset	900	1,355
Staffordshire	980	1,420
Suffolk	910	1,305
Surrey	905	1,415
Warwickshire	940	1,400
West Sussex	890	1,360
Wiltshire	940	1,350

Notes:

[1] Net Institutional Expenditure includes the cost of salaries and wages, premises and certain supplies and services. It does not include the cost of school meals, central administration and inspection, debt charges or revenue contributions to capital outlay.

[2] The figures are based on LEA expenditure returns to DOE and pupil number returns to DES.

[3] N/A denotes that an expenditure return has not been received from 4 LEAs.

Capital Allocations

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table giving the amounts for England of capital allocations for *(a)* county and voluntary controlled schools, *(b)* voluntary aided schools and *(c)* the total of *(a)* and *(b)* for each financial year from and including 1978-79 to 1990-91, expressed in (i) current prices, (ii) constant prices and (iii) an index of (ii) where 1978-79 = 100.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall reply to the hon. Member after the allocations for 1990-91 have been announced in the usual way.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table listing *(a)* the amounts of capital allocations for county and voluntary controlled schools for 1990-91 for which each local education authority in England has bid and *(b)* the amounts of capital grant for voluntary aided schools in their area which each local authority has asked of his Departments.

Mr. MacGregor: The information requested is set out in the table.

	Total plans for county and VC schools 1990-91 (£000s-cash)	*Total plans for VA schools 1990-91 (£000s-cash)*
Barking	1,365	1,940
Barnet	2,690	835
Bexley	4,512	1,760
Brent	5,553	822
Bromley	6,555	175
Croydon	17,153	1,086
Ealing	13,275	178
Enfield	27,207	1,652
Haringey	4,777	2,760
Harrow	2,708	208
Havering	8,275	357
Hillingdon	6,840	845
Hounslow	6,690	299
Kingston	3,929	317
Merton	10,512	634
Newham	16,363	213
Redbridge	5,619	401
Richmond	5,547	1,545
Sutton	13,785	372
Waltham	11,301	340
City	0	0
Camden	3,981	2,688
Westminster	5,112	291
Greenwich	7,263	324
Hackney	5,197	521
Hammersmith	2,136	549
Islington	6,991	123
Kensington	7,663	4,918
Lambeth	3,155	563
Lewisham	6,991	412
Southwark	6,408	1,830
Wandsworth	13,508	101
Tower Hamlets	23,870	771
Birmingham	15,068	1,287
Coventry	12,179	1,129
Dudley	4,492	2,700
Sandwell	7,422	652
Solihull	5,498	1,456
Walsall	3,521	193
Wolverhampton	2,669	0
Knowsley	6,049	1,943
Liverpool	13,461	5,548
St. Helens	3,567	1,251
Sefton	5,941	2,323
Wirral	6,329	1,799
Bolton	3,213	1,098
Bury	1,140	1,013
Manchester	18,944	1,529
Oldham	6,912	1,143
Rochdale	11,104	1,372
Salford	6,134	552
Stockport	2,934	575
Tameside	2,248	103
Trafford	10,902	456
Wigan	6,645	1,524
Barnsley	1,980	0
Doncaster	1,156	345
Rotherham	3,077	170
Sheffield	4,161	510
Bradford	26,989	1,237
Calderdale	2,285	276
Kirklees	5,100	183
Leeds	14,157	9,332
Wakefield	5,900	425
Gateshead	6,591	455

	Total plans for county and VC schools 1990-91 (£000s-cash)	*Total plans for VA schools 1990-91 (£000s-cash)*
Newcastle	7,199	941
North Tyneside	4,978	1,017
South Tyneside	8,150	146
Sunderland	8,581	230
Isle of Scilly	300	0
Avon	13,270	2,527
Bedfordshire	11,824	0
Berkshire	14,099	1,046
Buckinghamshire	12,978	2,782
Cambridge	26,194	2,285
Cheshire	13,499	5,714
Cleveland	6,963	634
Cornwall	16,401	1,336
Cumbria	10,052	745
Derbyshire	20,121	2,442
Devon	26,667	1,007
Dorset	8,776	6,620
Durham	14,826	752
East Sussex	19,227	1,860
Essex	36,837	1,395
Gloucester	17,094	5,374
Hampshire	21,937	4,025
Hereford and Worcester	11,658	1,653
Hertford	12,564	648
Humberside	15,436	1,058
Isle of Wight	5,458	126
Kent	29,396	3,786
Lancashire	32,079	6,066
Leicester	15,863	685
Lincoln	21,251	830
Norfolk	8,374	1,192
North Yorkshire	6,119	774
Northampton	8,836	85
Northumberland	5,516	431
Nottinghamshire	10,977	2,084
Oxfordshire	12,300	4,223
Shropshire	8,964	486
Somerset	11,300	1,685
Staffordshire	14,935	1,373
Suffolk	13,872	447
Surrey	7,919	1,534
Warwickshire	3,958	1,936
West Sussex	10,432	2,988
Wiltshire	17,088	1,026

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to announce his allocations to local education authorities in respect of their capital expenditure on schools.

Mr. MacGregor: I expect to make an announcement before Christmas.

Natural Environment Research Council

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has received the annual report of the natural environment research council for 1988-89; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The annual report of the natural environment research council has been submitted to me under the requirements of the Science and Technology Act 1965, and a copy is being laid before the House today.

The report highlights the council's achievements in a year in which public interest in environmental matters significantly increased. I was particularly interested to note:

(a) the start of the biological ocean flux study, a major programme involving scientists from both NERC and higher education institutions, contributing to international research on the carbon cycle in oceans;

(b) the collaborative research on the North sea, and progress in developing models to help predict water quality and the future effects of man's activities;

(c) the advances in research on the contribution of air pollutants to forest decline and the mechanisms involved;

(d) the development of a predictive system of biological monitoring and river quality, now incorporated in a software package and being developed further with support from the water industry;

(e) the start up of the NERC extractive industry partnership scheme.

I congratulate the council on these and its many other achievements and look forward to further progress in next year's report.

WALES

Unemployment

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many travel-to-work areas in Wales had an unemployment rate *(a)* over 10 per cent., *(b)* between 5 per cent. and 10 per cent. and *(c)* below 5 per cent. in October.

Mr. Peter Walker: Of the 34 travel-to-work areas in Wales, two had an unemployment rate of more than 10 per cent. at October 1989, 24 a rate between 5 and 10 per cent. and 8 below 5 per cent.

Water

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how he intends to account to Parliament for his responsibility under EC legislation to ensure that individual and private water supplies meet European standards.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be accountable through the usual parliamentary procedures.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many times the Secretary of State's committee has met since the passing of the Water Act 1989; and what matters have been discussed;

(2) if he will list the names of the individuals who comprise the Secretary of State's committee established under the Water Act 1989;

(3) what matters he has referred to the Secretary of State's committee for Wales since the passing of the Water Act; what advice has been offered to him; and what action he has taken as a result.

Mr. Grist: The committee has yet to be appointed.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list his responsibilities under EC and United Kingdom legislation in respect of water supply quality.

Mr. Grist: The main responsibilities of my right hon. Friend in relation to the quality and sufficiency of water supplies are set out clearly in the Water Act 1989. The EC directives relating to drinking water quality have now been incorporated into subordinate legislation arising from the Act.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) in what way local authorities in Wales will be involved in testing and monitoring water supplies from Dwr Cymru, other suppliers and private supplies following the full implementation of the Water Act 1989;

(2) what action he intends to take to bring private water supplies in Wales up to EC standards; and what grants are available to individuals and families who need work undertaken to achieve those standards;

(3) what mechanism he has established to test private water supplies in Wales and to monitor the results of such tests.

Mr. Grist: Section 56 of the Water Act 1989 continues and reinforces the general duty of local authorities to monitor the wholesomeness and sufficiency of all water supplies in their areas. In this respect, I refer the hon. Gentleman to paragraphs 5-19 of Welsh Office circular 47/89, a copy of which is in the Library. Paragraph 12 of that circular also describes the important role of the drinking water inspectorate soon to be established under section 60 of the Act.

From 1 April 1990, schedule 9 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, which amends section 604 of the Housing Act 1985, will come into force and this provides mandatory assistance for a property to have an adequate supply of wholesome water, subject to the grant applicant qualifying under the test of resources. On 29 November this year, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced that there is to be no limit on the amount which local authorities can spend on mandatory home renovation grants which can be used in this regard, next year.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what level of punishment and what directives can be called into effect in the event of a finding against the Government in the European Court following any prosecution for failing to meet directives on water quality.

Mr. Grist: The treaty establishing the European Economic Community does not convey to the Court of Justice express powers in terms of the enforcement of its judgments against member states but the United Kingdom would be under an obligation to comply.

European Regional Development Fund

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest estimates available to him of the total level of receipts to Welsh eligible bodies in Wales from the European regional development fund in each of the past five years.

Mr. Peter Walker: Total European regional development fund payments to eligible Welsh bodies in each of the past five years are shown in the following table:

	£ million
1984	28·6
1985	47·0
1986	43·1
1987	43·8
1988	83·0

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the latest estimate available to him of the total level of commitments to eligible public bodies in Wales of grant aid from the European regional development fund in the current year and 1990.

Mr. Grist: The latest estimate for European regional development fund commitments to Wales for 1989 is £31 million. We expect that, following adoption of the Community support frameworks for objective 2 programmes, commitments will be made during the first three months of 1990 in respect of projects whose processing during 1989 has been delayed by the negotiation of the frameworks.

It will not be possible to provide a reliable estimate of commitments for 1990 until discussions with the European Commission on future funding are complete.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the latest estimate available to him of the total level of commitments to eligible public bodies in Wales of grant aid from the European regional development fund in each of the past five years.

Mr. Peter Walker: Total European regional development fund commitments to eligible Welsh bodies in each of the past five years are shown in the following table:

	£ million
1984	63·0
1985	54·9
1986	49·7
1987	57·8
1988	63·3

Natural Heritage

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what additional funding will be required for the purposes of merging the Nature Conservancy Council and Countryside Commission for Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: This cannot be fully determined at this stage. However, appropriate provision will be included in the Estimates for 1990-91 to cover anticipated start-up costs for the new Countryside Council for Wales in that year, subject to parliamentary approval.

EMPLOYMENT

Earnings

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table in the same form as that contained in his reply of 15 November, *Official Report*, column *279*, in each case distinguishing between manufacturing and non-manufacturing: and if he will provide corresponding figures for (i) the period 1970 to 1979 or the longest available comparable shorter period and (ii) females over each period.

Mr. Nicholls: The increases in real earnings are provided in the table:

Percentage increase

	Manufacturing		*Non-manufacturing*	
	1970-79	*1979-89*	*1970-79*	*1979-89*
Manual males				
Lowest decile	19	3	18	6
Lower quartile	17	7	17	10

	Manufacturing		*Non-manufacturing*	
	1970-79	*1979-89*	*1970-79*	*1979-89*
Median	15	12	17	13
Higher quartile	15	16	19	15
Highest decile	16	20	21	16
Average earnings	16	14	19	13
Non-manual males				
Lowest decile	17	21	15	19
Lower quartile	15	25	15	27
Median	12	31	12	33
Higher quartile	12	37	7	38
Highest decile	7	43	3	48
Average earnings	9	36	7	39
Manual females				
Lowest decile	40	7	47	11
Lower quartile	39	7	46	14
Median	41	9	44	17
Higher quartile	41	14	41	22
Highest decile	39	23	32	28
Average earnings	40	14	40	20
Non-manual females				
Lowest decile	42	17	41	21
Lower quartile	39	22	34	27
Median	39	29	25	35
Higher quartile	35	39	23	46
Highest decile	32	51	15	46
Average earnings	35	38	23	39

Notes:

1. The increases shown do not relate to the same individuals at the different dates.

2. Full-time adult employees in Great Britain.

Source:

3. New Earnings Survey data deflated by the RPI (all items), April of each year.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table providing corresponding figures to those given in his answer of 15 November, *Official Report,* column *279,* for non-manual workers in all service industries (6-9) electricity (161) office machinery, etc. (33) retail distribution (64-65) railways (71) banking etc. (8) banking and bill discounting (814) business services (83) accountants, auditors and tax experts (836) social security (919) higher education (931) and school education (932) together with their weight in the earnings index in 1979 and 1989.

Mr. Nicholls: Comparable earnings figures for 1979 and 1989 are not readily available for the industries specified because of the change in the standard industrial classification in 1982 and it would involve disproportionate cost to compile the data on a consistent basis. The weights used in the average earnings index in 1979 are not available on a comparable industry basis: those available for 1989 are published on page 609 of the November 1989 issue of *Employment Gazette.*

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table providing corresponding figures to that given in his written answer of 15 November, *Official Report,* column *279,* for the manual workers in mechanical engineering (32) motor vehicles and their engines (351) textiles (43) footwear (451) clothing etc. (453) paper and paper products (471-472) internal combustion engines (3281) retail distribution (64-65) retail distribution of motor vehicles (651) business services (83) hospitals etc. (951) and personal services (13.1) together with their weights in the earnings index in 1979 and 1989.

Mr. Nicholls: Except for footwear (SIC 451), comparable earnings figures for 1979 and 1989 are not readily available for the industries specified because of the change in the standard industrial classification in 1982 and it would involve disproportionate cost to compile the data on a consistent basis. The weights used in the average earnings index in 1979 are not available on a comparable industry basis: those available for 1989 are published on page 609 of the November 1989 issue of *Employment Gazette.* The available information for footwear (SIC 451) is given in the table.

Full-time manual adult males in footwear industries—Great Britain

	Percentage increase
Lowest decile	1
Lower quartile	5
Median	14
Higher quartile	13
Highest decile	4
Average earnings	7

Note:

1. The increases shown are for April 1979 to April 1989 and do not relate to the same individuals at the different dates.

2. *Source:* New Earnings Survey data deflated by the RPI (all items).

Health and Safety Executive

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many professionally qualified accountants are employed by the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Nicholls: On 1 December 1989, four professionally qualified accountants were employed by the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many staff, and of which grades are employed in the Health and Safety Executive's press department.

Mr. Nicholls: The number of staff, and their grades, employed in the Health and Safety Executive's press department as at 1 October 1989 is as follows:

1 Grade 7
3 Senior press officers (SIO grade)
2 Press officers (IO grade)
1 Executive officer
1 Administrative officer
1 Administrative assistant
1 Personal secretary

Factory Inspectors

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 23 November, *Official Report,* columns *19-20,* how many actual training days have been organised, and on what dates, for factory inspectors, on each of these three sets of new regulations in 1989; and how many are planned for 1990.

Mr. Nicholls: Forty-three training days on the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations were organised for factory inspectors on the following dates in 1989: 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 18, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26 and

27 April, 3, 4, 9 and 10 May, 3, 5 and 10 October. None are planned in 1990. Thirty-one training days on the Control of Noise at Work Regulations were organised for factory inspectors on the following dates in 1989: 8, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 29 and 30 November and 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 14 and 15 December. One training day has been organised on 30 January 1990. No training days on the Electricity at Work Regulations were organised for factory inspectors in 1989. Training days for inspectors are planned for early 1990 but the dates have not yet been arranged.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of the annual revenue budget of the Health and Safety Executive, excluding staff salaries, was spent on training of staff, in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Nicholls: The percentage of the Health and Safety Executive's annual revenue budget (that is, excluding capital expenditure) less expenditure on salaries, spent on training courses and related travel and subsistence costs over the last five years was as follows:

	Per cent.
1984-85	1·8
1985-86	2·5
1986-87	3·1
1987-88	3·5
1988-89	3·5

Workplace Child Care

Mr. David Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has on the level and standards of provision of workplace child care facilities in different member countries of the European Community.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend has no comparable data on the extent of workplace child care facilities for all member countries of the European Community.

Such information as my right hon. Friend has is contained in the European Commission April 1988 Consolidated Report "Childcare and Equality of Opportunity". This shows that most countries have some childcare services provided by employers and that services are most common in the public sector.

Workplace facilities are not always the most practical method of child care provision.

Sheltered Placement Scheme

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether detailed recommendations on the future of the sheltered placement scheme will be made in his Department's internal review on employment assistance to disabled adults.

Mr. Eggar: The future of the services provided by my Department for supporting people with severe disabilities in employment are among the matters under consideration within the internal review.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans to expand the sheltered placement scheme which provides job opportunities for severely disabled people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We intend to inform sponsors as soon as possible about arrangements for the sheltered placement scheme in 1990-91.

Disabled People

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment his Department has made of the demographic changes to the work force and the ability of disabled people to fill the associated skills gap in the work force.

Mr. Eggar: The Employment Department makes regular projections of the size and age structure of the labour force. The latest figures, based on 1987 based population projections and preliminary results of the 1988 labour force survey, were published in the *Employment Gazette,* April 1989, and cover the period up to the year 2000. The annual labour force survey collects information on the qualifications of those with work-limiting health problems and disabilities. It is clear that people with disabilities suffer higher unemployment rates than able bodied people and are under utilised in the labour market. The shortage of young people in the 1990s means that employers will have to make better use of their workers and seek new sources of recruitment, including people with disabilities.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment his Department has made of the need for anti-discrimination legislation to ensure equal employment opportunities for disabled people.

Mr. Nicholls: A consultative document covering the conclusions of the review will be published as soon as possible.

Successive Governments have judged that education and persuasion of employers is the most effective approach to improving employment opportunities for people with disabilities. The role of legislation is one of the matters being considered in the review of services to the disabled currently being undertaken by this Department.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what help he has given to disabled persons to train them in the use of microtechnology.

Mr. Eggar: Many people are given the opportunity to acquire relevant skills and to train in the uses of microtechnology through all the Training Agency's programmes. People with disabilities play a full and growing part in those programmes.

In addition, people who because of their disability are helped by the use of microtechnology-based equipment supplied through the special aids to employment scheme to undertake training or employment are entitled to any necessary introductory training in the use of that equipment.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what programmes he has commissioned aimed at changing employers' attitudes towards the employment of disabled people.

Mr. Eggar: My Department encourages employers to adopt good policies and practices in the employment of people with disabilities mainly through marketing action by the 65 area teams of the Disablement Advisory Service; promotion of the code of good practice in the employment of disabled people and of a number of supporting publications and videos; and the fit for work award scheme.

In addition, disablement resettlement officers and other jobcentre staff help employers to obtain suitable employees with disabilities, and financial help is available to help overcome specific barriers at work. My Department is currently reviewing its services for people with disabilities, and a consultative document will be published shortly.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Benefits (Uprating)

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide a breakdown of the saving or cost of each measure announced in his uprating statement on 25 October, *Official Report,* columns 841-54, indicating where and to what extent the cost is due to uprating in line with the retail prices index, or Rossi index where appropriate, to September 1989.

Mr. Newton: As a result of all the increases in social security benefits I announced on 25 October, expenditure on my Department's programme will be some £2·8 billion higher in 1990-91 than if these were to be left unchanged. Increases in rates for contributory and non-contributory benefits generally were with reference to the September 1988 to September 1989 increase in the retail prices index (RPI) and for income-related benefits with reference to the increase in that index less housing costs (the Rossi index).

Changes going beyond what is statutorily or conventionally undertaken by reference to one of these indices were as follows:

	£ million
Additional increase in the higher rate of Invalidity Allowance	+ 1
Additional increase of 50p in the family premiums for income related benefits	+33
Additional increase of £1 in the Family Credit adult credit	+16
Additional increase in the Housing Benefit and Community Charge Benefit lone parent premium	+2
Additional increase in the allowance for personal expenses for Income Support claimants in hospital	+ 1
Additional increases in war widows age allowances	+ 3
Additional increase in the adult disability premiums in income-related benefits	+18
More than doubling of the disability premium for families with disabled children on income-related benefits	+ 8
Additional increase in the Therapeutic Earnings Limit	(less than £1 million see below)

In addition I made increases in certain payments and limits for which there is no statutory uprating requirement or established uprating convention:

	£ million
Increases in Income Support limits for residential care and nursing homes	+100
£15 increase in the Social Fund Maternity Payment	+ 3
£5 increase in the War Pensioner's disregard in income-related benefits	+ 4
Increase of £8 in the Invalid Care Allowance earnings limit	(less than £1 million see below).

I also announced various structural changes to help the less-well-off, over and above increases in the benefit rates. The costs of these in the first full year (1991-92) are as follows:

	£ million
New higher limit on the amount lone parents not on Income Support receiving Housing Benefit or Community Charge Benefit can earn without affecting benefit	+11
New higher Social Fund capital rule of £1,000 for elderly people on Income Support	+2
£10 Carer's premium in the income-related benefits	+15
Extension of Attendance Allowance to the terminally ill without a six month waiting period with consequent extension of Invalid Care Allowance	+28
Extension of Attendance Allowance for children under 2 years old with consequent extensions of Invalid Care Allowance	+6
Extension of Mobility Allowance to the deaf-blind	+5
Extension of Invalidity Benefit to those on Employment Rehabilitation Courses	[1]—
Additional funds for the Independent Living Fund (1990-91)	+19

[1] Estimated at a cost less than £1 million together with the additional increase in the invalid care allowance earnings limit and the therapeutic earnings limit mentioned above.

I also took account, in deciding on my proposals, of two major improvements which took effect in October in advance of the uprating but entailing substantially increased social security expenditure in 1990-91. These were:

	1989-90 £ million	*1990-91 £ million*
Abolition of the pensioners' earnings rule	+190	+375
Help for poorer pensioners who are disabled or over 75	+85	+199

I also announced increases in statutory sick pay and statutory maternity pay. The lower rates will increase in real terms, as will the statutory sick pay standard rate threshold. There will be a lower increase in the statutory sick pay standard rate. Overall, these changes will increase expenditure by some £70 million to £80 million less than raising both rates and thresholds in line with the RPI. Had I decided to increase child benefit in line with the RPI, this would have cost some £250 million net of savings on other benefits.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many families are currently unable to claim either family credit or income support due to the difficulty of deciding when a pattern of working over 24 hours a week is established; how long on average these families have been awaiting an outstanding claim for either income support or family credit; and how he proposes to ensure that the risk of failing to qualify for either family credit or income support, in such cases, be minimised.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Available information suggests that only a few hundred families are unable to qualify for either income support or family credit because the claimant or partner is working for 24 hours or more a week at the time of the claim, but cannot be regarded as normally engaged in such work for family credit purposes because it is casual or short-term. Claims from people in this situation have been dealt with, and decisions issued, as and when they have arisen. We propose to lay regulations shortly to amend the definition of normally engaged in the family credit legislation so as to enable more such families to qualify for benefit.

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether for the purpose of calculating claimants' entitlement to family credit, depreciation is an allowable business expense of which account should be taken to determine the annual net profit of self-employed persons and their average weekly earnings.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: No. Paragraph 22(5)(b) of the Family Credit (General) Regulations provides that in calculating net profit for family credit purposes no deduction shall be made in respect of the depreciation of any capital asset.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the latest available figures for the number of families in receipt of family credit in Blyth Valley.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: At the latest available date, the number of families receiving family credit who at the time of their award were living in the area covered by the Blyth local social security office was 700.

Income Support

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has made a decision on the outstanding claim of Mr. and Mrs. Elliot of the Rodley boat centre to either family credit or income support.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him on 21 July 1989 at column *435* when my hon. Friend explained that decisions had been issued on Mr. and Mrs. Elliot's claims for both family credit and income support. I understand that they have made no further claim for either benefit. Mr. and Mrs. Elliot are, of course, free to claim either benefit again at any time if their circumstances are now such that they believe they may have become entitled.

Benefits and Allowances

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the number of recipients of attendance allowance at *(a)* the higher rate and *(b)* the lower rate by sex and standard age cohorts at the last date for which figures are available.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is in the table.

Attendance allowance: recipients by sex and age cohort at 31 March 1988

Thousands

	Higher rate		*Lower rate*	
	Males	*Females*	*Males*	*Females*
All ages	101	186	161	264
2-4	4	3	5	4
5-9	7	5	10	7
10-15	6	4	9	7
16-19	3	2	5	4
20-29	6	5	12	11
30-39	4	5	8	9
40-49	5	7	9	10
50-59	8	11	13	14
60-64	8	9	12	12
65-69	9	12	14	16
70-74	10	15	15	21
75-79	12	23	17	33
80 and over	19	84	32	117

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the number of recipients of invalid care allowance by sex and standard age cohorts at the last date for which figures are available.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is in the table.

Invalid care allowance:
Recipients by sex and age cohort at 26 September 1989

	Numbers	
Age bands	*Males*	*Females*
All ages	19,044	99,202
Under 20	111	360
20-24	284	1,933
25-29	535	7,156
30-34	847	12,232
35-39	1,304	13,902
40-44	1,921	15,504
45-49	2,324	13,562
50-54	2,971	14,489
55-59	4,202	14,758
60-64	4,273	[1]5,306
65 and over	272	—

[1] All Females aged 60 and over.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the number of recipients of invalidity benefit by sex and standard age cohorts at the last date for which figures are available; and if he will further break down the figures by *(a)* receipt of an additional component and *(b)* receipt of each rate of invalidity allowance.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is in the tables.

Recipients of invalidity benefit at 2 April 1988 and numbers who receive additional pension

Thousands

	Men		*Women*	
Age	*Total recipients*	*Recipients of additional pension*	*Total recipients*	*Recipients of additional pension*
All ages	807·8	608·3	239·7	174·7
Under 20	0·3	0·3	0·7	0·2
20-24	5·6	4·2	7·6	6·6
25-29	12·0	9·6	16·2	14·4
30-34	22·5	17·7	19·5	14·8
35-39	29·7	21·1	22·0	14·4
40-44	47·2	33·4	25·6	19·2
45-49	58·1	38·8	30·9	21·1
50-54	94·8	67·6	44·0	32·6
55-59	149·5	115·7	53·0	39·5

Age	*Men* *Total recipients*	*Men* *Recipients of additional pension*	*Women* *Total recipients*	*Women* *Recipients of additional pension*
60-64	258·2	210·9	20·2	11·9
65 and over	129·9	89·0	—	—

Recipients of invalidity benefit at 2 April 1988 who receive invalidity allowance[1]

Thousands

Age	*Men* *High rate*	*Men* *Medium rate*	*Men* *Low rate*	*Women* *High rate*	*Women* *Medium rate*	*Women* *Low rate*	*Total*
All ages	130·9	102·0	104·6	95·6	53·7	22·3	509·1
Under 20	0·3	—	—	0·7	—	—	1·0
20-24	5·6	—	—	7·5	—	—	13·1
25-29	10·5	—	—	15·4	—	—	25·9
30-34	17·1	—	—	18·0	—	—	35·1
35-39	22·3	—	—	20·2	—	—	42·5
40-44	29·5	4·1	—	16·3	5·8	—	55·7
45-49	19·2	16·4	—	8·1	16·7	—	60·4
50-54	13·6	30·3	4·7	4·1	18·6	6·7	78·0
55-59	7·3	30·2	19·3	3·8	9·9	11·3	81·8
60-64	4·1	17·3	46·5	1·5	2·7	4·3	76·4
65 and over	1·4	3·7	34·1	—	—	—	39·2

[1] Numbers of recipients are those who actually receive some Invalidity Allowance (IVA). In addition there are 360,300 people who do not receive IVA because the rate of Additional Pension or guaranteed minimum pension they receive exceeds the rate of IVA which would have been payable.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the number of recipients of mobility allowance by sex and standard age cohorts at the last date for which figures are available.

Mr. Scott: The latest available information, as at 30 September 1989, is in the table.

Age Groups	*Recipients who transferred from vehicle scheme* *Male*	*Recipients who transferred from vehicle scheme* *Female*	*Other Recipients* *Male*	*Other Recipients* *Female*
5-9	—	—	5,001	4,026
10-14	—	—	4,493	3,667
15-19	1	2	5,775	4,955
20-24	5	4	7,106	6,223
25-29	17	15	7,808	7,295
30-34	487	311	7,555	7,980
35-39	860	580	9,517	10,569
40-44	1,308	952	13,998	15,915
45-49	1,077	845	17,699	19,385
50-54	1,163	902	26,871	28,156
55-59	1,458	986	41,642	40,085
60-64	1,835	1,103	64,511	54,608
65-69	2,303	1,355	61,787	50,486
70-74	1,621	965	13,314	12,605
75-79	1,294	806	—	—
80-84	564	495	—	—
85 and over	226	219	—	—
All ages	14,219	9,450	287,077	265,955

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the number of recipients of severe disablement allowance by sex and standard age cohorts at the last date for which figures are available.

Mr. Scott: The latest information, at 2 April 1988, is in the table.

	Men	*Women*
All ages	103,400	160,000
Under 20	11,200	8,500
20-24	16,400	11,300
25-29	13,600	10,300
30-34	8,100	11,000
35-39	10,300	12,900
40-44	8,700	15,300
45-49	7,400	16,100
50-54	5,300	21,200
55-59	7,400	28,100
60-64	8,300	17,200
65 and over	6,600	8,000

Note: Figures are based on a 1 per cent. sample.

National Insurance

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of national insurance contributions collected from employers is the responsibility of his Department; and how much that amounted to in the last available year broken down by each class of contributions.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Inland Revenue is mainly responsible for the collection of class 1 national insurance contributions. The Department of Social Security assumes responsibility for collection in certain limited circumstances and collects such contributions direct in certain instances—for example in respect of Civil Service and Her Majesty's forces employments.

The Department also makes claims against insolvent employers. For the year ended April 1989 the Department collected about £1·5 billion in this way which represents about 5 per cent. of the total of class 1 national insurance contributions.

Social Fund

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what collation of statistics his Department undertakes on how many claimants have been taken out of the priority categories eligible for community care grants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Priority categories for community care grants have not been changed. Statistics relating to the number of refusals of community care grants on grounds of insufficient priority are in annex 9(1A) of the Secretary of State's annual report on the social fund 1988-89, a copy of which is in the Library.

Income Support

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give for each client group a table for rates of income support showing (i) the illustrative figures in the technical annex to the 1985 White Paper, (ii) the illustrative figures uprated by the retail prices index since then, (iii) the illustrative figures uprated by the Rossi index, (iv) the amounts provided to compensate for the 20 per cent. rates or poll tax contribution and (v) the proposed income support rates for April 1990.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information requested is in the table:

Income Support Client Group	*Technical annex to the 1985 White Paper*	*Uprated by*		*Compensation for 20 per cent. Community Charge Contribution*[3]	*Proposed rates from April 1990*
		[1] *RPI*	[2] *ROSSI*		
	£	£	£	£	£
Pensioners					
Age 80+ single	42·85	52·49	50·19	1·30	53·75
Age 80+ couple	65·45	80·18	76·65	2·30	81·85
Age 75-79 single	40·60	49·73	47·55	1·30	51·10
Age 75-79 couple	63·25	77·48	74·07	2·30	79·20
Age 60+ disabled					
single	40·60	49·73	47·55	1·30	51·10
couple	63·25	77·48	74·07	2·30	79·20
Age 60-74 single	40·60	49·73	47·55	1·30	48·50
couple	63·25	77·48	74·07	2·30	75·55
[4] *Sick and Disabled*					
Age 18-24 single	36·25	44·41	42·46	1·15	44·20
Age 25+ single	42·85	52·49	50·19	1·30	52·10
couple	65·45	80·18	76·65	2·30	79·70
Lone Parent					
[5] With 2 children	65·00	79·62	76·12	1·30	78·75
Unemployed					
Age 18-24 single	24·00	29·40	28·11	1·15	28·80
Age 25+ single	30·60	37·48	35·84	1·30	36·70
Couple no children	48·00	58·80	56·21	2·30	57·60
[5] Couple with 2 children	78·95	96·71	92·45	2·30	95·55

[1] Based on movement in the index of Retail Prices between November 1985 and October 1989 (the latest date for which the index is available).

[2] Based on movement in the index of Retail Prices (less housing) between November 1985 and October 1989.

[3] Amounts included in benefit levels from April 1989. These amounts, which replaced those previously included from April 1988 to compensate for the 20 per cent. rates contribution, now form part of the overall benefit levels to be uprated from April 1990.

[4] In receipt of disability premium.

[5] Assumes one child under age 11 and one child aged 11-15.

Pensioners

Mr. Meacher To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will set out in detail the basis of his calculation, *Official Report,* 27 November, column *525,* that pensioners' total incomes have increased by about 23 per cent. in real terms since 1979.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer the hon. Member to the article "Pensioners incomes and expenditure" which appeared in the *Employment Gazette,* of May 1987, a copy of which is in the Library. The same basis of calculation was used in arriving at the 1979-86 real terms increase of 23 per cent. in pensioners' average total net income.

Child Abuse

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what Government funds are available for the range of assessment, treatment, and support services provided by local authority social services departments, health authorities, and voluntary child care organisations, specified in her answer of 15 November, *Official Report,* column *339.*

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I have been asked to reply.

This information is not available centrally. It is for local authorities and health authorities to determine the deployment of their overall resources to specific services in the light of legislative requirements, and local circumstances, needs and priorities. Government grants to voluntary organisations working in the field of child protection are usually paid as contributions to headquarters administration expenses.

SCOTLAND

Nuclear Power Stations

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of employees at each nuclear power station in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: I am advised by the South of Scotland electricity board, British Nuclear Fuels and the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority that, as at the end of November 1989, the number of employees at Scottish power stations was as follows:

	Number
Chapelcross	630
Dounreay	[1]1,838
Hunterston A and B	[2]1,046
Torness	[2]634

[1] The figure of 1,838 represents the total number of employees at the Dounreay Nuclear Establishment; of these, only around 15 per cent. work on the operation or in close support of the prototype fast reactor.

[2] The figures do not include Headquarters and Central Services personnel involved wholly or partly with nuclear generation.

Birds (Illegal Poisoning)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many birds, by species, were illegally killed by poisons in the Tayside region for each of the last two years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The numbers of birds, by species, reported to have been illegally killed by pesticides in Tayside region are as follows:

	Number
1987	
Corvids	3
Gulls	2
Buzzard	1
1988	
Corvids	20
Buzzards	2
Gulls	2
Eagle	1
1989 to date	
Corvids	3
Buzzard	1

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 4 December, on how many occasions during each of the last five years he has drawn to the attention of the Islay estates owners the requirements of the law relating to the illegal poisoning of birds.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The policy referred to in my answer of 4 December was introduced in 1988 following the golden eagle poisoning incidents on the Islay estate that year. The policy was also operated this year in the light of the poisoning incidents referred to in my previous answer. Prior to 1988, the attention of the Islay estates was not formally drawn to the incidents.

Parliament House

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the cost of the new lift being installed in Parliament house for the use of judges; and what is its purpose.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The cost of installing the new lift will be approximately £100,000. It will allow more ready access from judges' chambers to court rooms.

Argyll and Clyde Health Board

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met with the Argyll and Clyde health board; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend has had no recent meetings with Argyll and Clyde health board.

Lennox Castle Hospital

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many patients are resident in Lennox Castle hospital.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Seven hundred and eighty-five.

Dr. John Myles

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what function is performed by Dr. John Myles in relation to the Scottish Development Department.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Dr. John Miles' function as ecological adviser is to assist the Scottish Development Department and other Scottish Departments to arrive at a better informed view of the effect of current and proposed policies affecting the living environment. One of his prime responsibilities is to interpret scientific information. He also advises on casework and assists in determining departmental ecological and environmental research requirements.

Health Service

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each year since 1980 the total number of doctors employed by the National Health Service and express this as a percentage of the 1980 figure.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is given in the following table:

Year	*Total*	*Percentage of 1980*
1980	9,923	100·0
1981	10,167	102·5
1982	10,229	103·1
1983	10,410	104·9
1984	10,499	105·8
1985	10,509	105·9
1986	10,480	105·6
1987	10,476	105·6
1988	10,833	109·2

Natural Heritage Agency

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many permanent staff are likely to be employed by the proposed Natural Heritage Agency.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The proposed agency will be adequately staffed to carry out its important responsibilities but it is too soon to estimate the number of permanent posts.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what additional funding will be required for the purposes of merging the Nature Conservancy Council and Countryside Commission for Scotland into a new agency.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The proposed agency will have adequate resources to carry out its important responsibilities, but it is too soon to decide the precise level of funding which will be required.

Western Scottish Bus Company

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has received from Touche Ross and Co. concerning the financial management of the Western Scottish bus company; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: None. Touche Ross and Co. has not been appointed to advise the Secretary of State or the Scottish transport group on matters concerning the management of the Scottish Bus Group subsidiaries or their privatisation.

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has received from the Scottish Bus Group concerning recent management resignations from the Western Scottish bus company; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The management of Western Scottish Omnibuses Ltd. is a matter for the Scottish transport group and the company concerned. My right hon. and learned Friend is, however, aware that two second-level management staff have recently resigned from Western Scottish Omnibuses Ltd. Their reasons for doing so are a matter between the individuals concerned and the company.

Power Generation

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to introduce a non-fossil fuel obligation within the Scottish electricity generating industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: There are no plans to introduce a non-fossil fuel obligation in Scotland at present.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to encourage wind-generated power in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: Government research and development into renewable energy sources is managed by the Department of Energy. Since 1979 the Government have spent over £140 million (over £190 million at 1989 prices) on research into renewable energy sources with the aim of identifying those technologies which can economically meet the energy needs of the next century. A 10 to 15-year programme is presently under way in conjunction with the electricity industry which, if successful, should provide the basis for the commercial exploitation of wind power from the late 1990s onward.

The Scottish Office has consistently stressed that Government support would be available for a viable Scottish development.

Parliament Hall

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the cost of manufacture and erection of the two bronze plaques erected at the south end of Parliament Hall concerning the achievements of the Property Services Agency.

Mr. Chope: I have been asked to reply. The costs were:

	£
Plaque to commemorate the roof restoration	540
Plaque to commemorate the window restoration	580

HEALTH

Cash Allocations (Nottingham)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the cash allocation to Nottingham district health authority in constant prices for each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Initial cash allocations to Nottingham HA at 1989-90 prices since 1982-83 are:

	£ million
1982-83	162·7
1983-84	162·4
1984-85	157·6
1985-86	159·5
1986-87	167·7
1987-88	171·0
1988-89	174·7
1989-90	180·8

Figures before the 1982 NHS reorganisation would relate to Nottingham area health authority, a much larger organisation than the current district health authority, and would therefore not be comparable.

Demographic Changes

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the most recently available estimates of the percentage changes in demand on the hospital and community health services due to demographic change for each year from 1972-73 to 1995-96; and if he will put in the Library details of the methods used to arrive at these estimates.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: There has been a conventional practice in recent years of giving estimates of increased demand on services from demographic change expressed in expenditure terms. I have never believed that these figures are very useful as they imply, wrongly in my opinion, that increased spending is the only way in which increased demand can be met. Nevertheless I give the information requested in the table.

Estimates of growth in demographic demand on the hospital and community health services for the years 1972-73 to 1995-96

Year	*Per cent.*
1972-73	0·0
1973-74	−0·1
1974-75	0·0
1975-76	0·1
1976-77	0·2
1977-78	0·3
1978-79	1·0
1979-80	1·3
1980-81	1·1
1981-82	0·4
1982-83	0·4
1983-84	0·5
1984-85	0·6
1985-86	1·3

Year	*Per cent.*
1986-87	1·0
1987-88	1·0
1988-89	1·1
1989-90	0·9
1990-91	0·9
1991-92	0·7
1992-93	0·5
1993-94	0·3
1994-95	0·3
1995-96	0·9

Details of the method used to arrive at the estimates are given in answer to question 2 of the Social Services Select Committee report, Session 1988-89, HC 418.

NHS Reform

Sir Barney Hayhoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what specific areas of expenditure on the family practitioner services are at present cash limited; which will be cash limited from April 1990; and which he plans to cash limit later.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: At present expenditure on family practitioner services is not subject to a cash limit.

From April 1990, payments to general medical practitioners under the practice staff, cost rent and improvement grant schemes will be subject to a cash limit. From that date, general medical practitioners will for the first time be able to claim direct reimbursement for part of the costs of computer purchase, leasing and maintenance, and these payments will be subject to a cash limit.

A cash limit will apply at national level to total expenditure from GP practice funds which are, subject to parliamentary approval, to be introduced from 1 April 1991. No cash limits will apply to this expenditure at practice level. The management allowance to be paid in relation to the GP funding initiative will be subject to a cash limit.

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will commission management studies of the strategic effectiveness of the new National Health Service management structures as they develop, including those where the regional health authority splits into separate businesses, the district health authority secures trust status and certain individual services become trusts.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We are supporting a considerable number of development projects designed to test out in districts, hospitals and other units different aspects of our proposed improvements to make sure that workable systems are in place by April 1991. Many of the proposals will evolve throughout the coming decade. We intend to achieve steady incremental progress, informed by the lessons of experience. I see no need to commission management studies at this stage.

Chiropractors

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received about giving Government recognition to qualified chiropractors; what response he has made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: During the past two months, we have received representations, as part of a campaign, from the British Association of Chiropractors, individual chiropractors and patients, calling for the state registration of chiropractors.

Practitioners of alternative or complementary therapies who are not registered with the General Medical Council and who are therefore not eligible to work within the NHS, are nevertheless at liberty to offer their services privately. It is for individual patients seeking the services of complementary practitioners, to satisfy themselves as to the competence of the practitioner concerned.

If members of a particular profession are concerned to ensure that professional standards are maintained and believe that statutory regulation is the best way of achieving this end, then it is for the profession itself to take all necessary steps necessary to obtain their goal.

Community Care

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which Department will be responsible for furthering paediatric physiotherapy in schools, whether mainstream or special, under the programmes proposed in the White Paper on community care.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: District health authorities will remain responsible for the development of paediatric physiotherapy services for children in mainstream and special schools. We expect that health authorities will continue to collaborate with local education authorities to improve these services.

Whipps Cross Hospital

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will ask the chairman of the North-East Thames regional health authority when he is likely to submit phase 2 of the Whipps Cross hospital development for approval; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: No. The timing of the submission of proposals for major capital developments to the Department of Health is for regional health authorities to decide.

Racial Abuse

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take steps to counter the racial abuse of National Health Service staff by some patients; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Members of minority communities play an invaluable part in the NHS, for which many of us have cause to feel profoundly grateful. We totally deplore any racially motivated abuse of them.

Racial abuse or harassment is recognised as a form of violence in the report of the DHSS advisory committee on violence to staff which was chaired by my noble Friend Lord Skelmersdale. The report, which was published in July last year and a copy of which is in the Library, recommends that every unit should have a local strategy for dealing with violence, including preventive measures, suitable responses and support for staff who are victims. It also emphasises the critical importance of reporting systems and of encouraging staff to report all incidents.

We support this approach and hope that any member of staff who is subjected to or witnesses racial abuse will be encouraged to report it to his or her manager whose immediate responsibility it is to ensure that suitable action is taken.

Hepatitis C

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the percentage of blood donors shown to have hepatitis C in random tests carried out by the national blood transfusion service;

(2) whether he proposes to introduce screening of blood donors for hepatitis C;

(3) whether supplies of stored blood plasma are checked for indications of hepatitis C.

Mr. Freeman: A screening test for antibodies to hepatitis C has been available only since the middle of the year, and no confirmatory test is at present available. In a preliminary study the national blood transfusion service examined frozen blood samples, but this work cannot be used to predict likely infection in fresh blood donations.

A systematic evaluation of the test on 15,000 donations at three transfusion centres is currently in progress. Results are not yet available. The introduction of the test for all blood donations is under review and will depend on the results of the evaluation and other scientific evidence supporting its benefit. Stored plasma is not tested for hepatitis C. It has not yet been shown that the test would reduce the possibility of transmission of disease in fractionated plasma products.

Cancer

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the rates of cancer of the breast and cervix in the north-east of England for those aged *(a)* 20 to 25 years, *(b)* 25 to 30 years, *(c)* 30 to 35 years, *(d)* 35 to 40 years, *(e)* 40 to 45 years, *(f)* 45 to 50 years, and *(g)* 50 to 55 years, and; what were the average rates for the rest of the United Kingdom for the same age groups, for each year from 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The exact information requested could be provided only at a disproportionate cost. However, some information for the period 1980-84 is shown in the table.

Newly diagnosed cases of cancer rates (per 100,000 population) for female breast[1] and the cervix uteri[2] by age group for Northern regional health authority, Yorkshire regional health authority and the United Kingdom: 1980-84

TABLE 1

Malignant neoplasm of the female breast

Year and age group	*Northern RHA*	*Yorkshire RHA*	*United Kingdom*
1980			
20-24	0·86	1·53	0·24
25-29	6·72	5·94	1·84
30-34	27·78	26·78	7·87
35-39	44·35	41·67	21·76
40-44	98·10	97·83	41·64
45-49	151·69	153·37	68·55
50-54	146·47	123·42	86·08
1981			
20-24	1·70	0·75	0·19
25-29	7·66	9·39	2·85
30-34	26·57	20·50	8·33
35-39	64·94	61·36	19·53
40-44	88·84	114·00	38·60
45-49	128·00	134·28	68·87
50-54	113·61	147·06	88·83
1982			
20-24	—	0·73	0·23
25-29	9·63	3·38	1·83
30-34	24·34	14·47	8·77
35-39	64·23	45·30	19·63
40-44	109·20	94·38	39·56
45-49	144·66	146·79	68·66
50-54	123·51	140·59	87·85
1983			
20-24	1·63	0·71	0·14
25-29	3·83	6·71	2·33
30-34	22·12	21·67	8·05
35-39	38·61	47·35	20·61
40-44	82·19	96·93	38·12
45-49	147·64	138·24	64·57
50-54	120·98	155·31	89·64
1984			
20-24	1·60	2·07	0·48
25-29	10·32	4·90	2·69
30-34	28·38	27·90	8·75
35-39	48·71	47·92	20·68
40-44	71·83	103·68	37·19
45-49	126·28	141·42	65·43
50-54	144·47	138·07	87·11

TABLE 2

Malignant neoplasm of the cervix uteri

Year and age group	*Northern RHA*	*Yorkshire RHA*	*United Kingdom*
1980			
20-24	1·73	4·60	0·93
25-29	9·61	7·63	2·74
30-34	18·82	21·42	4·78
35-39	26·61	28·41	6·98
40-44	18·95	26·68	7·70
45-49	15·73	14·13	9·91
50-54	28·45	30·13	14·03
1981			
20-24	1·70	2·24	0·80
25-29	9·58	17·08	3·11
30-34	15·06	23·54	6·02
35-39	19·48	27·47	7·02
40-44	20·50	27·00	9·60
45-49	13·71	27·47	9·67
50-54	30·01	25·49	13·19
1982			
20-24	1·66	2·92	0·69
25-29	12·52	17·77	2·31
30-34	15·92	27·33	5·88
35-39	17·79	28·52	6·80
40-44	25·29	39·16	10·66
45-49	20·67	18·35	10·72
50-54	20·59	17·82	10·50
1983			
20-24	0·82	5·66	0·50
25-29	13·40	22·65	3·73
30-34	31·15	35·00	6·85
35-39	18·83	22·47	7·09
40-44	27·40	27·70	8·68
45-49	16·15	26·24	10·11
50-54	23·31	22·04	12·36
1984			
20-24	0·80	2·76	0·35
25-29	10·32	13·88	4·32
30-34	29·35	32·97	5·30
35-39	19·30	36·92	7·35
40-44	19·08	31·98	10·08

Year and age group	*Northern RHA*	*Yorkshire RHA*	*United Kingdom*
45-49	20·48	31·09	9·16
50-54	19·19	27·41	12·04

[1] Assigned to the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) 9th revision code 174.

[2] Assigned to the ICD code 180.

Pharmacists

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many staff are currently employed *(a)* in the Medicines Control Agency and *(b)* the drug tariff committee; and how many of these are qualified pharmacists.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: As at 1 November 1989 the Medicines Control Agency employed 297·5 staff (full-time equivalents); of these 52 are pharmacists*.

There is no drug tariff committee. About 35 staff in the Department have duties concerned with the preparation of the drug tariff. Of these, five are pharmacists*.

Note: * Members or Fellows of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain.

Midwives

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements are being made to pay interest on backdated regrading awards to midwives subject to delay by the appeals procedures.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The grading appeals are being dealt with under a longstanding agreement between the management and staff sides of the general Whitley council. It contains no provision for the payment of any interest should appellants be regraded on appeal.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance he has given to health authorities on the application of the grading criteria FII for midwives.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The grading criteria for the new clinical grading structure were agreed by both staff and management sides of the nursing and midwifery staffs negotiating council. Departmental guidance issued in 1988 on the implementation of the structure applied equally to nurses and to midwives. Copies are available in the Library.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what information he has on the consistency of application of midwives' regrading criteria as between different health authorities;

(2) what representations he has received about the consistency between health authorities in midwives' regrading and from whom; and what response he proposes to make.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Health authorities are expected to adhere to the agreed clinical grading definitions and the management guidance issued by the health Departments in grading midwifery posts. These require posts to be graded in accordance with the particular duties and responsibilities they carry. Variations between authorities in the proportion of posts graded at particular levels will therefore arise, for example because of different approaches to service organisation.

We have received a number of representations on the grading of midwives. The Government have made clear their position in their response to the fourth report from the Social Services Committee Session 1988-89 "Resourcing The National Health Service: Midwives' Regrading 1988-89".

Clinical Grading Exercise

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the outcome of the review of the clinical grading exercise by the Manpower Services Commission *(a)* generally and *(b)* relating to midwives; and what action he has taken in response.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The clinical grading review for nursing, midwifery and health visiting staff was undertaken by the nursing and midwifery staffs negotiating council. It led to the introduction of a new grading structure for clinical posts, including midwifery posts, with effect from 1 April 1988. There was no review by the Manpower Services Commission.

Tobacco Advertising

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health for what reasons he has decided that some of the work of the committee for monitoring agreements on tobacco advertising and sponsorship should remain confidential; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The committee for monitoring agreements on tobacco advertising and sponsorship is an independent advisory committee. It is for the committee to decide on the confidentiality of reports it has commissioned. The committee's reasons for doing so were set out in the answer given to my hon. Friend on 27 October 1989 at column *631*. I accept that the committee must have the freedom to determine the confidentiality of its own proceedings and of the work it has commissioned if it is to function efficiently.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many breaches there have been of the voluntary agreements with the tobacco industry on advertising and sponsorship in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Before the formation of the committee for monitoring agreements on tobacco advertising and sponsorship (COMATAS) in October 1986, there was no consistent record of breaches of the voluntary agreements. It was to remedy this position that COMATAS was set up. In it first annual report COMATAS recorded 41 breaches and in its second annual report, seven breaches of the voluntary agreement have been recorded and one further complaint was referred to the Advertising Standards Authority which judged it to be in breach of its code of practice.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many reports considered by the committee for monitoring agreements on tobacco advertising and sponsorships have not been made available to Parliament; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The committee for monitoring agreements on tobacco advertising and sponsorship has commissioned and considered four reports on whether certain parts of the voluntary agreements are being observed. These are: a study of poster advertising near schools by Survey Research Associates Ltd; a study of sports sponsorship by the centre for mass communication research at the university of Leicester; and two surveys on advertising at confectioners, tobacconists and newsagents by MaS Research, Marketing and Consultancy Ltd. They have not been made available to Parliament for the reasons given in my reply to my hon. Friend on 27 October at column *631*.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will review the terms of reference of the committee for monitoring agreements on tobacco advertising and sponsorship to enable all the information made available to the committee to be made available to Parliament; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The tobacco industry has recently agreed to meet Ministers with a view to opening renegotiations of the voluntary agreement on advertising. The role of the committee for monitoring agreements on tobacco advertising and sponsorship will be considered in this context.

Medical Records

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what consideration he has given to the need to ensure confidentiality between patient and doctor, and to protect medical records stored on computerised systems from being sold to data processing companies;

(2) who owns, and has responsibility for, a patient's medical records stored on a computer system; and what rights a patient has to access to the information stored in these records;

(3) who owns, and has responsibilty for, a patient's medical records stored on index cards; and what rights a patient has to access to the information stored in these records;

(4) who owns, and has responsibility for, a patient's medical records stored on a smart card; and what rights a patient has to access to the information stored in these records.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We are currently considering all these issues. We intend to issue a health circular on ownership, confidentiality and disclosure of personal health information in the NHS on which we propose to consult widely in the new year.

Census Information

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will take steps to ensure that no information collected for the 1991 census, based on postal code areas, is used by insurance companies or building societies or others to withhold or weight policies based on that information;

(2) if he will take steps to ensure that no information collected for the 1991 census is used to prepare mailing lists for any purpose.

Mr. Freeman: It would not be practicable for the Government to control the uses particular customers make of the aggregated data published from the Census. However, as with previous censuses, stringent measures will be taken to ensure confidentiality. No information on identified individual people or households will be passed to anyone other than employees of the registrars general. Furthermore, in order to guard against possible indirect disclosure of such information, no statistics, except, possibly, simple totals of people or households, will be published for areas containing very small numbers of households or people.

Statistical summary tables relating to fairly small local areas have been produced since the 1961 census. These have proved to be of great value to a wide range of users in central and local government and in health authorities, as well as to industry and commerce. The facility to define such areas directly in terms of groups of postcodes as well as census enumeration districts will add to the usefulness of these statistics, particularly to local and health authorities; and, subject to the overriding requirement to avoid disclosing data about individuals, I am anxious that the most effective use should be made of the data which everyone is required by law to provide to the census offices.

If census statistics were not made available for areas defined directly in postcode terms, it would still be possible for anyone to use maps and postcode directories published elsewhere in order to relate the statistics for any local area to the set of postcodes and to the set of addresses which fall within that area. Such uses could be prevented only by suppressing all census statistics for local areas. This would unnecessarily reduce the public availability of statistics collected by the census offices, and substantially diminish the value of the census.

Irradiated Food

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has established that the eating of irradiated food by pregnant women is safe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: International expert bodies, such as the joint expert committee on food irradiation and the international consultative group on food irradiation, and the national expert body, the advisory committee on irradiated and novel foods, have advised repeatedly on the safety and wholesomeness of irradiated foods. There is no evidence to suggest that irradiation of food up to an overall average dose of 10kgy presents a toxicological hazard or special nutritional or microbiological problems to the population at large or to specific groups of the population.

Irradiation is one among several techniques for preserving and improving the safety of certain foods. The Government consider that all members of the public in the United Kingdom should be free to choose to enjoy the preservation and safety benefits of irradiated food and are therefore seeking powers in the Food Safety Bill to ensure that this choice is available within an appropriate control framework.

Ambulance Service

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the number of Army personnel and vehicles deployed in London for each shift on ambulance duties since 1 November.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A total of 51 Army vehicles were deployed in London with effect from 8 November. Each vehicle is crewed by two persons, making a total of 102 per shift.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will list for each day since 1 October for the London area, per shift *(a)* the number of ambulance personnel on duty, *(b)* the number of vehicles available, and *(c)* the number of emergency calls and the number answered within seven minutes and 14 minutes;

(2) what are the total number of patients moved by *(a)* the London ambulance service, *(b)* St. John's and *(c)* military vehicles per day in London since 1 October;

(3) what is the average amount of money paid to a qualified ambulance person in London for September, October and November of the current year.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The management of the London ambulance service is the responsibility of the South West Thames regional health authority to whom I refer the hon. Member.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what meetings have been held by *(a)* himself and *(b)* Duncan Nichol, chief executive of the National Health Service with (i) the trade union side of the Whitley council for ambulance staff and (ii) the Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel since 1 September.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State met representatives of the Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel on 24 November when their claim for recognition was discussed. I met them on 14 November to discuss their role in the current dispute. Duncan Nichol, National Health Service chief executive, met the trade union side of the ambulance Whitley council on 22 September, 24 and 26 October and 17 November in attempts to find a basis on which negotiations in the Whitley council might be resumed; he also met the Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel on 26 September and 17 November.

Vehicle Emissions

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he is taking to assess the health implications of emissions from diesel-powered engines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The Department of Health's independent expert advisory committee on the carcinogenicity of chemicals in food, consumer products and the environment is currently considering findings from a series of recent epidemiological and experimental studies relating to effects on health of diesel exhaust in order to assess any possible impact on public health.

Direct exposure to diesel exhaust fumes can cause irritation to the eyes and throat. Substances present in diesel fumes are known to be toxic to laboratory animals when they are exposed to high concentrations over a lifetime. However, human exposure to diesel fumes is normally transient and at much lower levels, and is not known to have any long-term effects on health.

Oral Tobacco Products

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has decided to proceed with the proposed ban on oral snuff.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Letters have been sent today to the two companies affected to inform them that I have decided to make regulations under section 11 of the Consumer Protection Act 1987 which are being laid before Parliament today. The regulations will prohibit persons from supplying or from offering to supply, agreeing to supply, exposing for supply or possessing for supply any oral snuff. They will come into effect on 13 March 1990.

The purpose of the ban is to protect our population, particularly our young people, from the serious health risks posed by these products, the use of which is causally associated with an increased risk of oral cancer. There is increasing evidence from the United States of America and Sweden that these products can become popular amongst young people. The Government's action should nip this dangerous new habit in the bud.

When the Government originally proposed a ban on oral snuff last year, a three-month period was allowed for representations, and this period was subsequently extended by a month for the two companies involved. A large number of representations were received, the vast majority of which were in favour of a ban. The Government have considered all the representations with great care. It has also consulted its partners in the European community and other GATT signatories. However, no new evidence or arguments have come to light which suggest that the proposed ban is not justified.

The products which will be covered by the ban are goods which consist wholly or mainly of tobacco in fine cut, ground or particulate form or in any combination of those forms and which are for oral use other than smoking. This does not include traditional chewing tobacco, loose tobacco for making up into cigarettes, pipe tobacco or snuff for nasal use.

DEFENCE

Military Museums

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many military museums, including regimental museums, are currently being maintained; and if he will list them with their locations.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are currently 99 military museums being maintained wholly or in part by the Ministry of Defence. This total includes regimental and corps museums, some of which are colocated or are in the process of moving to common premises, and those museums designated under the Heritage Act 1982. I will write to my hon. Friend with a list of these museums shortly.

Nuclear Defence Industry (Scotland)

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will list the major employers in the nuclear defence industry in Scotland, their location and the number of employees at each;

(2) if he will list the number of employees in the nuclear defence industry and related industries in Scotland.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Ministry of Defence does not hold detailed information in the form requested, but a rough estimate of employment in Scotland related to nuclear defence is some 9,000 including Rosyth dockyard, Coulport, Faslane and the Clyde.

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the number of defence bases in

Scotland, their location and the number of Scottish jobs at each base broken down into *(a)* armed forces and *(b)* MOD personnel.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The MOD's principal nuclear defence base in Scotland is the Clyde submarine base at Faslane. Other establishments providing support to the strategic deterrent programme are the royal navy armament depot at Coulport, Her Majesty's naval base at Rosyth and the naval reactor test establishment at Dounreay (HMS Vulcan). The figures for the number of personnel at present are as follows:

	Service	*Civilian*
Clyde submarine base	3,797	2,116
RNAD Coulport	65	1,775
HMNB Rosyth	698	[1]1,936
HMS Vulcan	6	420

[1] This figure does not include employees of the dockyard contractor.

Some MOD staff are also employed in support of United States nuclear-powered submarines based at Holy Loch.

Battle Tank (BAOR)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration has been given to the cancellation of the programmes to develop a new battle tank for the British Army of the Rhine, and the Trigat anti-tank missile.

Mr. Alan Clark: We keep our investment in all weapon systems, including main battle tanks and anti-tank missiles, under constant review.

Toxic Chemicals

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all toxic chemicals held at military bases and military production sites; what are the quantities of such chemicals; and under what environmental regulations they are managed.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Information on the type and quantity of toxic chemicals held at military bases and military production sites is not held centrally. The Department is bound by the general duties imposed by the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and by regulations made under it. Certain sites that produce noxious or offensive substances are registered with Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution in accordance with the Control of Industrial Air Pollution (Registration of Works) Regulations 1989. Although the MOD is not bound by the provisions of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 or the Water Act 1989, it is a matter of general policy that it will aim to meet standards which are no lower than those in the community at large.

Nuclear Weapons

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, at the recent meeting of NATO Defence Ministers in Brussels, the issue of the forthcoming amendment conference for the 1963 partial test ban treaty, and its implications for the modernisation of nuclear warheads for new NATO controlled nuclear weapons, was addressed.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend discussed a range of matters of mutual defence interest when he met his colleagues on the defence planning committee in Brussels in November, but it is not our practice to reveal the details of such discussions.

TRANSPORT

European Council

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the outcome of the recent European Council of Transport Ministers meeting in Brussels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: The meeting on 4 and 5 December, which was attended by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, saw important progress made towards the establishment of a single market in transport in two areas.

First, the Council agreed an interim experiment for road haulage cabotage as a preliminary step to a full-scale regime from 1993. Although this is a small step in itself, it represents a major breakthrough in terms of liberalising cabotage generally.

Secondly, the Council expressed its commitment to agree measures to liberalise air transport. From June 1993, airlines will be able to set their own fares subject only to "double disapproval"—that is, unless the countries at both the ends of the route reject the proposed fares. In the meantime, the present fare approval system will be made more flexible. Similarly, bilateral capacity sharing will be abolished from the end of 1992, and further relaxation will be made in the interim. The council also committed itself to ensure that uniform licensing criteria are introduced by June 1992 giving airlines established in a country the right to a licence. Altogether, this provided a clear basis for more detailed work over the coming months with a view to Council agreement under the Irish presidency. The Council adopted a directive on training for drivers of dangerous goods. The United Kingdom, supported by certain other member states, registered our concern in the minutes that future technical adaption should be consistent with the standards of the ADR.

There were discussions but not agreements on the Commission's proposals for shipping "positive measures", and on the current state of negotiations with west African countries on shipping; on vehicles hired without drivers; on road safety; on driving and working hours; and on transport infrastructure. After a debate on Community railway policy, the Commission was invited to set up a working party to look at a high-speed rail network and the scope for technical harmonisation. The Commission reported the current state of play in its negotiations with Switzerland, Austria and Yugoslavia on transit. Under other business, there were brief references to transit quotas, and to lorry taxation.

Life Saving at Sea

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many persons have been decorated with the bronze or silver medal for gallantry for saving life at sea in each year since 1974.

Mr. McLoughlin: There have been two awards of the sea gallantry medal (bronze) in the period: one in 1981 and the other in 1989. No sea gallantry medals (silver) were awarded.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps his Department has taken to alert master mariners, shipping companies, the lifeboat services, Her Majesty's Coastguard and other official institutions to the sea gallantry medal instituted by Act of Parliament to recognise acts of bravery at sea.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department has not thought it necessary to publicise the award in view of its long standing.

Traffic Noise

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made to the effect on householders of increasing traffic noise from existing roads; whether he has any plans to make such households eligible for the noise insulation grants available to residents affected by new road development, using the same noise level criteria; and whether he will evaluate the likely cost of such a measure.

Mr. Atkins: No general assessment has been made of the effect on householders of changes in traffic noise from existing roads. This is bound to vary substantially from case to case. In some cases, the building of new roads will reduce substantially the noise from existing ones.

The Land Compensation Act 1973 makes provision for noise insulation only in the case of new or substantially improved roads. It is not accordingly open to the Department under the law as it stands to make noise insulation available more widely. The cost of making insulation available in relation to all existing roads was estimated in 1983 at £1,840 million for some 2·3 million properties.

Vehicle Emissions

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he plans to introduce benzene vapour emission controls; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The benzene content of petrol is already controlled by regulations and by European Community directive 85/210/EEC. Petrol may contain no more than 5 per cent. of benzene. In practice the average content in this country is about 3 per cent.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to discourage the transportation of toxic waste *(a)* inland and *(b)* for import-export.

Mr. Atkins: When toxic waste is transported, it is treated in the same way as other dangerous substances and must comply with the appropriate regulations to ensure safe transport. The import and export of toxic and other wastes is a matter for the Department of the Environment.

THE ARTS

Disabled Musicians

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Minister for the Arts what assessment he has made of the effect on disabled musicians of the recent closure of the music advisory service of the Disabled Living Foundation; and what funding his Department intends to offer towards providing such a service.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 12 December 1989]:* I have asked for a report about the closure of this service and will write to my hon. Friend when I have received more information.

Wilding Report

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will extend the current closing date for responses to the Wilding report on "Supporting the Arts —A Review of the Structure of Arts Funding" to 31 January 1990.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 12 December 1989]:* To avoid uncertainty in the arts world, I remain committed to announcing my response to Mr. Wilding's recommendations as soon as I am able. While, in reaching my decisions, I shall endeavour to take into account responses received after 31 December, I am reluctant to agree to a formal extension of the consultation period.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Companies Acts Investigations

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Attorney-General, pursuant to his reply of 27 November, *Official Report,* column 97, if he will give his reasons for believing it unnecessary to conduct a review of the possibilities of prejudice to a criminal trial of individuals named in a Companies Act investigation when those individuals are, in advance of their trial, publicly disciplined by a self-regulatory organisation established under the Financial Services Act.

The Attorney-General: Self-regulating organisations recognised under the Financial Services Act are responsible for exercising their own discipline over those who have agreed to be bound by their rules, so as to ensure that their members are fit and proper to conduct investment business. Such organisations are also subject to the general duty at common law to refrain from acts which raise a real likelihood of interference with the administration of justice. I am satisfied that these obligations are well known and understood by those affected and have no reason to doubt that care is taken to strike the right balance according to the circumstances of particular cases.

PRIME MINISTER

Constitution

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister which Minister would be responsible for putting proposals to Parliament on a constitutional separation of powers.

The Prime Minister: This would depend on the nature of the proposals.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Veterinary Medicines

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Truro of 5 December, which veterinary medicines were discussed with Monsanto on 15 November.

Mr. Maclean: The discussions concentrated on general licensing principles, although Monsanto's BST product was mentioned.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when representatives from *(a)* Eli Lilley and *(b)* Monsanto last met members of the Veterinary Products Committee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The Veterinary Products Committee met representatives from Eli Lilley on 19 April 1989, and from Monsanto on 20 September 1989, in both cases to review evidence submitted in support of a product licence application.

Poultry

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the number of premises in each county of England requiring inspection under the provisions of the testing of poultry flocks orders.

Mr. Maclean: It is estimated that the number of flocks subject to the requirements of the Poultry Laying Flocks (Testing and Registration etc.) Order 1989 in England is in the region of 28,000. The order does not contain specific inspection requirements, but I expect inspections to be concentrated particularly on the larger flocks, estimated at around 4,000, which will be required to be registered with my Department. Under the Poultry Breeding Flocks and Hatcheries (Registration and Testing) Order 1989 an estimated 3,000 breeding flocks and 120 hatcheries in England will be visited by my officials. A breakdown of these figures by counties is not available.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the estimate of the additional costs being borne by the local authorities in their enforcement of the order relating to the registration and testing of poultry flocks.

Mr. Maclean: I do not have information on the resources which local authorities are allocating to work in connection with the two new orders on registration and testing of poultry flocks, which came into force on 26 October 1989.

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what scientific or veterinary studies have been carried out on the Government's slaughter policy for laying poultry; and whether any of these studies has produced evidence in favour of the policy.

Mr. Maclean: The evidence relating to salmonella infection in poultry flocks and eggs was reviewed by the House of Commons Agriculture Committee in its report of 28 February 1989. The Committee concluded that in seeking to address the problem of the rise in salmonella food poisoning cases the Government were right to make egg production the first focus of attention. In reaching this conclusion the Committee referred to the routes by which eggs may become infected via infected flocks, through faecal contamination and transovarian transmission, and welcomed the Government's announcement of the compulsory slaughter policy for poultry flocks. It is too early to reach definite conclusions about the effectiveness of this policy, but it is clear that the removal of infected flocks is helping to reduce the risk of salmonella infection in humans.

Enzymes

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has authorised the use of any products containing enzymes from blood for the purpose of creating restructured fresh meat products; if he has received any requests for approval for trials of such products; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: No. No such requests have been received. The use of enzymes in food is subject to the general provisions of the Food Act. It is an offence to add any substance to food intended for sale so as to render the food injurious to health.

Cetaceans

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the use of echo locators and side scanners and their effect on dolphin and porpoise behaviour.

Mr. Gummer: Echo locators and side scanners are standard equipment on modern fishing vessels to assist in the location of fish shoals for capture. I am not aware of any evidence to suggest that such equipment has any adverse effect on dolphin or porpoise behaviour.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the consequences of the use of nylon monofilament fish nets for the dolphin and porpoise population in British coastal waters.

Mr. Gummer: I am aware of the concern that monofilament fishing nets may accidentally ensnare dolphins and porpoises. However there has been no evidence that this is a significant problem in our waters. Nevertheless the fisheries Departments are planning a general monitoring scheme on the incidental capture of cetaceans in United Kingdom fisheries, so that we can keep the matter under closer review.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to introduce measures similar to those in the United States Marine Mammal Protection Act to protect the populations of cetaceans.

Mr. Gummer: I understand that the specific problem which the United States authorities have sought to address this year, under their Marine Mammal Protection Act, is the very large number of small cetaceans which may be caught in the Pacific purse-seine fisheries for yellow-fin tuna. There is no comparable situation within United Kingdom waters and therefore we have no plans to introduce similar measures. Our own legislation already seeks to protect cetaceans by prohibiting their deliberate taking within our 200-mile limit and the import or sale of cetacean products in the United Kingdom.

Global Warming

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what studies are *(a)* being conducted and *(b)* planned by his Department into the likely effects of the greenhouse global warming effect on farming and agriculture in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to my hon. Friend, the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) on 4 December at column *112.*

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, during the meeting of the Council of European Agriculture Ministers in Brussels on 21 November, he put forward any policies aimed at modification of agricultural practices to mitigate the greenhouse effect, that is global warming.

Mr. Gummer: There was no discussion of the greenhouse effect at this meeting of the Council.

Beef Premium

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to obtain agreement with the United Kingdom's European partners for the extension of the £27 beef premium to include heifers and to apply to herds in excess of 90 head.

Mr. Gummer: I see no prospect of being able to negotiate the inclusion of heifers in the beef special premium scheme. The United Kingdom voted against the imposition of a headage limit and I continue to regard it as discriminatory.

Live Animal Exports

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what provision he makes for the inspection of live animal exports to ensure the provisions of the Transit of Animals (General) Order 1973 and the Protection of Animals Act 1911 are met.

Mr. Maclean: Veterinary inspections and supervised loadings of every consignment of farm animals exported for further fattening or slaughter are made in accordance with the Export of Animals (Protection) Order 1981. Under this order the state veterinary service (SVS) also oversees transport arrangements for breeding farm livestock where advice and guidance may be necessary. Enforcement of the 1973 order is primarily a matter for local authorities, but the SVS provides assistance and advice where necessary.

Salmonella

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food why he has refused to grant licences for independent scientific tests under proper veterinary supervision to be carried out on flocks found to be infected with salmonella typhimurium and enteritidis.

Mr. Maclean: A licence may be given for samples to be taken for separate examination if this is requested by the flock owner. Decisions to require the slaughter of infected flocks are however based on the results of laboratory examinations carried out by my Department.

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether broiler flocks affected by salmonella typhimurium and enteritidis can complete their growing cycle and be processed in the normal way to end up as raw meat in kitchens; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: There is no requirement for broiler birds to be tested for salmonella. Broiler breeder flocks are however required to be tested and, if found to be infected with salmonella enteritidis or salmonella typhimurium, will be slaughtered in order to minimise the risk of infection spreading through the production chain. Advice to consumers has been given on the precautions which should be taken in handling and cooking poultry meat.

Animal Exports

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food at what administrative level the numbers of animals exported for research purposes are collected.

Mr. Maclean: Her Majesty's Customs and Excise keep records of exports of live animals, but these do not distinguish between those sent for research purposes and other uses.

Egg Imports

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many eggs were imported into the United Kingdom during the month of November; of these how many were *(a)* tested for salmonella, *(b)* condemned for salmonella contamination or *(c)* condemned for other reasons.

Mr. Gummer: I will write to the hon. Member as soon as these data become available.

Zoonoses Order 1988

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 4 December, what directions he has given for the disposal of carcases of birds slaughtered under the Zoonoses Order 1988.

Mr. Maclean: The methods of disposing of carcases from compulsory slaughtered flocks include burial and incineration, the method used in each case depending on local circumstances.

Bovine Somatotropin

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what elements of the veterinary products committee examination of bovine somatotropin have not yet been completed.

Mr. Maclean: The veterinary products committee has yet to submit its recommendations on any of the BST products for which licence applications have been made. I understand that in accordance with the Medicines Act the committee is still reviewing a range of matters with the help of data being generated in field trials.

Our Lady of Passion Monastery, Daventry

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much compensation has been paid to Our Lady of Passion monastery at Daventry; and if he will estimate the costs incurred by the monastery arising from the slaughter of 5,000 birds.

Mr. Maclean: Details of the amount of compensation paid for slaughtered poultry, in accordance with the provisions of the Animal Health Act 1981, are a matter between the flock owner and my Department. I am not in a position to estimate the costs incurred by Our Lady of Passion monastery.

Liriomyza Huidobrensis

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will ban the importation of plants from Holland in order to control the spread of Liriomyza huidobrensis among plants;

(2) what compensation is proposed for those growers compelled to destroy crops infested with Liriomyza huidobrensis;

(3) what has been the incidence of Liriomyza huidobrensis infestation in plants over the last 10 years; and what steps he is taking to counter the problem.

Mr. Maclean: So far this year there have been 27 confirmed findings of the South American leafminer, Liriomyza huidobrensis. There were no findings in previous years. The Ministry is maintaining a policy of eradication of this pest to ensure that it does not become established in this country. As regards compensation and controls on the importation of plants from the Netherlands. I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave him on 6 December at column *248*.

Microwave Ovens.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research his Department has sponsored within the last 12 months to assess the safety of microwaves in respect of food cooked therein; what research is either in progress or planned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The research to assess the safety of food cooked in domestic microwave ovens commissioned within the last 12 months is as follows:

Title	*Contractor*	*Status*
1. The performance of Microwave Ovens for Cooking and Reheating Foods.	Mr. M. Duncan	Completed
2. Microwave Reheating of Ready Meals	IFR-Bristol	Completed
3. Destruction of *Listeria monocytogenes* during Microwave Cooking.	IFR-Norwich	Completed
4. Effect of Microwave Cooking on Survival of *Listeria monocytogenes* in Cook-Chill Retail Products.	CFDRA	Completed
5. Testing the Uniformity and Reproducibility of Reheating in Domestic Microwave Oven.	IFR-Bristol	Completed
6. The Influence of the Physical, and Electrical Properties on the Quality of Foods Heated by Microwaves.	CFDRA	On-going

The position is still being evaluated and further research will be commissioned as necessary.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he proposes to take to eliminate the use of microwaves designed for domestic use in commercial premises.

Mr. Maclean: My officials are holding urgent discussions with the Institution of Environmental Health Officers to establish how far this practice creates a problem, and with a view to taking whatever steps may be necessary to make sure that caterers have the right equipment to avoid any risk to food safety.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has become of the microwave ovens donated by manufacturers to facilitate the study recently completed by his Department.

Mr. Maclean: The microwave ovens do not belong to my Department as they were made available to the researchers by the manufacturers. Their fate is a matter for discussion between the manufacturers and the researchers at Bristol.

Bananas

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the annual tonnage of bananas imported into the United Kingdom as a percentage of the European Community total in each of the last five years.

Mr. Maclean: The annual tonnage of bananas imported into the United Kingdom as a percentage of the European Community total in each of the last five years is as follows:

United Kingdom imports of bananas as a percentage of total European Community imports

	per cent.
[1]1984	16·7
[1]1985	16·5
1986	13·2
1987	14·0
1988	13·5

[1] Excluding Spain and Portugal.

Source: Eurostat.

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the total tonnage of imports of bananas in each of the last five years from *(a)* Africa, Caribbean and Pacific suppliers, *(b)* Latin America and *(c)* other suppliers.

Mr. Maclean: The total tonnage of imports of bananas into the United Kingdom in each of the last five years from *(a)* African, Caribbean and Pacific signatories to the Lomé convention, *(b)* dollar area countries (incorporating Latin American sources) and *(c)* other suppliers are as follows:

	1984 tonnes	*1985 tonnes*	*1986 tonnes*	*1987 tonnes*	*1988 tonnes*
African, Caribbean and Pacific	184,463	222,678	275,836	271,620	322,327
Dollar area (including Latin American countries)	120,854	99,363	59,541	80,604	61,654
Other suppliers	4,010	1,506	7,619	7,193	4,016
TOTAL	309,327	323,547	342,996	359,417	387,997

Source: Her Majesty's Customs General Trade Tabulation Sheets.

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what criteria the banana trade advisory committee take into account in its monthly meetings to assess the supply and demand position on imported bananas.

Mr. Maclean: In assessing the supply position the banana trade advisory committee considers estimates of future sendings from all ACP and EC origins given either by the traditional supplying countries or by the main importing companies. The committee also keeps in mind the minimum figure for imports of bananas from the dollar area guaranteed to the smaller banana importers. On demand, estimates are based on advice from all sectors of the trade and take account of the Government's own rising minimum supply requirement figures which are published for the year ahead.

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent discussions he has had with European Community Ministers concerning banana import policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: None. But my officials have been in contact with their counterparts in other European Community countries and the European Commission. We wish to ensure that policy from 1993 onwards on bananas takes account of consumer interests and of the competition and efficiency objectives of the single market, and is consistent with our commitments to our Caribbean suppliers.

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received on banana import policy in the last 12 months; and what reply he gave.

Mr. Maclean: We have received representations from a wide variety of interests in the past 12 months, including from United Kingdom trade, ripener and retailer interests and from our supplying countries. Our responses have reflected the balance of interests that is struck in our banana policy—the fulfilment of commitments to our traditional suppliers, the improvement of competition in the market and the improvement of banana quality.

Food Safety

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the present membership of his food advisory committee and the committee on the toxicity of chemicals in food, consumers products and the environment and whether there have been any changes in either committee during the last 12 months.

Mr. Maclean: The Members of the food advisory committee (FAC) are as follows:

Name	*Occupation*
Dr. Ewan S. Page (Chairman) BSc, MA, PhD, CBIM FBCS	Vice Chancellor, Reading University.
Dr. Margaret Ashwell BCc (Hons) PhD, MIHEc, FIFST, FRSH	Science Director, British Nutrition Foundation.
Mr. Michael J. Boxall ACII, CBIM	Company Secretary, Tesco Plc.
Professor Douglas Georgala CBE, PhD, FIFST	Director of Food Research, AFRC and Director of the Institute of Food Research.
Dr. Tom Gorsuch OBE, BSc, PhD, FIFST	Former Director of Research and Quality Control, Colmans of Norwich (Retired).
Professor R. Marian Hicks BSc, PhD, DSc, FRCPath	Science Director, United Biscuits (UK) Ltd Group Research and Development Centre.
Mr. Roger Manley, FITSA	Director of Trading Standards, Cheshire County Council.
Miss Patricia Mann FCam, FIPA, CBIM	Head of External Affairs, J. Walter Thompson Group and Editor of "Consumer Affairs".
Mrs. Jill Moore OBE	National Consumer Council and Chairman of National Federation of Consumer Groups.
Dr. Bryan Nichols MSc, PhD	Legislation and Health Policy Manager, Van den Berghs and Jurgens Ltd.
Mr. Ronald Nicholson M. Chem A, FIFST, FIWEM, CChem, FRSC	Regional Chemist, Public Analyst and Agricultural Analyst for the Regional Council of Strathclyde; and Public Analyst and Agricultural Analyst for the Western Isles Island Council.
Mrs. Barbara Saunders	Freelance consultant on consumer policy. Member of the European Commission's Consumer Consultative Committee.
Mr. Tony Skrimshire C. Chem, FRSC, FIFST	Director, Purchasing and Quality Assurance, H. J. Heinz Company Ltd.
Professor Paul Turner MD, BSc, FRCP, Mr. Pharms Hon. FiBiol	Professor of Clinical Pharmacology, St. Bartholomew's Hospital.

Name	*Occupation*
Dr. Roger G. Whitehead BSc, PhD, MA, FiBiol, C. Biol, Hon. MRCP	Director of the Medical Research Council's Dunn Nutrition Unit Cambridge, UK and the Gambia, West Africa.

The following appointments have been made since 1 December 1988: Professor D. Georgala; Mrs. J. Moore OBE; Mr. R. Nicholson; and Mrs. B. Saunders were appointed on 1 November 1989. The following members have retired; Dr. H. O. W. Eggins BSc, PhD, FI Biol, director of Bioquest Ltd; Mr. A. J. Harrison MBE, M. Chem A, C Chem, FRSC, FIFST, FRSH, chief scientific adviser, public analyst and official agricultural analyst to Avon county council, and public analyst and official agricultural analyst to Gloucestershire county council; Mrs. M. Stamper BSc, Dip Ed, part-time lecturer in biology, Lewes technical college and chairman of the National Federation of Women's Institutes' environmental and public affairs committee; and Dr. E. R. Young MB, MRCP, senior registrar in dermatology, Wycombe general hospital.

These changes strengthen the consumer background of the FAC. Changes in membership of the FAC are always announced by press release.

The membership of the committee on toxicity of chemicals in food, consumer products and the environment is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

Eggs

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will estimate the number of small egg producers which have gone out of business since the introduction of the Zoonoses Order 1989;

(2) what is his estimate of the number of egg producers which have gone out of business since 1 January.

Mr. Curry: This information is not available.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he has taken to allow United Kingdom egg producers to compete fairly with other European Community egg producers since the introduction of the Zoonoses Order of 1989.

Mr. Maclean: The European Commission are drafting proposed measures on salmonella in poultry including the establishment of effective controls at the points of production, to apply throughout the Community.

At present whilst imported eggs take a very small part of the market our exports have increased so far this year by over 90 per cent. compared with 1988. We are also developing an initiative to label British produced eggs as "British" to encourage consumers' confidence in British eggs.

Food Premises

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on how many food premises come under the jurisdiction of the Duchy of Cornwall.

Mr. Maclean: I understand that no food premises are managed directly by the Duchy of Cornwall. Certain of the Duchy's tenants are known to run food businesses, but details are not available centrally.

Microwaved Food

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will make a statement on the molecular structures of *(a)* milk products, *(b)* meat and *(c)* fish which has been microwaved;

(2) if he will make a statement on the presence of the amino acids D-proline and cis-hydroxyproline in food which has been microwaved.

Mr. Maclean: Microwaving is simply one method of heating food. I am not aware of any good evidence that changes in food brought about by microwave heating would not also be brought about by other methods producing equivalent amounts of heat.

I understand that the account of the research carried out at the University of Vienna and reported in *The Lancet* of 9 December was very incomplete. It failed to mention that a very small milk sample was microwaved at full power in a sealed tube to an unknown temperature (probably well in excess of 100 deg C) until it was brown. This heat treatment was far more severe than that received by other samples with which it was compared and bears no relation whatever to the way consumers would heat milk in the kitchen.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Lee: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Brussels Agriculture Council held on 11 and 12 December.

Mr. Gummer: I represented the United Kingdom at this meeting together with my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry), the Parliamentary Secretary in my Department.

The Council discussed a possible Community initiative on agriculture in the current GATT round. I emphasised the need for a constructive Community position, which would further the process of agricultural reform and the negotiations. Further discussions will now be held in the Foreign Affairs Council.

The Council reached agreement in principle on a directive laying down arrangements for veterinary checks on certain animal products. This contains satisfactory safeguards so that the dismantling of controls at the border does not significantly increase the risk of the spread of disease. Special safeguards are included, benefiting countries, such as the United Kingdom, that do not vaccinate against food and mouth disease or are free from swine fever. The directive will be implemented at a date which will be decided by the Council taking account of arrangements to be put in place establishing a uniform Community system governing imports from third countries.

Agreement in principle was also reached on a Council regulation specifying the level of checks member states must undertake on firms benefiting from payments under the guarantee section of the Community's farm fund. This should help to combat fraud.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Environmentally Friendly Technology

124. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his estimate of the value of the global market in environmentally friendly technology; and what steps he is taking to urge British companies to take a major share of this market.

Mr. Forth: Environmentally friendly technology is a portmanteau term which can be applied to an enormous selection of goods and services, from biodegradable washing powder to the fitting of flue gas desulphurisation processes to power stations. It is, therefore, impossible to state a single figure for the global market. However, the current estimate of the world market for pollution control products and services is £100 billion a year.

The Department of Trade and Industry has set up the business and the environment unit (BEU) to focus on specific key areas of the DTI environmental programme, such as waste management, clean technology and pollution control. The BEU helps United Kingdom companies to exploit the market opportunities for clean technology, pollution control equipment and services, and for other environmentally-friendly products. It gathers and maintains information on standards and world markets, assists United Kingdom companies to take advantage of the various support schemes available in this field and encourages United Kingdom companies to participate in environmental technology exhibitions at home and abroad.

British Aerospace (Rover Deal)

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish the correspondence between British Aerospace and the Government over the future of the golden share.

Mr. Ridley: Correspondence between British Aerospace and the Government over the future of the golden share from 1985 (when British Aerospace made its initial request to raise the foreign shareholding limit), to August 1989 when I decided to raise the BAe and Rolls-Royce limits following agreement with the European Commission, took place on the basis of commercial confidentiality. At the time of the Rover Group sale my right hon. and noble Friend, the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, made it clear, as can be seen from his letter of 12 July which I have sent to the hon. Member, that he was sympathetic to BAe's case for a relaxation of the limit. The detailed proposals for raising the limit, common to both companies, had to be decided in consultation with the Commission which had since 1987 queried compatibility at the 15 per cent. foreign shareholding with EC law.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what he now estimates to be the value of the tax concessions made to British Aerospace during the Rover negotiations.

Mr. Ridley: No tax concessions were made to British Aerospace during the Rover negotiations. On the contrary, contractual arrangements were put in place effectively to deny Rover Group the benefit of tax losses in excess of £500 million which the group was entitled to carry forward under United Kingdom tax law. In that connection, the position remains subject to any applicability of section 768 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988, on which British Aerospace may seek a view from the Inland Revenue in accordance with the terms of the correspondence between British Aerospace's advisers and the Inland Revenue which has been made available to the Public Accounts Committee.

As explained at the time of the final deal, certain contractual ring-fencing arrangements agreed in the March conditional terms were lifted so that the final contractual position with regard to disclaimed capital allowances and capital losses was no more, and no less, restrictive than under normal revenue law.

Blood Products

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the quantity and value of imported blood products, distinguishing between factor 8 and other blood products, in each year since 1980.

Mr. Freeman: I have been asked to reply.

The information held centrally relates only to the usage of imported factor 8 concentrate and is given in the table. Information on the value of these imports is not held centrally.

United Kingdom usage of imported Factor 8 concentrate (millions of international units).

	Number
1980	[1]35·1
1981	[1]35·5
1982	[1]45·6
1983	[1]39·5
1984	[1]38·5
1985	50·9
1986	53·8
1987	59·2
1988	55·2

[1] Does not include users with acquired haemophilia.

Export Initiative

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the number, nature and size of charges made for services under the export initiative *(a)* in March 1989, and *(b)* in October 1989.

Mr. Redwood: The information requested is as follows:

DTI Export Services

Service	*Number of Charges*		*Nature of Charge*		*Size of Charge (income generated)*	
	March 1989	*October 1989*	*March 1989*	*October 1989*	*March 1989 £k*	*October 1989 £k*
Export Representative Service	33	11	£517·50, £345·00, £172·50 depending on market	As for March	12·6	1·91
Overseas status review service	21	17	£24·15	As for MIEs below	5·17	1·61
Market Information Enquiries [MIEs]	No Charge	108	No Charge	Up to 4 hours work at Posts overseas = £57·50 over 4 hours = £115	No Charge	9·00
New Products Service	No Charge	1	No Charge	£57·50 per story	No Charge	0·06
Export Intelligence Service	69,000	n/a	£0·50p per notice	n/a	34·5	n/a
Overseas Trade Fairs	424	634	See below	See below	548·00	992·00

It is difficult to compare the figures provided, as a new accounting system based on the use of the DTI service card for paying for most export services was introduced on 1 April 1989. The following should also be noted:

Overseas trade fairs: for fairs opening prior to 1 April 1990, the charge is 40 per cent. of the DTI's direct costs of providing space and exhibition stand for first time participants at an event, 55 per cent. for second timers and 75 per cent. for regular exhibitors. For events opening after 1 April 1990 the charge is 50 per cent. for the first three participations in a particular country (five for Japan) and full cost thereafter. Some of the receipts in October will be under the former regime and some under the latter.

Export Intelligence Service: elements of the export intelligence service have been contracted out to Export Opportunities Ltd. The information for October 1989 is commercially confidential.

Chargecard for Exporters

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether the contract awarded to Welbeck Financial Services Ltd. to operate the Department of Trade and Industry chargecard for exporters was subject to competitive tender; and how tenders were obtained.

Mr. Redwood: Yes. Five companies were invited to tender to operate the DTI service card.

Ferranti

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) whether he will launch an investigation into the affair of Ferranti's acquisition of ISC;

(2) if he will order an inquiry into alleged fraud involving the Ferranti Company.

Mr. Redwood; I have no plans to do so.

The serious fraud office and the company fraud department of the metropolitan police are actively investigating allegations of fraud prior to, surrounding and subsequent to the merger of Ferranti plc and International Signal and Control Group plc.

Accountancy Firms

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the auditing firms criticised by his Department's inspectors since June 1979 but which have nevertheless been allowed to make accounting policy through their membership of the Accounting Standards Committee or its working parties; and how such firms have come to be represented on the committee.

Mr. Redwood: Those voting members of the Accounting Standards Committee (ASC) who are accountants are nominated on a personal basis by their professional body and appointed by the Consultative Committee of Accountancy Bodies, which has stipulated that they shall not regard themselves as delegates of sectional interests but shall be guided by the need to act in the general interests of the community and of the accountancy profession as a whole. Members of its working parties are appointed by the ASC itself.

Inspectors

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether, at any time since June 1979, any person has acted as an inspector for any of the Department of Trade and Industry's investigations whilst that same person was under investigation by other inspectors.

Mr. Redwood: Inspectors are appointed to investigate the affairs or membership of companies, not individuals. In one case an accountant was appointed to be an inspector during the course of another investigation which involved his firm as auditors of the company under inquiry, and in which he was subsequently criticised. These appointments were made in 1975 and 1977 respectively.

Milbury plc

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action the Government have taken against auditors Arthur Young following the criticism of them in his Department's report on Milbury plc.

Mr. Redwood: A copy of the inspectors' report was sent to the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales. It subsequently announced that a committee of inquiry had been set up under the joint disciplinary scheme to look into certain matters arising out of the report.

Bananas

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received in the last 12 months concerning the operation of the scheme of banana import quotas; and what reply he gave.

Mr. Redwood: During the last 12 months a few representations have been received from importers about the allocation of the dollar banana quota. We have explained that this is shared out amongst existing traders on the basis of past trade in dollar bananas. Newcomers are required to demonstrate their commitment before receiving an allocation. "Past trade" is the method used to distribute all other import administered quotas.

Footwear Industry

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on his response to the proposals in the European Economic Community consultative document on the import of footwear from Korea and Taiwan.

Mr. Redwood: My noble Friend the Minister for Trade is giving urgent consideration to the Commission's consultative document in the light of their findings and the views expressed by the United Kingdom industry and others. He expects to reach a decision on the appropriate action to be taken very shortly.

Single European Market

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many seminars on the subject of the single European market have been organised by his Department during the last two years, broken down by region.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 12 December 1989]:* My Department has organised 20 regional breakfast presentations and provided ministerial and official speakers for 1,423 conferences and seminars in the United Kingdom, primarily organised by private sector bodies, since the Europe "Open for Business" campaign was launched in March 1988.

The regional breakdown of these figures is as follows:

	Breakfast presentations	*Conferences seminars etc.*
East Midlands	1	159
North East	1	85
North West	3	155
South East	5	620
South West	2	121
West Midlands	1	150
Yorkshire and Humberside	2	115
Northern Ireland	1	5
Scotland	2	7
Wales	2	6

The figures for conferences and seminars exclude speakers provided by the relevant Government Departments in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

My Department also organised a major conference on Europe "Open for Professions", held in London on 4 October this year.

Batteries (Recycling)

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress is being made towards the recycling of batteries; and if he will make a statement about the role of the Warren Spring laboratory.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 12 December 1989]:* Battery recycling is well-established in the United Kingdom, but is mostly concentrated upon the larger land-acid and nickel-cadmium cells, and upon silver oxide and mercuric oxide button cells. Commercial recycling of the consumer types of alkaline manganese and nickel-cadmium batteries has not so far proved economically viable. Warren Spring laboratory, as part of a collaborative project, is carrying out research into methods of recovering these batteries from the domestic waste stream and the environmental, economic and technical issues which recovery involves.

Inland Revenue

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action he has taken in response to proposals relating to the Inland Revenue from British Aerospace referred to in a letter which was sent by Professor Roland Smith to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry between 6 July and 12 July 1988.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 11 December 1989]:* It was agreed that British Aerospace could seek a view in advance from the Inland Revenue about the applicability of section 768 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 to proposals to be made by British Aerospace following its acquisition of Rover Group.

ENVIRONMENT

Environmental Health Officers

7. **Mr. Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any new proposals for increasing the number of environmental health officers.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No. The number of environmental health officers needed to discharge statutory functions is a matter for each individual local environmental health authority to determine in the light of local circumstances.

Wild Life

14. **Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals the Government have to protect wildlife.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 introduced for the first time in Great Britain comprehensive statutory protection for endangered wild species and their habitats. Protection is given to many species of wild animals and plants and to all birds; the lists of animals and plants are reviewed every five years.

Planning

17. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to issue any further planning policy guidance notes or introduce any legislation on planning matters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend will know that the Gracious Speech contained no proposal for planning legislation in this Session. We do propose, however, to issue several new or revised planning policy guidance notes in the coming months.

123. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider seeking to amend legislation on planning procedures to include permission to demolish dwelling houses in the scope of planning applications.

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. Friend has considered this carefully, but he does not believe that there is a need to extend planning controls over demolition.

76. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received regarding planning procedure.

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. Friend receives a number of representations about planning procedure. In particular, over 400 individuals and organisations have responded to a consultation paper entitled "Efficient Planning" which we issued on 28 July.

Historic Buildings

18. **Mr. Conway:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the planned expenditure of his Department on the royal parks, the royal palaces and other historic buildings in 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Trippier: The gross planned expenditure figures are £165·9 million for 1990-91 and £169·7 million for 1991-92. They include the re-use of income such as trading and visitor receipts for the occupied palaces, parks and the new Historic Royal Palaces Agency, and include grant-in-aid to English Heritage. This expenditure will permit improvements in the standards of presentation and preservation of our heritage and increase the enjoyment of visitors, and represents a significant increase over the current year.

Evironmental Protection

19. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on environmental protection.

Mr. Trippier: Very many, particularly in relation to the proposals which we wish to include in this session's Environmental Protection Bill.

Nature Conservancy Council

20. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the chairman of the Nature Conservancy Council; and what was discussed.

Mr. Chris Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Merionnydd Nant Conwy. (Dr. Thomas).

27. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the reorganisation of the Nature Conservancy Council; and if he will make a statement.

46. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received regarding the Government's plans for the future of the Nature Conservancy Council.

62. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations from Welsh hon. Members he has received on the decision to set up separate bodies to deal with nature conservancy issues in England, Scotland and Wales.

Mr Trippier: My Department has received a large number of representations about the reorganisation of the NCC covering a wide spectrum of views. Common to almost all the representations has, however, been the need to maintain a sound science base and for appropriate arrangements for addressing nature conservation issues with a Great Britain or international dimension. All representations received were taken into account in the formulation of the Government's proposals for a statutory joint committee, announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 23 November.

Rent Arrears

21. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment by what amount local authority rent arrears rose in 1988-89.

Mr. Chope: Local authority figures for 1988-89 are not yet available. However, in 1987-88, local authority rent arrears amounted to £226 million or 5·7 per cent. of the total rent roll. This constituted a 15 per cent. increase over the arrears outstanding in 1986-87 of £195 million.

Rates (Basildon)

22. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the rate increase for Basildon district council for each of the last three years.

Mr. Hunt: The change in the local rate for Basildon district council was 0·2 per cent. for 1987-88, minus 6 per cent. for 1988-89 and 57·2 per cent. for 1989-90.

South Africa (Sporting Links)

23. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will take further steps to stop or discourage sporting links with South Africa.

Mr. Chris Patten: Government policy on sporting links with South Africa is set out in the Gleneagles agreement. We remain fully committed to the agreement and take every opportunity to give effect to that commitment.

Pollution (Irish Sea)

24. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps have been taken by his Department in conjunction with others to monitor the level of pollution in the Irish sea.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Regular monitoring for a wide range of purposes and substances takes place in the Irish sea, undertaken mainly by the National Rivers Authority in the case of rivers and estuaries and the Fisheries Departments for offshore site. The Department of the Environment also contributes, as does the work of dedicated research agencies such as the Natural Environment Research Council.

Local Government Finance

25. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many single person households with an existing rates liability can expect to benefit from the poll tax transitional relief scheme.

Mr. David Hunt: I estimate that about 110,000 single adult households will benefit from the community charge transitional relief scheme.

26. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment by how much more the rate support grant figure for 1989-90 would be increased if 2,000 of the residents of Langbaurgh were black.

Mr. Chope: I will write to my hon. Friend.

54. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what help will be available under the poll tax transitional relief scheme to private tenants who presently pay a combined rent and rates bill to their landlord.

Mr. Chope: Private tenants who pay a combined rent and rates bill to their landlord will be eligible for community charge transitional relief on the same basis as other chargepayers. They will be entitled to transitional relief provided that a comparison between their assumed rates bill for 1989-90 and either one or two assumed community charges (depending on the number of community chargepayers in the property) shows an increase of more than £156 a year.

55. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what allowance he has made for local factors when setting the levels of community charge or poll tax which he considers will meet standard spending needs for local authorities in Northumberland.

Mr. David Hunt: My right hon. Friend's detailed proposals for the calculation of standard spending assessments were set out in the draft revenue support grant distribution report issued at the time of his announcement to the House on 6 November. The same method will apply to all authorities with similar functions and will make use of a large number of indicators to reflect local conditions.

56. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment has been made of the administrative costs of the poll tax transitional relief scheme.

Mr. Chope: An estimate of the administrative costs of the community charge transitional relief scheme will be made on the light of a study being undertaken for the Department by Peat Marwick McLintock and discussions with the local authorities associations.

77. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when his analysis of the effect on various households types of the losses and gains upon introduction of the poll tax using the charges listed in his 6 November statement will be available.

Mr. Chope: Shortly.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take note of the representations made by Stoke on Trent city council expressing its concerns about the Department of Environment letter of 6 November about the loss of £18 million of Government grants to charge payers in the city; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: All representations, including those from Stoke on Trent city council, will be taken into account before my right hon. Friend makes final decisions about the revenue support grant settlement for 1990-91.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 5 December, *Official Report*, column *120*, what were the changes in the regulations to ensure that people being cared for in the community will receive the same relief from the standard community charge as those in residential care homes.

Mr. David Hunt: Regulation 6 of the Community Charges (Miscellaneous Provisions) (No. 2) Regulations 1989, which were laid before the House on 7 December, prescribes, among other things, two extra classes of property for the purposes of the standard charge. One class covers property which is unoccupied because the person who formerly lived there is resident somewhere else for the purpose of receiving personal care. The other covers property which is unoccupied because the person who formerly lived there has moved in order to provide personal care to someone else. The maximum multiplier for both classes is zero for 12 months after the property becomes unoccupied. Charging authorities have discretion to allow a longer period of relief for such properties.

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many students there are in full-time education and receiving an increase from their employers since qualifying for the 80 per cent. student discount under the poll tax rules.

Mr. Patten: I understand from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science that these statistics are not available.

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate has been made of the number of student nurses who will give up their training because they are unable to meet the full cost of their poll tax obligation.

Mr. Patten: No estimate is necessary since no such effect is likely.

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what would be the full cost of extending to student nurses the rights to poll tax rebates available to other full-time students;

(2) what is the likely number of full-time student nurses who will be obliged to pay the full cost of the poll tax.

Mr. Patten: I understand that there are approximately 43,500 pre-registration nursing students in schools of nursing, and that by the end of March next year there will be approximately 1,500 nurses being trained under Project 2,000. Project 2,000 student nurses will qualify for student relief from the community charge. Over the next few years the scheme will be extended to cover all pre-registration nursing trainees receiving their training in schools of nursing.

Based on these figures, and an average community charge of £278, the revenue forgone from extending student relief to all pre-registration students would be about £9·3 million.

Mr. Fishburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give for each local authority the total as returned by community charges registration officers of *(a)* the numbers of persons subject to a personal community charge, excluding students eligible for relief under section 13 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, *(b)* one fifth of students eligible for relief under section 13 of the 1988 Act and *(c)* the estimated full-year equivalent of the number of individuals liable to contribute to a collective community charge of the authority in 1990-91, in response to the notice issued on 21 November under section 139A of the Local Government Finance Act 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The response to the notice was excellent and the results demonstrate that authorities have been very successful in compiling their community charges registers. Every community charges registration officer made a return although one return received at the last minute was illegible having been corrupted in the course of facsimile transmission.

The total of the forms received is 99·95 per cent. of the Government's estimate based on OPCS information. The information for individual authorities has been laid in the Library of the House.

I do not propose to recalculate the figures circulated with the consultation letter of 6 November 1989 to local authority associations using this new information until I have completed my consideration of the representations made in response to that letter.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he could give the total amounts of support from central Government for the expenditure of Somerset county council in the years 1987-88, 1988-89, and 1989-90 and the latest estimate for such support for 1990-91.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 11 December 1989]:* The available information is as follows:

Central government grants[1] to Somerset county council

	£ million
1987-88	89·7
1988-89	94·3
1989-90	93·5

[1] Comprising rate support grant, specific and supplementary grants.

Somerset county council, as a precepting authority, will not receive revenue support grant in 1990-91 and no estimates of specific grants payable in 1990-91 are available for individual authorities.

Lakes and Rivers

28. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those lakes and rivers in England and Wales that show signs of acidification.

Mr. Trippier: The second report of the Department's acid waters review group, copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House, identified those areas of the United Kingdom that are susceptible to acid deposition as well as the location of known acid waters. Further studies under the Department's air pollution research programme are continuing and will be published.

Unified Business Rate

29. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has recently received any representations regarding the implementation of the unified business rate in England and Wales.

113. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent discussions he has held with representatives of the small business community on the introduction of the unified business rate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State, has received a number of representations from individual businesses and business organisations on aspects of the new unified business rate in England.

45. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from businesses in the south-east of England regarding the implementation of the unified business rate.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations from businesses in the south-east and elsewhere on aspects of the new unified business rate.

As a result of representations from bodies representing small businesses, my right hon. Friend announced on 27 July that the threshold for more generous transitional arrangements would be doubled to £15,000 and £10,000 rateable value for properties, respectively, in London and elsewhere. He also announced on 6 November his provisional view that the non-domestic rating multiplier for 1990-91 would be 36p, a figure below that expected by the business community and generally welcomed by it. And, on 7 December, he laid before Parliament an order to allow where necessary for larger annual reductions in rate bills during the transitional period than previously expected.

87. **Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce the unified business rate for 1990-91; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave to my hon. Friend, the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) on 29 November, at column *252*.

Globe Theatre

30. **Mr. Hayward:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce a decision about the scheduling of the Globe theatre.

Mr. Trippier: Having considered the advice of his professional advisers English Heritage and representations received, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has today included the remains of the recently discovered Globe theatre on the schedule of ancient monuments. I should like to acknowledge the leading part which the developers, Hanson, played in financing the archaeological excavation which led to the discovery of the remains.

Rented Housing

31. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to expand the numbers of council houses and cheaper rented houses in rural communities to deal with the increase in homelessness and the developing queues for rented housing.

Mr. Chope: We have planned for a major increase over the next three years in public funding through the Housing Corporation for new subsidised rented housing development by housing associations. Some of the extra resources will go to rural areas, and we have recently announced an increase in the targets for the Housing Corporation special rural programme aimed at smaller villages. Rural areas should also benefit from the encouragement we have given to private investment in the rented sector through deregulation of rents and tax relief under the business expansion scheme.

Engagements

33. **Mr. Stanbrook:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list his official engagements for Wednesday 13 December.

Mr. Chris Patten: My official engagements for Wednesday 13 December are:

Meetings with ministerial colleagues, DOE Ministers and Officials.
Cabinet Committee meeting.
Ministerial meeting.
First order questions.
Address national parks conference.
Cabinet Committee meeting.
DOE official engagement.
Meeting with colleagues and officials.

Barn Elms

34. **Mr. Hanley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what safeguards there are for the preservation of the reservoirs at Barn Elms, Barnes.

Mr. Howard: Section 8 of the Water Act confers duties on the water companies in respect of all their land to further conservation, protect the landscape and public access and provide for recreation. These duties are enforceable by the Secretary of State who has approved a statutory code of practice, debated in the House in July, on conservation, access and recreation which gives guidance to companies on the performance of these duties and promotes good practice.

Section 152 of the Water Act further provides that water companies may not dispose of land in national parks, the Broads, areas of outstanding natural beauty or sites of special scientific interest without the consent of the Secretary of State or in accordance with a general authorisation; and that the Secretary of State may require that such land be first offered for sale to a suitable conservation body or that it be indefinitely protected by convenants or management agreements.

Barn Elms reservoir was notified as an SSSI in 1975 under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. I understand that the Nature Conservancy Council, which is responsible for this matter, is considering the representations it has received about its proposal announced in 1988 to denotify the reservoir as an SSSI. If Barn Elms reservoir remains an SSSI it will fall within the scope of the controls under section 152 relating to disposals of environmentally sensitive land.

The safeguards are in addition to the ordinary protection afforded by planning legislation.

Community Charge

35. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from Oxfordshire county council concerning the community charge levels for 1990-91.

Mr. Chope: We have received a letter from the chief executive of the county council making representations on the proposals for the grant settlement.

The Secretary of State will consider the points made before he makes his final decisions on the settlement.

32. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received from local authorities about the community charge.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given earlier by my hon. Friend, the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities, to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours).

Inner Cities

36. **Mr. Irvine:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he is taking to revive inner city areas.

Mr. David Hunt: A wide range of action is being undertaken under the Government's Action for Cities initiative to revive our inner cities. Expenditure under the initiative has increased from £3 billion in 1988-89 to £3·5 billion in 1989-90. In developing our policies for the future we will seek to develop a genuine partnership between all those involved in the regeneration of their areas. On 6 December I announced the formation of a new ministerial team to spearhead and co-ordinate action in the inner cities. Each city action team and inner city task force will have its own Minister committed to advising and assisting the CAT in its vital regeneration work.

Housing Associations

37. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to increase grant rates for London housing associations.

Mr. Chope: The annual review of grant rates is currently under way.

City Grants

38. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many houses for rent have been provided with the aid of city grants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: One city grant project providing dwellings specifically for rent has so far been approved —the construction of 22 flats at Coach lane, North Shields.

89. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many authorities in West Yorkshire are considered for city grants in their area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: Applications for city grant are invited from three of the five local authority areas in West Yorkshire. The new grant has been very successful since its introduction in May 1988 and the available resources are being fully utilised by projects within the areas from which applications are invited.

117. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many city grants have been awarded to Nottingham since 1988; and what is their total value.

Mr. Moynihan: Ten city grants totalling £7·5 million have been approved to support projects in Nottingham. This is the largest number of grants approved for any local authority area.

Green Bill

39. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had about funding for local authorities tor measures in the proposed green Bill.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend has regular meetings with representatives of the local authorities to discuss local authority finance, including the case for additional spending. In addition we have considered carefully the responses from local authorities to the several consultation papers issued by my Department proposing legislation to improve the effectiveness of local pollution control.

Telford

40. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the chairman of the Telford development corporation to discuss the future of the town.

Mr. Chope: I last met Mr. Frank Jones on 29 November when we discussed a number of matters of mutual interest.

Improvement Grants

41. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what amount of money is allocated for improvement grants for the year 1989-90; what amount is proposed for the year 1990-91; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: We make general allocations to local authorities to cover spending on the whole range of housing activities. Within their total resources, and the requirements of the housing legislation, councils are free to decide how much to devote to improvement grants, and how much to other purposes.

Rural Development

42. **Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what provisions he intends to make on the drawing up on the next 10 years strategic plans to ensure that rural development is adequately provided for; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: A framework for planning at the local level will be provided by regional guidance and revised and simplified strategic plans. We have already issued guidance to help metropolitan and London authorities prepare unitary development plans. For other areas, a planning policy guidance note issued for consultation on 27 November encourages county councils to prepare advice for the Secretary of State on regional planning issues and to review their structure plans. These will include policies on the rural economy, based on current Departmental advice.

Development Programmes

43. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to ensure that developers take full account of environmental considerations and consult with relevant environmental authorities before embarking on development programmes.

Mr. Moynihan: Local planning authorities are required to consult a wide range of bodies on planning applications and to take all material considerations into account when deciding whether to grant planning permission. These provisions have been widened and strengthened by the Town and Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988 under which applicants must provide environmental statements for projects which are likely to have significant environmental effects; the Nature Conservancy Council and Countryside Commission must be consulted about all applications to which these regulations apply. While there are no statutory requirements for developers to consult public bodies with environmental responsibilities prior to submission of planning applications, developers are advised (for example in my Department's recently published booklet "Environmental Assessment—A Guide to the Procedures") to undertake such consultations so as to ensure that schemes are designed with environmental considerations in mind.

Homelessness (Wakefield)

44. **Mr. Buckley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the number of homeless people in the area of the Wakefield district council; what action has been prepared to help these people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The City of Wakefield metropolitan district council reported 832 households as having been accepted as homeless during the period from the third quarter of 1988 to the second quarter of 1989.

Homelessness was one of the issues discussed by officials of my Department and representatives of the authority at a meeting last month to discuss the council's housing investment programme submission. It is one of the factors taken into account in making the HIP allocations, being announced this week.

Water Privatisation

47. **Mr. Wilshire:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the new measures of protection the water consumer will now have available as a result of the completion of water privatisation.

Mr. Howard: The Water Act 1989 established a new regulatory framework to accompany privatisation which will ensure the protection of customers in respect of the quality and standard of service they receive and the price they pay.

These measures include the establishment of a new National Rivers Authority, separate from the companies, with direct responsibility for the health of the water environment and regulation of environmental standards, and the introduction of a new drinking water inspectorate which will help ensure that the new legal standards for drinking water quality are met.

A new independent regulator of the water and sewerage industry, the director general of water services has been appointed. His main tasks are to enforce the new system of economic regulation of the industry and to protect the interests of customers.

Companies will be subject to a new system of price control. Customers' interests will be protected in respect of the charges they pay as these will be limited in the first instance by the K factors set by the Secretary of State. It will be the director general's responsibility to ensure that these K factors continue to reflect correctly the obligations imposed on the companies. He will also have a duty to ensure that the prices fixed by the companies are fair between different classes of customers, so that domestic and industrial customers both pay their fair share.

The director general will also be responsible for monitoring the companies' performance in providing satisfactory levels of customer service and for ensuring that they comply with the conditions under which they are appointed. These provide amongst other things that the companies prepare and publish codes of practice for customers setting out the services to be provided and to publish codes of practices on disconnections and on leakage. A guaranteed standards scheme has been established setting out certain standards for day-to-day relations between companies and domestic customers. If standards are not met then customers will be entitled to a payment or credit of £5. In addition companies are required to prepare asset management plans and submit them to the director general. This provides an assurance to customers that companies have made long-term plans for the maintenance of their underground assets and for the expenditure and investment required to maintain and improve their systems.

Customer service committees will be established to represent customers' interests in each of the ten regions. The CSC's, who will report to the director-general, will be able to investigate complaints and report on any matter which appears to them to affect customer's interests.

Privatisation will also provide a spur to greater efficiency and thus benefit the consumer.

92. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total value of the planned investment programme over the next 10 years of the privatised water companies in England and Wales.

Mr. Howard: The estimated investment expenditure by the 10 newly privatised water and sewage businesses in England and Wales, required by the programmes of which account was taken by the Secretaries of State in setting the initial levels of K, is £24·6 billion in prices prevailing at November 1989.

Global Warming

48. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans the Government have to increase the monitoring of global warming.

Mr. Trippier: The science review working group of the WMO/UNEP intergovernmental panel on climate change, chaired by the United Kingdom, is assessing the requirements for monitoring with regard to global warming and climate change. The Government will take the panel's report, due in the autumn of 1990, into account in planning appropriate monitoring programmes.

119. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if any assessment has been made of the contribution to global warming made by nitrate and nitrate fertilisers.

Mr. Trippier: Assessments of the effect of fertiliser use, including those containing nitrates, on the emission of nitrous oxide from soil have been made but are subject to great uncertainty. The state of understanding of emissions and future concentrations of all the major greenhouse gases is one of the topics included in the science review, chaired by the United Kingdom, of the intergovernmental panel on climate change which will report in the autumn of 1990.

Pollution (Eastern Europe)

49. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations are being made regarding environmental pollution from eastern European countries.

Mr. Trippier: No representations have been made recently. However, the Government are working actively to encourage the adoption of environmentally sound and sustainable policies in eastern European countries. To assist with this my Department has just announced a contribution of £50,000 for the east Europe programme of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Efforts are being pursued specifically through the group of 24 and its working groups on aid to Poland and Hungary and also through the 300 million ecu aid fund for these countries established by the European Community. We are urging that pollution surveys should be undertaken in Poland and Hungary as a first step in establishing an environmentally-sound base for sustainable aid in those countries.

Fossil Fuel Power Stations

50. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many fossil fuel power stations the Government expect to have been retrofitted to reduce sulphur emissions by the year 1992.

Mr. Trippier: The United Kingdom is committed to reduce sulphur dioxide emissions from existing large plants by 20 per cent. by 1993, 40 per cent. by 1998 and 60 per cent. by 2003. Meeting this commitment will involve a range of measures by United Kingdom industry, including retrofitting at least 12,000 MW of electricity generating capacity with flue gas desulphurisation equipment. The Central Electricity Generating Board has already begun to retrofit Drax power station, which contributes one-eighth of CEBG output, but the retrofit will not be completed until after 1992.

Research

51. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the planned percentage increase in expenditure by his Department on environmental research in 1992-93 over the current year.

68. **Mr. Neale:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total increase in planned expenditure by his Department's environmental research programme in the next financial year.

Mr. Trippier: The expenditure by the Department on environmental research is planned to increase by 20·6 per cent. in 1992-93 over the current year, amounting to an increase of £7·4 million over the provision for the current year of £36 million. Of this increase, £5·2 million is planned for the next financial year.

Funding, Sheffield

52. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what private and public funding has been hitherto available to the Sheffield development corporation.

Mr. Moynihan: We have made available £17·5 million grant-in-aid to Sheffield development corporation between its designation in June 1988 and the end of March 1990. A further £19 million has been allocated for 1990-91.

It is estimated that private sector investment totalling nearly £200 million will have been committed to developments within the corporation's area by the end of the current financial year.

Homelessness

57. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what extra resources local authorities will receive over the next two years to tackle the problem of homelessness.

Mr. Chope: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) on 4 December at column *36*.

58. **Mr. Bright:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the problems caused for Luton by outside local authorities housing homeless people in the borough who subsequently become eligible for housing by the borough council.

Mr. Chope: I will write to my hon. Friend.

64. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the number of homeless people in the area of Barnsley district council; what action he is prepared to take to help these people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The number of households reported to my Department as having been accepted by Barnsley metropolitan borough council as homeless during the period from the third quarter of 1988 to the second quarter of 1989 was 160.

Homelessness in the area was discussed at a meeting between councillors and officers of Barnsley metropolitan borough council and officials of my Department in early October to discuss the council's housing investment programme submission, and is one of the factors involved in making decisions on the housing investment programme allocations for 1990-91, being announced this week.

69. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the number of homeless people in the Greater London area on 29 November.

Mr. Chope: Local authorities make returns to the Department on numbers of households accepted as homeless on a quarterly and not daily basis.

The figures for the latest quarter ending 30 June 1989 are in the Library.

98. **Mr. Couchman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what additional resources housing associations will receive over the next two years to reduce the problem of homelessness.

Mr. Chope: The Housing Corporation, which provides grants and loans to housing associations, will receive an additional £36 million in 1990-91, and £37 million in 1991-92, as part of the Government's homelessness initiative. This is additional to the Housing Corporation's main programme of capital expenditure, in the distribution of which a high priority is given to schemes designed to alleviate homelessness.

105. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the likely effect of his recent announcement on homelessness, 15 November, *Official Report*, columns *243-44*, on those who are currently sleeping rough.

Mr. Chope: It is too early to say what will happen to particular groups of people. We have invited bids from local authorities and housing associations, for the £250 million of extra resources we have made available to tackle problems of homelessness in the pressure areas, and we are also inviting charitable, and voluntary organisations to apply for further resources to intensify and improve their services to people who are actually or potentially homeless.

106. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the latest figures for the number of households accepted as homeless.

Mr. Chope: I will write to the hon. Member.

Green Belt

59. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his policy towards the maintenance of green belt land.

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. Friend continues to be fully committed to upholding green belt policy as set out in planning policy guidance note 2.

Football Clubs (Membership Scheme)

60. **Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is satisfied that the necessary technology exists to implement the Government's identification card scheme for association football.

Mr. Moynihan: The working party which was set up by the football authorities to undertake preparatory work for the national membership scheme has issued an invitation to tender to the seven companies and consortia which are bidding for the contract to operate the scheme. It will be for the Football Membership Authority to decide on the technology on which the scheme should be based and to ensure that it has been tested properly.

Rented Accommodation

61. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a further statement on his policy for increasing the provision of low-cost rented accommodation.

Mr. Chope: The Government have taken a variety of measures to encourage the supply of rented housing, including the deregulation of private letting and the encouragement of private investment in housing associations. In addition public funding for the Housing Corporation is being substantially increased from £815 million this year to £1,736 million by 1992-93, mainly for the development of new rented housing by housing associations.

Recycling

63. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to require householders to segregate their household rubbish for recycling.

Mr. Heathcoat- Amory: The Government have no such plans at present, but my Department and the Department of Trade and Industry will be monitoring closely the results of the "Recycling City" experiment in Sheffield which involves the issue to several thousand households of blue bins for the purpose of segregating recyclable waste. If successful it is hoped that the experiment, which is receiving Government support, will be widely replicated.

82. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures his Department is taking to encourage the spread of waste recycling practices and technology.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My Department is currently considering adding recycling to the categories of project eligible for support under the environmental protection technology (EPT) scheme which encourages the development of environmentally responsible technologies. In addition my Department and the Department of Trade and Industry are supporting a range of studies and research projects relating to waste recycling and the "Recycling City" project in Sheffield in which several thousand households are participating.

118. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to visit Sheffield to observe its experimental waste recycling project.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend has at present no plans to visit the "Recycling City" project in Sheffield, but I opened the kerbside collection stage of the project on 21 November. The project will be closely monitored by my Department and the Department of Trade and Industry.

Stonehenge

65. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made by English Heritage on the establishment of a new visitor centre at Stonehenge.

Mr. Trippier: I am pleased to say that agreement has recently been reached between the Ministry of Defence and English Heritage about an access route, across MOD land, to the site of the proposed new visitor centre at Larkhill West, just north of Stonehenge. There remains a considerable amount of detailed preparation and planning work to be done but I know that English Heritage will now be directing their energies wholeheartedly, in discussion with MOD, the local authorities and other interested parties, towards making significant early progress with these next stages.

English Heritage's aim is to develop a visitor centre worthy of Stonehenge's international importance as a world heritage site and a major attraction to tourists. It hopes that the centre will cater for up to 1 million visitors each year and plans to include a full, imaginative interpretation of Stonehenge using the latest exhibition techniques to inform visitors. In recognition of the importance which the Government attach to the development of appropriate visitor facilities at Stonehenge, we included in the £3 million additional funding which we are allocating to English Heritage in 1990-91 a sum of £500,000 to enable extra resources to be used to be put into working up the project as rapidly as possible.

Water Authorities

66. **Mr. James Lamond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the increase in salaries for chief executives and chairmen of the water authorities over the past two years and since flotation.

Mr. Howard: The chairmen of the English water authorities, and those chief executives appointed to the authorities' boards by the Secretary of State, received salary increases of between 8·7 per cent. and 10·1 per cent. With effect from 1 July 1988 and an increase of 7·5 per cent. with effect from 1 July 1989. The salaries of chief executives who were not board members were a matter for the authorities themselves. Following the flotation directors' salaries as well as staff salaries are now for the privatised companies to determine. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales was responsible for approving the salaries of the chairman and chief executive of the Welsh Water Authority.

Litter

67. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to encourage householders and businesses to be more accountable for the litter outside their premises.

Mr. Trippier: I shall continue to encourage householders, businesses and everyone else to take a responsible attitude towards litter, wherever it might be. We are currently looking at ways to involve commercial frontagers in the cleaning up of their immediate environment.

Dogs

70. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received concerning the registration of dogs.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We have received 1,600 ministerial letters and 2,500 letters from members of the public which expressed a wide range of opinions on the subject of dog registration. The same was true of the 300 responses received to the consultation paper.

Estate Action

71. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total provision for Estate Action over the current year and 1990.

Mr. Chope: The Estate Action budget for 1989-90 is £190 million. A further £190 million will be made available for 1990-91.

Private Tenancies

72. **Mr. Wall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has made any estimate of the rate of decline in the number of private tenancies since the introduction of the Housing Act 1988.

Mr. Chope: No. The fundamental reason for the introduction of part I of the Housing Act 1988 was to increase the supply of privately-rented accommodation. It is too early to make a firm assessment as to the impact of the new regime on the rental market. We shall be carrying out detailed evaluations as soon as practicable. But initial impressions are very encouraging. In particular, it is estimated that more than £350 million has been invested in business expansion scheme companies letting homes on assured tenancies. With an average price of £50,000 per property, that means an extra 6,000 to 7,000 homes available for letting.

Drinking Water

73. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice his Department provides to those concerned about the quality of their drinking water.

Mr. Howard: The Water Act 1989 and regulations made under it clarify and strengthen the requirements for drinking water quality. In addition to the local authorities' continuing role of checking the quality of water supplies, the new drinking water inspectorate will seek to ensure that drinking water standards are met. Also, it is now a criminal offence for water undertakers to supply water which is unfit for human consumption.

Trafford Park

74. **Mr. Churchill:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, if he will pay an official visit to Trafford park.

Mr. Chris Patten: I hope to be able to take up my hon. Friend's invitation to visit Trafford park later next year in conjuction with a visit to the Trafford park industrial council AGM.

Competitive Tendering

75. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any indication of the savings being achieved by local authorities as a result of the introduction of compulsory competitive tendering for certain services.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No precise figures are available at present, but the evidence suggests that substantial savings can be achieved as a result of the new requirements for competition in local government services. This is true whether work is awarded to an outside contractor or is retained in-house. As I explained in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) on 1 December at column *212* the results of a research project on the effects of compulsory competitive tendering should be available in the spring.

97. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what powers he has to take action against local authorities which fail to let contracts under compulsory competitive tendering on an impartial basis.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Secretary of State has powers under the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 and the Local Government Act 1988 to direct that an authority shall cease to have power to carry out certain types of work or that they may only carry out such work subject to specified conditions, if it appears to him that the authority have acted anti-competitively or breached any of the other requirements of the legislation.

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the minimum and maximum contract periods specified in the Department of the Environment's circular on compulsory competitive tendering; what are the periods prescribed by the Welsh Office for Wales; and what are the reasons for the differences between the two.

Mr. Patten: The Local Government Act 1988 (Defined Activities) (Specified Bodies) (England) Regulations 1988 specified minimum and maximum contract periods for the activities subject to compulsory competition, under the Local Government Act 1988. They are as follows:

Table I

Specified periods for authorities with education functions

Activity	*Minimum period years*	*Maximum period years*
Collection of refuse	5	7
Cleaning of buildings	3	4
Other cleaning	4	6
Catering for purposes of schools and welfare	4	5
Other catering	4	6
Maintenance of ground	3	4
Repair and maintenance of vehicles	4	6

Table II

Specified periods for authorities without education functions

Activity	*Minimum period years*	*Maximum period years*
Collection of refuse	5	7
Cleaning of buildings	4	6
Other cleaning	4	6

Activity	*Minimum period years*	*Maximum period years*
Catering for purposes of schools and welfare	4	6
Other catering	4	6
Maintenance of ground	4	6
Repair and maintenance of vehicles	4	6

The Local Government Act 1988 (Defined Activities) (Specified Periods) (Wales) Regulations 1988, as amended by the Local Government Act 1988 (Defined Activities) (Specified Periods) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 1988, specified the following periods:

Table III

Specified periods for authorities with education functions

Activity	*Minimum period years*	*Maximum period years*
Refuse collection	5	7
Building cleaning	3	4
Other cleaning	3	5
Catering	3	5
Ground maintenance	3	4
Vehicle maintenance and repair	3	5

Table IV

Specified periods for authorities without education functions

Activity	*Minimum period years*	*Maximum period years*
Refuse collection	5	7
Building cleaning	3	5
Other cleaning	3	5
Catering	3	5
Ground maintenance	3	5
Vehicle maintenance and repair	3	3

Differences in the specified contract periods reflect decisions made by my predecessor and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales in the light of circumstances pertaining in England and Wales respectively.

English Heritage

78. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment by how much the grant-in-aid to English Heritage is planned to increase over the next two years.

Mr. Trippier: We are allocating an additional £3 million to English Heritage in 1990-91 and an additional £3·02 million in 1991-92, taking its total grant-in-aid in that year to £79·8 million—a 56 per cent. cash increase over 1984-85. These significant extra sums reflect the Government's recognition of the importance of the heritage to the quality of life, and its major contribution to the tourism industry. The increases will enable English Heritage to build on its successful record in several different ways. It will be able to invest more in the maintenance and presentation of its key historic sites—already a source of significant enjoyment and education for an increasing number of adults and youngsters. I am particularly pleased that some of the increase can be earmarked for preparatory work on the proposed new visitor centre at Stonehenge—one of our most outstanding national monuments. Other areas of English Heritage's important responsibilities which will benefit from these extra resources include archaeology and the review of some lists of historic buildings which were produced in the early 1970s and are not up to the standards of the more recent lists.

Action for Cities

79. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement on the achievements of the action for cities programme.

Mr. David Hunt: Excellent progress continues to be made in the regeneration of our inner cities under the Government's action for cities programme, expenditure on which is planned to increase from £3 billion in 1988-89 to about £3·5 billion this year. Unemployment in the 57 inner city target areas has fallen by nearly a quarter over the last year. Massive investment is taking place in reclaiming derelict land and in new factories, housing, shopping centres, roads and other infrastructure. Recorded crime fell significantly in the Metropolitan police force areas over the last year. The Government are working in partnership with business, local government, the voluntary sector and local people to build on the progress already made and to ensure that the pace of inner city regeneration is maintained. On 6 December I announced the formation of a new ministerial team to spearhead and co-ordinate action in the inner city areas. Each city action team and inner city task force will have a Minister to advise and assist it in its vital regeneration work.

Housing, Hackney

80. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to visit Hackney to discuss housing.

Mr. Chope: No. The Department has regular contacts with the borough and has recently held a meeting with the council in the current housing investment programme round.

Toxic Waste

81. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the toxic waste material which is held in Wath upon Dearne, Rotherham to be removed.

Mr. Trippier: My officials are in close touch with the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the other parties involved. We are pressing hard for the early removal of this material.

"Keep Safe" Scheme

83. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will report on the progress of the "Keep Safe" security grants scheme in the London borough of Hammersmith and Fulham.

Mr. Moynihan: This crime prevention scheme was first approved by my Department in 1985. Some 5,500 security installations have now been completed. The scheme has received a total of £386,000 in urban programme funds to date, of which £141,900 has been approved for works to be undertaken this year.

River Pollution

84. **Mr. Jessel:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures the National Rivers Authority has taken against polluters since it was established.

Mr. Howard: The National Rivers Authority has taken positive steps against polluters by the prosecution of offenders, the issue of warning letters, and the recovery of costs relating to pollution incidents. I understand that since 1 September the NRA has decided to institute legal proceedings in 102 cases of water pollution.

Greenhouse Effect

85. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures Her Majesty's Government have taken to secure international agreement on the need for action on the greenhouse effect.

Mr. Trippier: We actively support the work of the inter-governmental panel on climate change and in particular the United Kingdom chairs its working group on scientific assessment. The United Kingdom is leading efforts to gain support for an international framework convention on climate change. This was unanimously supported at the recent conference of environment Ministers in the Netherlands. Our leading role in promoting international initiatives on climate change was underlined by the Prime Minister's speech at the United Nations on 8 November.

Rents

88. **Mr. Rees:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will meet housing associations and local authorities to discuss proposals to determine criteria for affordable rents.

Mr. Chris Patten: My hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning frequently meets representatives of local authorities and housing associations, and questions of rent policy are discussed when appropriate.

Hot Food Shops

90. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what support he has given to Bexley council in its attempt to control the number of hot food shops in Welling.

Mr. Moynihan: My Department's development control policy note 11 "Service Uses in Shopping Areas" gives advice on the planning considerations which are relevant to proposals for hot food shops.

Bed and Breakfast

91. **Mr. Clay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many families accepted as homeless are currently living in *(a)* bed-and-breakfast accommodation and *(b)* other forms of temporary accommodation.

Mr. Chope: I will write to the hon. Member.

New Homes

93. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest information he has on the number of new homes which stand unsold and unoccupied.

Mr. Chope: The Department does not collect information on the number of new homes which are unsold and unoccupied.

Public Inquiries

94. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for changes in the environmental criteria relating to major public inquiries.

Mr. Moynihan: We have no proposals to change the procedures for major planning inquiries. Environmental considerations will invariably be an important issue at such inquiries. In the case of planning applications made on or after 15 July 1988 for many projects likely to have significant environmental effects, developers are also required to provide an environmental statement of the implications to their proposals.

New Towns

95. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the policies of the Government on future new town developments.

Mr. Chope: The new towns programme in England is coming to a conclusion. New settlements however are an option that planning authorities in England can explore, in co-operation with private developers, in formulating their housing policies. New settlements could have a role to play in reducing pressure for new housing in existing towns and villages, but whether to proceed by this means and the finding of suitable locations is generally a matter for decision at the local level, through the development plan process.

My right hon. Friend has no responsibility for planning or new towns in Scotland or Wales.

Olympic Games

96. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice and support is being given by his Department to those bodies bidding to hold the 1996 olympic games in Manchester.

Mr. Moynihan: The Government wish Manchester every success in its bid to host the 1996 olympic games and will offer the bid team whatever promotional help they can. We have already offered assurances about paying full regard to the olympic rules and byelaws and doing all within our power to facilitate entry and unrestricted movement to members of the olympic family.

Projects (Kirklees)

99. **Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of city grants that have been made during the current year to projects in Kirklees for *(a)* housing, *(b)* industrial and *(c)* commercial; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: in the current financial year, city grant of £222,649 was approved for an industrial project at the

Ringway industrial centre in Kirklees on 5 April 1989. The project, costing £788,000 in all, involves the development of 1.75 acres of former railway yard to provide four business warehouse units, with landscaping and car parking facilities.

Regeneration Projects

100. **Mrs. Currie:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much city grant has been awarded to regeneration projects in Derby since July.

Mr. Moynihan: Two offers of city grant totalling £1·6 million have been made to support projects in Derby since July 1989.

Housing, Bradford

101. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to reach decisions on grant applications for new homes to rent and for sale on the Lower Grange estate in Bradford; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: On 13 November, my Department received an application for Estate Action support in respect of the dwellings on the Lower Grange estate which the City of Bradford metropolitan council intend to refurbish.

Housing (Land Prices)

102. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the average land price content of the average priced house in the south east, the north west and England and Wales as a whole in 1979 and the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Chope: The table shows average land prices per plot as a percentage of average new house prices. Land prices are restricted to purchases by the private sector of sites with planning permission and are therefore directly comparable with the average price of new houses than all houses (including secondhand purchases).

Land price per plot as a percentage of new dwelling price

	1979	*1988*
South East (excluding London)	20	45
North West	14	15
England and Wales	17	34

Climate Change

103. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what role the United Kingdom delegation played at the Noordwijk conference on climate change.

Mr. Trippier: I believe the United Kingdom delegation contributed positively to a final declaration in which the nearly 70 countries present were able unanimously to endorse our call for an international framework convention on climate change, to support the work of the inter-governmental panel on climate change, and to recognise the need to stabilise emissions of carbon dioxide. Maintaining this international consensus will be essential to effective action to combat the greenhouse effect.

Carbon Dioxide Emissions

104. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of the world's carbon dioxide emissions come from the developed world and the underdeveloped world.

Mr. Trippier: Figures for carbon dioxide emissions from developed and undeveloped countries are subject to uncertainty due both to the definition of the terms and the assessment of emissions for particular countries. Recent estimates, defining developed countries as industrialised countries and centrally planned economies suggest that the undeveloped world accounts for about 15 per cent. of world carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuel combustion.

Pollution Control

108. **Mr. Aspinwall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to legislate to put control of all forms of pollution within the same statutory framework of regulations.

Mr. Trippier: Pollution control requires different forms of expertise. The Government will be bringing forward legislation to provide more effective frameworks for controlling pollution best dealt with at the local level, and new systems at the national level for controlling the most dangerous or difficult processes.

116. **Mr. Batiste:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the ways in which the concept of integrated pollution control will help to protect the environment.

Mr. Trippier: Integrated pollution control (IPC) adopts a preventative approach to pollution control. The most polluting substances will be prevented or minimised at source and all substances will be rendered harmless. IPC applies the concept of the "best available techniques not entailing excessive cost" which provides an inbuilt dynamic to higher standards as techniques and technology improve. IPC will seek to achieve the best practicable environmental option, taking account of the effects on the environment as a whole.

122. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what predictions can be made about the levels of pollution from internal combustion engines between the present time and 2010.

Mr. Trippier: The Department has asked Warren Spring laboratory to revise the projections of exhaust emissions from road transport previously published in 1987 to take account of the new emission regulations agreed this year and the full range of current traffic projections.

Company Awareness

109. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to encourage British companies to be more aware of environmental concerns.

Mr. Trippier: The Department aims to increase the level of environmental awareness generally. It supports the Department of Trade and Industry in the latter's business and environment programme, for example by working with the DTI and others to organise conferences for industry on environmental issues.

The Department of the Environment also operates an environmental protection technology scheme, which encourages technical innovation through grants to aid the development of low waste and pollution control technology. The Department has recently published a booklet "Clean Technology" obtainable from the EPT Office, Room B357, Romney house, 43 Marsham street, London SW1P 3PY.

Sports Council

110. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the chairman of the Sports Council; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Moynihan: My most recent formal meeting with the chairman of the Sports Council was on 16 November at my meeting with the chairmen of the regional councils for sport and recreation. We discussed a number of issues including the Sports Council's grant-in-aid for 1990-91, my recent working party report on sport for people with disabilities, school sport and the impact of the new local authority capital expenditure rules on sport.

Tyne and Wear Development Corporation

111. **Mr. Trotter:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next plans to visit the Tyne and Wear development corporation.

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has no plans to visit the Tyne and Wear development corporation at present. However my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities plans to visit the corporation tomorrow.

Football Spectators Act

112. **Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what date he expects the provisions of the Football Spectators Act to be fully operational at all grounds.

Mr. Moynihan: We want the national membership scheme to be in place as soon as practicable. We will approve its introduction when we are satisfied that it will be effective, workable and safe. Against this background, it will be for the Football Membership Authority, in conjunction with the chosen supplier, to come forward with an acceptable timetable for implementation.

Wildlife and Trees

114. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the impact of pollutants on wildlife and trees especially in England and Wales.

Mr. Trippier: The Department's review groups on acid waters and terrestrial effects have assessed the impacts of pollutants on freshwaters, crops, trees and vegetation in the United Kingdom. Copies of the reports have been placed in the Library of the House.

In the north and south-west of England, in Northern Ireland and in many parts of Scotland and Wales, there are areas with soils and underlying rocks sensitive to acid deposition. In some of these areas the deposition of pollutants has caused water and soil acidification. The principal impact on wildlife is a reduction of fish and invertebrate species in affected streams, and a consequent reduction in habitat for species which feed on them. The terrestrial effects review group identified air pollution as a potential stress on trees, but was unable to specify where or to what extent trees were adversely affected. The Department has decided to set up a further review group specifically to look at the latest evidence on the impact of air pollution or tree health.

Waste Disposal

115. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to legislate to separate local authority responsibilities in the regulation and management of waste disposal.

Mr. Trippier: The Environmental Protection Bill will include measures to separate local authority waste disposal operations into arm's length local authority controlled companies. The waste regulation authorities will then be responsible for the licensing and enforcement of both public and private sector facilities.

Mortgage Arrears

120. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the number of households who have been evicted as a result of mortgage arrears in the past 12 months.

Mr. Chope: The latest information on building society mortgages covers the 12 months to 30 June 1989. The Building Societies Association reported that societies took 12,730 properties into possession during this period. This figure represented 0·166 per cent. of building society mortgages outstanding at 30 June 1989. In the year to 30 June 1988, 21,000 properties were taken into possession, which represented 0·288 per cent. of outstanding mortgages. Figures for other mortgage lenders are not available.

Housing Corporation

121. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the projected increase in the budget of the Housing Corporation between the present year and 1992-93.

Mr. Howard: The Housing Corporation's capital programme of grants and loans to housing associations is planned to increase from £818 million in 1989-90, to £1,736 million in 1992-93, more than doubling over three years.

Nuclear Waste

53. **Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has a meeting scheduled with Nirex before Christmas, to discuss the disposal of low and medium level nuclear waste.

86. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has a meeting scheduled with Nirex before Christmas, to discuss the disposal of low and medium level nuclear waste.

107. **Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has a meeting scheduled with Nirex before Christmas to discuss the disposal of low and medium level nuclear waste.

Mr. Trippier: I refer the hon. Members to the answer which I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond).

North Sea

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what evidence he has on whether algae, in the North sea, have given off significant quantities of dimethyl sulphide; and if he will make a statement on the next stage of the Natural Environment Research Council project on evaluating seasonal cycles in the North sea.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I understand that measurements of dimethyl sulphide (DMS) taken on NERC cruises as part of the NERC North sea community research project show a pronounced seasonal pattern. High levels of DMS in spring and summer, coinciding with the period of maximum algal activity, contrasted with low levels in the autumn/winter. Maximum DMS values in water occurred in April/May with high concentrations along the coast of France, Belgium, Holland and Germany. These results suggest that in the spring/summer the North sea algal production of DMS contributes at a rate equivalent to 25 per cent. of the rate for man-made emissions over Europe.

The 15-month NERC observational cruises programme in the North sea in now concluded. The next stage of the project involves detailed data analysis and interpretation, and the incorporation of data into models of the seasonal cycle of parameters in the North sea.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy towards compliance with the proposals made by the European Environment Commissioner on 29 November to clean up the North sea; and if he will estimate the likely cost of this programme to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Howard: The hon. Member may be referring to a proposal published by the Commission last month for a directive concerning municipal waste water treatment. If adopted, this would establish, inter alia, minimum standards of treatment before disposal for sewage from populations above a certain size. It would apply to discharges to all inland and coastal waters across the European Community. No discussions have yet taken place within the Council of Ministers on the proposals. The Department has commissioned Consultants in Environmental Sciences Ltd to assess the likely impact, including the cost, of certain aspects of the proposals. Their report is due early in the new year, and a copy will be made available to the House.

Radioactivity (Sellafield)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what problems with the levels of airborne radioactivity in the B-30 receiving pond facility at Sellafield have been reported to him in the past year.

Mr. Trippier: None.

Water Rates

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is considering bringing in any statutory procedures regarding disconnection for non-payment of water rates, by either a private or public authority.

Mr. Howard: No. Section 49 of the Water Act 1989 already lays down the procedure a water undertaker must follow before a water supply may be disconnected for non-payment of charges.

Housing (Lambeth)

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment why Lambeth borough council has been refused participation within the London mobility scheme for housing.

Mr. Chope: I understand that the London borough of Lambeth is currently suspended by the joint committee of the London area mobility scheme from the Greater London mobility scheme because it has not been contributing sufficient lettings to it. The suspension will, however, be lifted as soon as performance improves.

In the meantime tenants wishing to move from the borough can still do so through the other schemes operated by the London area mobility scheme—including the inter-borough nomination scheme and the mutual exchange bureau.

Trees

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what analysis he has made of the effects of acid deposition on trees; and what steps he is taking to mitigate the effects.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: An initial analysis of the effects of air pollution, including acid deposition, on trees was made by the United Kingdom terrestrial effects review group (TERG) in a report published in July 1988. Copies of the report are available in the House of Commons Library. Since then, additional scientific data have come to light both in the United Kingdom and elsewhere. Consequently a sub-group of TERG has been set up specifically to evaluate these extra data. The group will report in January 1991.

In order to mitigate the effects of acid deposition on the environment as a whole we are making substantial reductions in sulphur dioxide and oxides of nitrogen (NOx) emissions from large combustion plants at a cost of over £2 billion. In addition we have agreed major reductions of NOx emissions from motor vehicles at a cost of about £1·5 billion per annum.

Housing (Blyth Valley)

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total value of dwellings owned by Blyth Valley local authority calculated on the basis of 1988-89 right-to-buy sales and the total loan debt outstanding.

Mr. Chope: Under part VI of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, in determining housing revenue account subsidy, the Secretary of State may infer aggregate values of houses and other property within local authorities' housing revenue accounts from the average values of any of the houses and other property they have disposed of. The latest figure calculated on this basis for Blyth Valley is £158 million. This is subject to variation in the light of any futher information supplied by the local authority.

The total outstanding loan debt on dwellings in the ownership of Blyth Valley district council for 1988-89 as reported to the Department of the Environment by the local authority was £40·2 million.

Business Rates

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the estimated business rate, in tabular form, for shops with a floor space of 500 sq ft, 2,000 sq ft, 5,000 sq ft, and 10,000 sq ft for each of the years 1989-90 to 1994-95 if situated in Sheen road, Richmond, showing percentage increases for each year over the actual for 1989-90.

Mr. Chope: It is not possible at this stage to make the estimates for which the hon. Member asks.

My right hon. Friend announced on 6 November his provisional view that the national non-domestic rate poundage for 1990-91 would be 36 pence. In subsequent years the poundage will increase by the rise in the retail price index or by such lesser amount as the Chancellor of the Exchequer determines.

The valuation office is currently carrying out a revaluation of non-domestic property and is required to deposit with local authorities the new rating lists in draft by 31 December.

There will be transitional arrangements to phase in the effect of the uniform business rate and the revaluation. The maximum increase in rate bills for properties in London will be 20 per cent. in real terms for those with new rateable values of £15,000 and above and 15 per cent. for those with values between £500 and £14,999. Large reductions in bills will also be subject to phasing.

NCC and Countryside Commission

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what considerations of policy led to his decision to retain the Countryside Commission and the Nature Conservancy Council as separate bodies in England.

Mr. Trippier: The Government took into account the ecological, demographic and social circumstances in England and decided that the needs of nature conservation and the protection and enjoyment of the countryside would be best served by the retention of separate bodies for those purposes in this country.

Conservation Agencies

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures he will adopt to provide environmental auditing and accountability of the proposed new conservation agencies in Great Britain.

Mr. Trippier: The new conservation agencies in England, Scotland and Wales will be directly accountable to the Secretaries of State for the Environment, Scotland and Wales, respectively for the stewardship both of their individual and joint functions.

Environmental auditing is normally understood to mean the quantification of environmental costs and benefits in the economic or development context, rather than a means of assessing the work of public agencies.

Radioactive Contamination (Harwell)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps are being taken to clean up the radioactive contamination at the Harwell tank farm, following the discovery of radioactive waste contamination on 24 May; what assessment has been made of the effects on Atomic Energy Research Establishment workers and members of the public of this leak; and what has been the cost of the clean-up operation to date.

Mr. Trippier: Low level radioactive contaminated water from the tank farm area is being treated in the Harwell effluent plant. The effect of the contamination on workers and members of the public is insignificant. Approximately £20,000 has been spent on the clean-up operation to date.

Boundaries

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to introduce regulations governing the height of trees and hedges which form part of boundaries between private properties, similar to planning regulations which currently govern the height of boundary walls.

Mr. Moynihan: No.

Pollution Inspectorate

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current level of understaffing at Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution; and what proposals he has to meet the problem.

Mr. Trippier: The staff compliment for Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution was increased from 219 to 240 from 2 October 1989. Staff in post at 1 November 1989 was 199. Most of the vacancies are for pollution inspectors and to fill these posts Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution are undertaking a recruitment campaign offering exceptional salary increases of 28·5 per cent. over those offered in the last recruitment round.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the annual report of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution will be published.

Mr. Trippier: The annual report for 1988-89 will be published as soon as possible in the new year.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how often samples of the flue gases from the Rechem plant at Pontypool are analysed for dioxin and polychlorinated biphenyl content by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution; and if he will summarise the results of such analysis by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution since 1987.

Mr. Trippier: Flue gases from the Rechem plant at Pontypool are sampled by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and analysed specifically for polychlorinated biphenyl approximately twice a year. Figures are considerably less thay 0·01 mg/m^3. Sampling and analysis for dioxins and dibenzofurans is carried out less frequently. The latest summary figures for January 1989 are:

Tetrachlorodibenzodioxins (total)—less than 0·025 ng/m^3
Tetrachlorodibenzofurans (total)—0·12 ng/m^3

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest total number of staff employed by *(a)* Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and *(b)* the National Rivers Authority.

Mr. Trippier: Staff in post in Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution at 1 November were 199.

Staff in post in the National Rivers Authority at 31 October were 6,332.

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which regional office of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution will be responsible for meeting the environmental demands of Cleveland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The regulatory responsibilities of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution in Cleveland will be discharged by the Northern region of HMIP, based in Leeds.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if replacements have been found for the three senior inspectors who resigned in 1989 from Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 12 December 1989]:* One senior member of staff resigned from Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution in 1989 and will leave at the end of the year. Arrangements are in hand to appoint a successor. Two senior members of staff resigned in 1988. Their posts have been absorbed into the reorganised structure of the inspectorate, details of which were announced on 2 October 1989.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what reasons were tendered by the individuals concerned for the resignations from Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution by Mr. Michael Thayer and other senior inspectors.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 12 December 1989]:* It is not customary to disclose details of personnel matters.

Environment White Paper

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish the proposed White Paper on the environment; and whether it will outline the structure of the proposed Scottish heritage agency.

Mr. Trippier: We intend to publish a White Paper by next autumn; it is too soon to comment on the detailed content.

Air Pollution

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on how many people are involved in monitoring air pollution in *(a)* the United States of America, *(b)* Britain and *(c)* other member countries of the European Community.

Mr. Trippier: This information could be obtained only at excessive cost. However, the United Kingdom acid deposition and air pollution monitoring networks, referred to in my answer of 7 December to the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) are co-ordinated by about 33 staff at Warren Spring laboratory. Some of these sites are run by other consultants.

Many local authorities and other organisations in the United Kingdom monitor air pollution for their own purposes.

Pensions

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations have been made to him by the local authority associations and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy on the funding of pensions liabilities; and when he will respond to such representations.

Mr. Christopher Patten: I have received a number of representations on this subject. I shall be responding shortly.

South Downs

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to designate the South Downs as a national park; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The South Downs is already designated as an area of outstanding natural beauty. My right hon. Friend has no plans to designate it as a national park.

PSA

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will make a statement on his meetings with the Property Services Agency staff unions;

(2) when he next intends to consult trade unions about the privatisation of the Property Services Agency and the Crown Suppliers.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend met the PSA trade unions on 26 September. It was a constructive meeting and he looks forward to having further meetings with them as the PSA progresses towards privatisation.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his reply of 6 December, *Official Report,* column *412,* he will specify in what respects the briefing document sent to hon. Members by trade unions in respect of Property Services Agency legislation, was tendentious.

Mr. Chope: My judgment is based on the document as a whole.

Housebuilding

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the latest figures for housebuilding in the public sector, starts and completions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The latest figures for housebuilding up to the end of October 1989 were released on 4 December 1989. A copy of the press notice is in the Library.

Ordnance Survey

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement on the future of Ordnance Survey.

Mr. Trippier: As Britain's national mapping organisation, the Ordnance Survey has earned wide respect and recognition for its surveying and cartographic activities. At the same time, the Government have encouraged Ordnance Survey to develop and expand its business on increasingly commercial lines. It is therefore proposed that Ordnance Survey should become a next steps agency and this is expected to take place in 1990.

Housing Associations

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the average management and maintenance costs per dwelling owned by housing associations in each of the last three years.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 12 December 1989]:* The information requested is not available. The hon. Gentleman will, however, find some information on this subject in a report called "The Nature and Effectiveness of Housing Management in England" by the centre for housing research, university of Glasgow. Copies of the report, which was published earlier this year, are available in the Library.

Pollution (Mersey)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the current pollution level of the Mersey; and what measures are planned to improve its quality.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 4 December 1989]:* The water quality of the Mersey estuary has improved since 1980 as a result of North West Water's programme of building interceptor sewers to divert sewage from outfalls to sewage treatment works. This continuing programme, which includes construction of a major new sewage treatment works at Sandon dock in Liverpool due to open next year, now forms part of the Mersey basin campaign project to improve the water quality and landward aspects of the Mersey system at an overall estimated cost of £4 billion. The project involves North West Water, central and local government, and business and voluntary organisations.

The National Rivers Authority is responsible for monitoring river and estuarial quality, and for securing any improvements which it considers are needed to meet new statutory water quality objectives to be set by the Secretary of State.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 14 December 1989

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Student Loans

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many representations he has received *(a)* in favour of and *(b)* against student loans.

Mr. Jackson: Representations have expressed a variety of views on different aspects of the proposals. Many support the underlying principle that students in higher education should contribute to their living costs.

Research

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what arrangements exist between the Medical Research Council and Celltech on the exploitation of research results.

Mr. Jackson: The Medical Research Council and Celltech Ltd signed a memorandum of understanding for a period of five years on 2 November 1988.

The main feature of the memorandum of understanding is provision for regular dialogue between the council and Celltech. The understanding does not oblige the council to give preferential treatment in respect of new technologies.

Higher Education

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the numbers of pupils remaining in full-time education after 16 years.

Mr. Jackson: In 1988-89, 345,000 16-year-olds were participating in full-time education in England. The details are as follows:

	Pupils
Maintained schools:	180,000
Maintained further education colleges:	126,750
Independent schools:	38,300

This represents an overall full-time participation rate of 51 per cent.

Correspondence

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State will reply to the letter of 19 September from the hon. Member for Oxford, East on the future of the Workers Educational Association.

Mr. Jackson: I have replied to the hon. Member today.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State will reply to the letter of 19 July from the hon. Member for Oxford, East on the points indicated in his letter of 17 October.

Mr. Jackson: I did not think that the hon. Member's letter required a reply.

Her Majesty's Senior Chief Inspector (Report)

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) when the next annual report of Her Majesty's senior chief inspector will be published on the state of schools;

(2) whether he intends to edit or amend the annual report of Her Majesty's senior chief inspector on the state of schools before it is published.

Mr. MacGregor: I expect to receive the annual report from the senior chief inspector early in the new year. When I do so I intend to publish it without editing or amendment.

City Technology Colleges

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science which city technology colleges have signed agreements with his Department; and what areas these agreements cover.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend will shortly be concluding funding agreements with all city technology colleges on the lines of the model agreement placed in the Library of the House earlier this year. Pending the conclusion of these agreements, there have been exchanges of letters with principal sponsors setting out their commitment and the conditions on which the Secretary of State accepted their sponsorship.

Bradford City Technology College

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much money, to date, Dixons has paid towards capital and revenue expenditure at Bradford city technology college; what is the total financial commitment of Dixons to the capital and revenue expenditure of Bradford city technology college to date; by what dates Dixons is required to pay additional amounts; and whether any of these commitments are conditional on Dixons remaining free from takeover.

Mrs. Rumbold: The total financial commitment of the Dixons Group plc to the capital development of the Bradford city technology college is £1·1 million. This is being paid by a deed of covenant over five years in five equal payments of £220,000. The first payment was made in March 1989, the next being due in March 1990. Our agreement with Dixons is based on the understanding that the covenant by Dixons is such that it would have to be taken over by any successor of the Dixons Group plc.

Further Education

Mr. Derek Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list *(a)* the 1986-87 and 1987-88 grant-related expenditure assessments for 16 to 19-year-olds' education provision by local education authority and *(b)* the actual level of expenditure for 1986-87 and 1987-88.

Mr. Jackson: Table 1 shows the grant-related expenditure assessments (GREA) by local authority for the years 1986-87 and 1987-88 for provision relating to 16 to 19-year-olds. The assessments shown are the GRE for school pupils aged over 16 (OSLA) and for non-advanced further education (NAFE) and the pooling GRE for advanced further education. The NAFE GRE includes further education provision for students aged over 19 and is distributed on the numbers of NAFE home students in full-time, part-time day release and block-release and youth training scheme (YTS) courses. The pooling GRE covers also provision for a wider age range.

Table 2 shows the net expenditure by local education authorities on non-special secondary education, polytechnics and other maintained further education establishments for the years 1986-87 and 1987-88, which cover the areas dealing with 16 to 19-year-olds' education: no separate figure is available for secondary education for pupils aged 16 and over. The grant-related expenditure assessments cannot be compared easily with the expenditure shown because the coverage of each figure is different. The expenditure figures include estimates for three authorities in both 1986-87 and 1987-88 which did not make returns.

Table 1

Grant Related Expenditure Assessments

1986-87 and1987-88 OSLA and NAFE GREs and the AFE Pools, in £ million.

	1986-87			1987-88		
LEA	*OSLA*	*NAFE*	*POOLS*	*OSLA*	*NAFE*	*POOLS*
Barking	1·4210	2·3837	1·5216	1·6845	2·2553	1·5798
Barnet	6·7172	5·9062	7·1637	7·2191	5·6217	7·4339
Bexley	3·8971	4·2116	3·1860	4·5575	4·4537	3·1082
Brent	6·2415	6·7094	6·8363	6·8605	7·660	7·2494
Bromley	5·5222	4·6319	5·9212	6·0047	5·0973	5·8800
Croydon	4·8889	6·4768	6·4430	5·7831	6·4775	6·3971
Ealing	5·2962	7·3855	6·5584	6·0115	7·1603	6·8490
Enfield	4·9578	5·2520	5·2143	5·4973	5·6142	5·4249
Haringey	4·0245	5·7764	5·3178	4·4135	5·8670	5·5284
Harrow	4·6889	4·2608	5·2305	5·4283	3·9612	5·2552
Havering	3·5613	4·4512	3·4866	4·3357	4·3753	3·1977
Hillingdon	3·8055	4·0883	4·1897	4·3024	4·1549	4·1240
Hounslow	3·8350	3·9257	3·7846	4·2360	4·2482	3·8106
Kingston	2·5499	2·2729	2·8971	2·7567	2·4036	3·0455
Merton	2·7769	3·0265	2·8180	2·9728	3·1292	2·8872
Newham	3·3723	5·2619	4·1609	3·6348	6·0091	3·9277
Redbridge	4·1971	3·9960	4·2675	4·8762	4·0160	4·1001
Richmond	·5181	4·6504	3·4863	·5480	4·9176	3·5337
Sutton	2·8939	3·3290	2·7217	3·2122	3·1006	2·7527
Waltham Forest	3·6076	4·8795	3·7989	4·0335	4·42770	3·6877
ILEA	30·1963	46·2986	49·7162	32·0359	49·7585	50·9260
Birmingham	14·6681	16·3064	18·4695	17·6544	17·9318	18·8193
Coventry	4·7315	6·4711	6·9196	5·5654	6·9683	7·0017
Dudley	2·7909	8·0633	5·2054	3·1096	7·5264	5·1411
Sandwell	3·8869	5·5749	4·0927	4·4171	5·7844	4·1051
Solihull	3·1631	4·9295	4·2417	3·8077	5·1548	4·5599
Walsall	3·9950	4·7055	4·8804	4·6714	5·0086	4·8266
Wolverhampton	3·5822	5·3754	5·3822	3·9588	5·9377	5·5341
Knowsley	1·9714	3·8633	2·5138	2·1919	3·9683	2·2904
Liverpool	7·5045	9·2188	9·2911	8·6696	9·5059	9·0451
St. Helens	2·9447	3·8589	3·6334	3·4100	4·2772	3·6680
Sefton	4·8146	5·9304	7·0388	5·5496	6·5124	7·3637
Wirral	5·5689	7·1185	7·7825	6·6350	7·4905	7·9891
Bolton	3·5818	5·7068	6·1728	4·3318	5·8240	6·2502
Bury	2·9412	3·4973	3·7942	3·6108	3·9259	3·9357
Manchester	6·6694	7·7488	8·8854	7·6048	8·3378	8·9971
Oldham	2·5852	4·1344	3·8347	3·1632	4·3047	4·0035
Rochdale	3·0893	3·5733	3·6982	3·5865	3·5287	3·7218
Salford	3·2843	3·6904	3·5454	4·0918	3·7147	3·4666
Stockport	4·8964	6·0530	7·2915	5·7565	6·4273	7·5516
Tameside	2·7620	4·4418	3·4246	3·0058	4·7125	3·3961
Trafford	4·2633	5·2484	5·3404	4·7191	5·4605	5·7047
Wigan	2·9304	7·0770	5·4957	3·6194	7·4044	5·6563
Barnsley	2·4460	4·0468	3·3991	3·1163	4·3849	3·3687
Doncaster	4·3146	5·1801	5·5979	4·8023	4·8794	5·9407
Rotherham	3·3843	4·9609	4·4411	3·9741	5·3075	4·5306
Sheffield	7·3981	10·6159	11·8852	8·2633	11·8952	12·2711
Bradford	7·4602	6·8017	8·7233	8·7910	8·1134	8·7442
Calderdale	2·9714	3·3870	3·7624	3·4723	3·6888	3·8047
Kirklees	5·9654	7·6264	7·6808	7·1706	8·4657	7·8588
Leeds	10·1982	11·2013	13·1661	11·5771	11·9987	13·7239
Wakefield	2·7944	6·3332	5·0287	3·1951	6·8730	5·1835

Table 1
1986-87 and 1987-88 OSLA and NAFE GREs and the FE Pools, in £ million

		1986-87			*1987-88*	
LEA	*OSLA*	*NAFE*	*POOLS*	*OSLA*	*NAFE*	*POOLS*
Gateshead	2·3224	3·2500	3·5420	2·6262	3·2743	3·6110
Newcastle	3·4705	3·8327	6·1526	4·1759	3·8396	6·4799
North Tyne	2·7899	3·4673	4·1285	3·3394	3·8989	4·1377
South Tyne	1·6734	4·3732	3·3209	1·8745	3·9502	3·3607
Sunderland	3·5196	4·6668	5·8453	3·9955	5·2862	6·1069
Isle of Scilly	0·0245	0·0704	0·0667	0·0338	0·0634	0·0610
Avon	12·7125	15·3536	16·4283	14·1458	16·2210	16·8475
Bedfordshire	8·6903	8·8109	10·2428	9·6129	9·2168	10·3091
Berkshire	12·1247	14·8914	15·3845	13·7402	16·4875	15·5982
Buckinghamshire	11·5343	11·9879	12·7879	13·1905	13·0053	13·4367
Cambridge	8·3047	12·3585	10·2390	9·7843	13·1989	10·8203
Cheshire	16·0909	21·3202	21·1801	18·8959	23·9672	23·0431
Cleveland	9·1466	9·6033	11·6532	10·6006	10·6944	11·6598
Cornwall	6·7119	8·4693	6·6954	7·7672	9·2234	7·2745
Cumbria	6·7763	9·1688	7·9667	7·9154	9·7176	7·9488
Derbyshire	10·6946	18·9447	16·5113	12·2068	22·3227	17·1278
Devon	9·9219	21·5102	15·8355	11·0669	23·2751	15·6448
Dorset	7·4301	10·2165	9·7829	7·8925	11·8849	10·0172
Durham	7·0914	9·2538	10·4972	7·9938	10·0294	10·7041
East Sussex	9·6728	10·8399	10·9003	11·0594	11·0740	11·5481
Essex	22·8475	26·2580	25·9320	25·3278	27·7856	25·6711
Gloucestershire	7·7987	9·3300	9·6097	8·5251	10·5146	10·1352
Hampshire	19·4850	35·9221	27·0052	21·8919	37·9027	27·4604
Hereford and Worcester	9·2644	13·4535	11·9953	11·1941	14·6439	12·1071
Hertfordshire	18·6229	19·4794	22·5806	20·4377	20·6686	25·0542
Humberside	12·1301	14·3289	16·0721	13·7406	15·4554	16·0071
Isle of Wight	1·7237	2·4630	1·8169	1·9216	2·2492	1·7714
Kent	23·8374	28·9307	24·8749	27·1837	29·7682	25·5046
Lancashire	14·1041	33·9718	27·2558	15·8680	36·8203	28·4850
Leicester	16·0377	14·7526	16·9372	18·1764	16·8878	17·4708
Lincolnshire	7·2592	11·6851	9·4760	8·4486	12·9926	9·8644
Norfolk	8·2102	11·9843	9·4893	9·0588	13·1012	9·7804
North Yorkshire	11·2841	15·2090	13·5418	13·2148	16·7412	14·6450
Northants	7·6992	10·3348	9·1468	8·9448	10·2897	9·4616
Northumberland	4·6883	4·2472	5·7162	5·4850	4·4681	5·8428
Nottinghamshire	12·2744	18·8825	16·8375	14·2670	20·6049	17·4208
Oxfordshire	8·1646	10·6817	10·3380	8·7612	12·0597	10·9262
Shropshire	5·9921	8·3594	6·9795	6·9801	8·8079	7·1872
Somerset	3·8283	9·7017	7·1279	4·3517	10·7239	7·2232
Staffordshire	13·8471	19·7678	18·9114	16·2486	21·3089	19·3024
Suffolk	8·1406	9·3154	9·2070	9·5148	10·0508	9·4306
Surrey	19·8491	18·7693	22·1494	22·3371	19·3123	22·7233
Warwickshire	6·9218	11·7521	9·3600	8·2308	12·5251	10·0037
West Sussex	11·4628	10·9251	11·8375	13·1692	11·9078	12·0534
Wiltshire	5·7765	12·0900	8·8426	6·3063	13·4514	9·0406
Total	684·5000	915·8996	885·5412	779·3997	981·7002	909·4627

Local authority expenditure derived from forms RO1

		1986-87			*1987-88*	
	Secondary Education £	*Polytechnics* £	*Other maintained FE Establishments* £	*Secondary Education* £	*Polytechnics* £	*Other maintained FE Establishments* £
Barking	14,054,518	17,737,663	5,009,138	15,580,576	17,435,865	4,704,240
Barnet	24,751,342	24,628,018	5,995,300	25,515,330	23,796,750	7,433,242
Bexley	21,621,435	0	4,174,570	22,421,041	0	4,089,369
Brent	28,353,337	0	9,872,252	31,478,748	0	10,209,844
Bromley	25,202,486	0	6,375,384	27,601,471	0	6,693,668
Croydon	28,850,687	0	7,915,221	31,832,888	0	8,648,216
Ealing	21,481,862	0	13,165,166	23,003,070	0	14,045,026
Enfield	23,638,117	0	5,949,893	24,932,086	0	6,200,058
Haringey	23,767,766	0	7,546,015	24,173,330	0	8,400,912
Harrow	17,079,468	0	6,953,490	16,104,444	0	10,753,000
Havering	25,817,484	0	4,415,561	27,262,507	0	4,738,624
Hillingdon	21,445,499	0	2,128,605	23,170,160	0	2,564,917
Hounslow	18,186,828	0	4,574,193	18,965,636	0	4,755,165
Kingston-upon-Thames	11,741,849	16,455,818	4,983,001	12,750,493	17,594,935	5,503,178
Merton	15,041,739	0	3,529,466	16,337,819	0	4,394,640
Newham	26,045,956	0	9,911,726	25,101,795	0	8,783,287
Redbridge	21,664,444	0	1,944,135	22,389,430	0	1,923,063
Richmond-upon-Thames	8,260,492	0	5,511,414	8,150,925	0	6,327,100
Sutton	13,516,457	0	2,633,580	13,787,484	0	3,171,719

		1986-87			1987-88	
	Secondary Education £	*Polytechnics* £	*Other maintained FE Establishments* £	*Secondary Education* £	*Polytechnics* £	*Other maintained FE Establishments* £
Waltham Forest	26,781,188	0	5,136,245	30,343,067	0	6,276,524
Birmingham	94,822,941	16,740,741	21,554,879	100,039,459	18,089,726	22,996,178
Coventry	31,335,917	15,587,491	10,807,057	32,770,584	16,747,980	10,288,831
Dudley	25,737,138	0	9,826,924	27,736,367	0	10,838,246
Sandwell	31,430,396	0	11,160,133	33,405,606	0	12,207,385
Solihull	20,096,842	0	4,584,769	20,782,066	0	5,689,111
Walsall	29,836,611	0	5,958,204	31,471,938	0	5,900,718
Wolverhampton	26,649,914	14,935,697	8,049,002	28,331,489	15,633,531	8,382,372
Knowsley	19,699,913	0	3,280,121	21,623,664	0	3,315,952
Liverpool	50,642,663	21,958,007	16,874,860	54,963,367	22,190,092	18,357,088
St. Helens	20,779,211	0	6,335,486	21,662,168	0	6,838,822
Sefton	27,016,074	0	5,801,317	28,615,998	0	6,362,420
Wirral	31,488,630	0	9,172,436	34,068,961	0	10,601,473
Bolton	24,575,108	0	9,965,243	26,249,544	0	11,435,542
Bury	16,518,223	0	2,518,244	17,382,959	0	4,480,469
Manchester	46,762,101	31,418,997	22,818,665	45,178,393	32,304,627	21,222,708
Oldham	20,312,788	0	3,988,124	21,198,256	0	4,966,864
Rochdale	24,180,643	0	3,893,796	26,158,949	0	3,595,573
Salford	22,682,622	0	8,395,577	24,430,856	0	9,474,718
Stockport	25,730,352	0	6,362,472	28,655,243	0	7,404,429
Tameside	20,796,166	0	4,627,880	22,389,356	0	4,836,309
Trafford	20,298,289	0	5,447,215	21,985,719	0	6,012,683
Wigan	34,780,886	0	11,536,011	37,039,195	0	12,461,861
Barnsley	23,355,839	0	3,563,201	23,603,194	0	3,849,655
Doncaster	30,583,327	0	7,474,486	32,636,292	0	7,795,320
Rotherham	25,337,218	0	5,598,074	26,979,323	0	7,133,170
Sheffield	49,720,884	22,327,827	13,620,891	52,234,343	22,354,943	13,665,601
Bradford	56,389,876	0	16,626,819	61,568,887	0	18,055,605
Calderdale	19,963,017	0	3,171,015	20,385,255	0	3,165,053
Kirklees	38,029,100	14,300,567	10,286,810	40,783,819	15,167,203	11,026,788
Leeds	74,060,184	16,484,363	13,934,478	79,230,701	17,636,128	14,684,701
Wakefield	31,182,719	0	10,499,751	33,046,106	0	11,316,079
Gateshead	18,726,809	0	3,682,485	19,865,048	0	4,123,808
Newcastle upon Tyne	27,543,317	19,385,648	8,145,143	29,299,534	21,070,833	7,845,403
North Tyneside	22,966,186	0	2,772,509	24,750,072	0	2,991,303
South Tyneside	14,699,240	0	5,788,449	15,014,472	0	6,603,349

		1986-87			1987-88	
	Secondary education £	*Polytechnics* £	*Other maintained FE establishments* £	*Secondary education* £	*Polytechnics* £	*Other maintained FE establishments* £
Sunderland	28,910,534	11,368,509	5,362,780	30,680,917	12,034,582	5,612,805
Isles of Scilly	339,194	0	0	339,374	0	0
ILEA	263,550,157	85,810,985	122,713,747	274,271,804	92,095,400	123,827,759
Avon	78,976,793	17,228,655	23,729,305	82,422,127	18,449,698	24,678,676
Bedfordshire	57,919,533	0	16,388,943	63,392,671	0	19,592,484
Berkshire	63,516,809	0	24,850,660	68,221,071	0	26,921,589
Buckinghamshire	54,989,146	0	14,926,890	59,805,927	0	16,789,043
Cambridgeshire	55,071,889	0	19,288,705	59,289,498	0	21,242,501
Cheshire	92,211,665	0	27,055,026	97,931,033	0	28,631,229
Cleveland	60,295,116	11,411,208	13,693,042	63,974,681	12,959,355	17,047,000
Cornwall	39,249,979	0	10,815,248	43,204,459	0	11,435,517
Cumbria	48,476,614	0	12,523,013	52,528,084	0	12,973,434
Derbyshire	89,548,946	0	19,799,691	97,216,591	0	21,910,747
Devon	78,870,103	13,948,748	26,539,126	84,764,306	15,024,025	29,296,523
Dorset	49,551,320	0	19,365,803	52,723,808	0	20,231,823
Durham	54,043,391	0	13,834,774	57,906,897	0	14,789,948
East Sussex	47,923,466	16,256,938	12,545,484	51,278,270	16,782,672	13,357,708
Essex	144,454,040	0	36,578,456	156,024,923	0	39,209,411
Gloucestershire	45,519,110	0	14,889,432	48,348,511	0	16,673,461
Hampshire	119,527,811	16,608,327	46,184,422	130,863,006	17,946,655	50,061,746
Hereford and Worcester	63,512,232	0	20,631,671	68,917,232	0	22,679,847
Hertfordshire	93,683,862	13,158,289	30,545,977	97,717,214	17,181,112	31,546,645
Humberside	92,936,999	0	27,818,100	97,904,378	0	30,245,535
Isle of Wight	12,639,121	0	2,696,727	13,949,615	0	2,960,494
Kent	133,640,920	0	27,372,100	141,954,852	0	29,596,292
Lancashire	126,151,218	13,589,904	42,153,105	137,268,238	14,444,995	42,776,664
Leicestershire	92,938,882	18,141,357	20,438,492	97,263,400	19,196,252	22,394,890
Lincolnshire	52,485,781	0	10,726,632	54,801,391	0	11,433,412
Norfolk	58,036,611	0	14,798,698	62,566,535	0	16,125,738
North Yorkshire	62,331,868	0	11,048,666	65,777,429	0	14,028,961

	1986-87			1987-88		
	Secondary education £	*Polytechnics* £	*Other maintained FE establishments* £	*Secondary education* £	*Polytechnics* £	*Other maintained FE establishments* £
Northamptonshire	59,642,016	0	15,532,719	63,205,529	0	17,406,937
Northumberland	36,010,583	0	3,576,802	39,309,452	0	4,341,694
Nottinghamshire	101,585,516	20,689,701	22,452,042	108,102,884	23,168,204	24,852,158
Oxfordshire	49,043,978	12,227,878	11,953,540	52,360,679	12,538,322	14,289,167
Salop	40,578,656	0	9,079,307	43,796,429	0	9,600,907
Somerset	38,700,788	0	13,738,327	41,837,745	0	15,486,287
Staffordshire	104,690,337	14,256,528	23,201,060	110,827,224	15,240,624	24,982,875
Suffolk	59,171,049	0	12,188,395	64,064,406	0	13,781,489
Surrey	67,508,936	0	21,415,621	73,461,788	0	23,016,997
Warwickshire	37,425,447	0	13,734,713	40,671,657	0	15,019,664
West Sussex	52,558,783	0	10,950,249	56,549,273	0	13,545,159
Wiltshire	48,443,812	0	16,371,171	51,682,518	0	18,943,196
Total	4,472,697,109	496,657,864	1,279,355,542	4,765,527,509	527,084,514	1,382,881,791

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Legal Aid (Northern Ireland)

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Attorney-General what is the present waiting period for appeals against refusals of applications for legal aid in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the operations of the legal aid service in Northern Ireland.

The Attorney-General: The present average waiting period for appeals against refusals for civil legal aid in Northern Ireland is four months.

The Law Society of Northern Ireland produces an annual report on the operation of both civil and criminal legal aid which incorporates a report by the Lord Chancellor's advisory committee on legal aid in Northern Ireland. The report for 1987-88 was laid before Parliament on 20 October 1989.

Taken Over Cases

Mr. Allen: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list those cases taken over by any Government officer other than the Director of Public Prosecutions since 1980 and the reason for the takeover in each case.

The Attorney-General: The power to take over the conduct of criminal proceedings contained in section 6(2) of the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985 extends only to the Director of Public Prosecutions but that power may be exercised by a Crown prosecutor acting under his direction. Prior to the implementation of the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985 the corresponding legislation was the Prosecution of Offences Act 1979 which conferred a similar power on the Director of Public Prosecutions. That power was exercisable by an assistant Director of Public Prosecutions. A similar power is conferred on the director of the Serious Fraud Office by section 1(5)*(b)* of the Criminal Justice Act 1987 but has not been exercised. On the establishment of the Serious Fraud Office the conduct of a number of current cases passed by agreement from the Crown prosecution service to the Serious Fraud Office. I shall write to the hon. Member listing those cases. It is to be noted that neither the Director of Public Prosecutions nor the director of the Serious Fraud Office is correctly described as a Government officer.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Spirit Measures

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what arrangements will apply in future in Great Britain for measuring spirits for consumption on licensed premises; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Having considered the responses to my Department's consultation paper, I have concluded that the present range of imperial quantities of $\frac{1}{6}$, $\frac{1}{5}$ and $\frac{1}{4}$ gill for serving whisky, gin, rum and vodka should be replaced by a single round metric quantity of 25ml.

A single metric measure throughout Great Britain would have the advantage of enabling consumers to compare prices and monitor their alcohol consumption more easily. It would also allow instrument manufacturers to make economies of scale. Licensees should find the new quantity more convenient since it is an exact fraction of the bottle.

I therefore intend to lay in draft an order which would permit the four major spirits to be served in this new metric quantity from the middle of next year and would prohibit the use of the imperial quantities for this purpose from 1 January 1995.

British Aerospace

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish the minute of the meeting of 4 July with British Aerospace at which tax benefits were discussed.

Mr. Ridley: The agreed way of recording this meeting was an exchange of letters between the advisers of British Aerospace and the Inland Revenue; copies of these letters dated 8 July have already been sent to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will place in the Library correspondence between his predecessor and British Aerospace on 6, 12 July and 13 July.

Mr. Ridley: I have already done so, together with other letters between my predecessor and the British Aerospace chairman dated 14 July 1988 relating to the terms and conditions of the sale of Her Majesty's Government's shareholding in Rover Group to British Aerospace.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if the raising of the ring fence for capital losses includes capital gains in property companies acquired by British Aerospace.

Mr. Ridley: Following the lifting of the contractual ring fence on capital losses which had been a part of the March 1988 conditional agreement for the sale of Rover, British Aerospace has the right to use Rover Group capital losses to set against gains to the same extent and subject to the same statutory conditions as any other group in equivalent circumstances.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information was provided to the European Commission of the tax benefits for British Aerospace of the Rover deal.

Mr. Ridley: The Commission was informed that the benefit of using Rover Group's carried forward pre-acquisition trading tax losses was effectively limited to £500 million by the conditional and the final agreement with BAe: that the March 1988 conditional agreement ring fenced the capital losses and disclaimed capital allowances so they could only be utilised by Rover Group; and that as part of the final agreement these would be unringfenced so that BAe would have the same freedom as that available under tax law to any other group. The Commission was made aware of the difficulty of estimating the value of restoring that freedom.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry who paid the fees for *(a)* Rover's and *(b)* British Aerospace's advisers as part of the final contract with British Aerospace.

Mr. Ridley: As I explained in my statement of 30 November the Government paid Rover Group £1·5 million for its privatisation costs. BAe paid its own advisers' fees.

Steel Industry

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) on what date he was informed that a plate finishing mill was being stored at British Steel, Lackenby; whether he was consulted by British Steel before the company issued a denial of any knowledge of such a plant; whether he was consulted by British Steel before the company confirmed that a plate mill had been stored in Lackenby for several months; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he regards British Steel plc's admission that it has been supportive of the Davy Corporation's acquisition of a second-hand Japanese plate finishing mill as likely to affect guarantees given by his Department relating to the future of the Scottish steel industry;

(3) whether the Government would intervene to stop British Steel plc going ahead with any closure proposals which relate to the Scottish plants covered by the guarantees issued by his Department on 3 December 1987.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 12 December 1989]:* The acquisition and disposition of items of plant are matters for British Steel. Ministers have not been, and do not expect to be, informed or consulted by the company on such matters. There are no current Government guarantees in relation to the future of any of British Steel's works, the last such guarantee having expired at the end of August 1988.

Bankruptcies

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proportion of assets in bankruptcy in the last available year were absorbed by the cost of the proceedings as opposed to distribution among creditors.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 12 December 1989]:* The last year for which the information was maintained in the form requested was 1984. In that year out of every £1 of net assets realised in bankruptcy cases where the official receiver was trustee 64·5p was spent on administration expenses, 15p was paid to the preferential creditors and 20·5p was distributed among the unsecured creditors. The comparative figures for cases where a non-official trustee was appointed were 52·9p, 17·9p and 29·9p. Such information for the years after 1984 could not be obtained other than at disproportionate cost.

Since the Insolvency Act 1986 came into force on 29 December 1986 official receivers have been able to ensure that nearly all bankruptcies with sufficient assets to produce a distribution to creditors are administered by private sector insolvency practitioners. Those bankruptcies which remain to be administered by the official receiver as trustee are therefore unlikely to produce such a distribution, any assets realised in such cases being absorbed in payment of the costs of the proceedings.

Cross-Media Ownership

Dr. Woodcock: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what is the outcome of the investigation by the Office of Fair Trading into cross-media ownership; what action he intends to take; and if he will make a statement.

(2) when the Director General for Fair Trading is going to announce the conclusion of his investigations into cross-media ownership.

Mr. Ridley *[pursuant to the reply, 15 November 1989, c. 281-82]:* How media companies promote their interests in media services and products raises questions of standards of behaviour which go wider than those which can be addressed by the Director General of Fair Trading using competition legislation. I have therefore agreed with my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary that there should be an independent inquiry, to be undertaken by John Sadler CBE, which will start work as soon as possible. In view of this the DGFT has decided not to pursue his investigations.

The terms of reference are as follows:

1. To consider to what extent it is proper for media companies to promote their own, or any associate's interests in the provision of media services or products.
2. Where such behaviour is found to be improper and taking into account the effect on the relevant markets to consider what remedies might be appropriate.
3. The provisions of the Broadcasting Bill 1989 are being considered by Parliament and are outside these terms of reference.
4. To report with any recommendations, to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

ENVIRONMENT

Rainfall

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has formed of the rainfall levels required in England and Wales during the coming winter if drought conditions next summer are to be avoided.

Mr. Howard: Recent information suggests that average rainfall over the next five months would restore water resources to near-normal levels for the late spring in most areas of England and Wales. However, the National Rivers Authority estimates that the amount of rainfall required in parts of Yorkshire, the south-east and East Anglia might have to be as much as 50, 40 and 10 per cent. above average respectively. Where necessary, water undertakers are considering contingency measures.

Drinking Water

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many water supplies in the north-east contain aluminium in excess of the terms of the European drinking water directive.

Mr. Howard: Eighteen supply zones in the north-east have been notified to the Commission as being subject to a derogation under article 9(1)*(a)* of the EC drinking water directive in respect of the aluminium standard and hence comply with its requirements. We expect to notify the Commission shortly of a derogation for one further supply zone.

Improvement works are planned to treatment works to remedy failures of the aluminium standard in a further 24 supply zones. Improvements are also being carried out to the distribution system to remove residual aluminium deposits.

Contracts

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many contracts over £92,500 have been let by his Department in the 1988-89 financial year and the current financial year to date; and how many of these were *(a)* automatically renewed and *(b)* open to competition by advertisement throughout the European Community.

Mr. Chris Patten: My Department includes the Property Services Agency and the Crown Suppliers. In 1988, a total of 175 contracts were let which were covered by the European Communities (EC) supplies directive, for which the current threshold is £92,000. Of these, 128 were awarded following advertisement in the EC official journal and 47 were considered to be exempt from advertising and may have been awarded to the previous supplier. For 1989 no comprehensive figures are yet available.

Accountancy Firms

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many outside accountancy firms are employed by his Department; whether such employment is subject to any guidelines; and whether he takes steps before employing an accountancy firm to discover whether that firm has been censured by Department of Trade and Industry inspectors in their inquiries under the Companies Act.

Mr. Chris Patten: The latest readily available information covers 1988-89 when a total of seven accountancy firms were engaged by my Department. Accountancy firms are invited to tender for the provision of advisory services to Departments on the basis of their suitability to provide the relevant advice. In making such appointments consultations are carried out as necessary, and where appropriate in the light of advice given by Treasury on consultancy appointments.

National Rivers Authority

Mr. Ray Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in setting up salaries and terms of negotiating machinery for manual, white collar and senior staff in the nine months since the creation of the National Rivers Authority.

Mr. Howard: The National Rivers Authority's arrangements for pay negotiation with its employees are entirely a matter for the management of the authority, as an independent body.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many times the chairman of the National Rivers Authority has met the recognised trade unions since the National Rivers Authority came into formal existence; and what information he has on the chairman's plans for any future meetings with the trade unions.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 12 December 1989]:* Negotiations with staff—including dealings with trade unions—are a matter for the management of the National Rivers Authority, as an independent body.

Social Services

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the expenditure per capita of population on social services in each shire county in England and Wales for the last financial year for which figures are available.

Mr. Chope: The information for English counties is as follows.

Expenditure[1] on social services per capita—1988-89

	£
Avon	60
Bedfordshire	56
Berkshire	55
Buckinghamshire	52
Cambridgeshire	55
Cheshire	58
Cleveland	69
Cornwall	49
Cumbria	55
Derbyshire	72
Devon	49
Dorset	42
Durham	51
East Sussex	56
Essex	50
Gloucestershire	45
Hampshire	42
Hereford and Worcester	44
Hertfordshire	50
Humberside	65
Isle of Wight	52
Kent	48
Lancashire	67

	£
Leicestershire	56
Lincolnshire	46
Norfolk	46
Northamptonshire	58
Northumberland	57
North Yorkshire	45
Nottinghamshire	69
Oxfordshire	50
Shropshire	45
Somerset	51
Staffordshire	45
Suffolk	42
Surrey	39
Warwickshire	51
West Sussex	44
Wiltshire	49

[1] Net current expenditure.

The information relating to Welsh counties is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Nature Conservancy Council

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those members of the Nature Conservancy Council or members of its advisory committees whose periods of office expire or are to be reviewed at the end of the present financial year.

Mr. Trippier: The members of the Nature Conservancy Council, or its advisory committees, whose periods of office expire on 31 March 1990 are as follows:

Council

Sir William Wilkinson
Sir John Burnett
Professor J. A. Allen
Lord Blakenham
Miss A. M. Lees
Mr. J. Teacher
Mr. A. R. Trotter

Advisory Committee for England

Dr. P. H. Banham
Mr. J. B. Elkington
Professor B. M. Green
Miss A. M. Lees
Professor T. O'Riordan
Mr. A. T. Swindell
Mr. J. Teacher
Dr. M. B. Usher
Mr. W. J. Wilder

Advisory Committee for Scotland

Mr. J. M. S. Arnott
Mr. J. C. Compton
Professor P. S. Corbet
Mr. A. D. M. Farquharson
M. J. L. Goodfellow
Professor W. Ritchie
Mr. J. H. Scott
Miss V. M. Thom
Mr. A. R. Trotter

Advisory Committee for Wales

Mrs. E. M. Colwyn Foulkes
Mr. J. M. Harrop
Professor G. R. Sagar

Advisory Committee on Science (ACOS)

Professor J. A. Allen
Dr. P. H. Banham
Dr. J. P. Dempster
Dr. C. J. O. Harrison

Advisory Committee on Birds (ACB)

Dr. C. J. O. Harrison
Mr. J. M. Harrop
Professor G. V. T. Matthews
Mr. J. Teacher
Miss V. M. Thom

European Environment Agency

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many staff will be employed by the European Environment Agency; and how many will be *(a)* seconded staff and *(b)* new recruits.

Mr. Trippier: About 20 professional staff, some of whom will be transferred from the Commission, together with a limited number of support staff will be employed by the European Environment Agency. The precise total numbers, secondments and new recruits have yet to be determined.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the cost of establishing and running the European Environment Agency will be additional spending by the European Commission.

Mr. Trippier: The cost of establishing and running the European Environment Agency in its first year is estimated at 5·5 million ecu, equivalent to about £3·8 million. It is likely that part of this expenditure will be met through transfer of expenditure on existing Community programmes.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the European Environment Agency will have powers to obtain information from companies and individuals.

Mr. Trippier: The European Environment Agency will not have powers to require companies and individuals to provide information.

Homelessness

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the number of homeless people in London currently sleeping rough; and what is his estimate for each year since 1979.

Mr. Chope: There are no regular and reliable counts or estimates. The most recent study undertaken for the Salvation Army found 753 people sleeping rough on the streets of 17 London boroughs on one night in April this year. We have no other reliable estimate.

Woolworth Products

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make representations to the management of F. W. Woolworth plc in respect of their product lines Christmas Snow and Silly String, in view of their ozone-depleting properties; if he will take steps to ban the use of ozone-depleting chemicals in non-essential products; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I understand that it is the intention of the British aerosol industry that by the end of this year at least 90 per cent. of their products will be CFC free. It is the policy of the Government to phase out all CFC consumption by the end of the century.

Sheltered Housing

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish his Department's research on very sheltered housing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: With the expected increase of three quarters of a million people over the age of 75 in the next 20 years I am today publishing this report which shows the contribution that can be made by very sheltered housing schemes to the care of frail elderly people in the community.

The report based on research by my Department showed that the vast majority of elderly people liked living in very sheltered schemes which are an enhanced form of sheltered housing with extra wardens, provision of meals and help for residents with domestic and care tasks, and which are currently provided by about one in three local authorities and one in four housing associations.

Caring for an elderly person in very sheltered housing was less expensive than a place in a local authority old people's home and much less expensive than equivalent care in hospital. Very sheltered housing schemes were, however, more costly than comparable care provided in an elderly person's own home and about one in four of those interviewed would have preferred this cheaper option. The schemes also varied considerably in the frailty of the people they catered for, some schemes containing a high proportion of relatively fit elderly people.

The report recommends that future schemes adopt a slightly more flexible approach to caring for residents by making use of visiting care support services provided by social services departments and district health authorities rather than relying entirely on permanent in-house staff. It also suggests that the preferred model for development is for self-contained rather than shared accommodation, with additional communal facilities and with meals available.

Overall, the report concludes that, whilst very sheltered housing can be an attractive alternative to hospital and residential care for most elderly people, it is an expensive resource which should be provided only after careful appraisal of all the factors involved including the wishes of elderly people, stress on carers, and costs. It should also be provided only where there is an adequate level of care and consultation with all the relevant agencies in assessing nominations for places. However, enabling frail elderly people to remain at home must continue to be the first option for those who need and want it.

The Government's White Paper on care in the community, published last month, recognises that suitable housing is an important component of community care, and that social services authorities will need to work closely with providers of housing of all types in developing plans for a full and flexible range of accommodation. Very sheltered housing will form part of the spectrum of care provision which local authorities will be able to call on as they plan services in their areas to cater for a variety of individual needs.

Community Charge

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library a copy of the guidance he has given to local authorities relating to exemptions from the community charge.

Mr. Chope: Yes. Arrangements have been put in hand to do so. A copy of practice note No. 19 "Exemptions from the Personal Community Charge (2)" has already been placed in the Library.

Sulphur Dioxide Emissions

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to achieve reductions in United Kingdom levels of emissions of sulphur dioxide.

Mr. Trippier: My Department issued a consultation paper on 31 August this year explaining in detail our proposals for implementing the large combustion plants directive. Such plants are responsible for 85 per cent. of United Kingdom emissions of sulphur dioxide. A copy of the paper is in the Library of the House.

Correspondence

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the letter written to the hon. Member for Carmarthen on 5 December by the Minister for the Environment and Countryside, the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier).

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 13 December 1989]:* The text of the letter is as follows:

"I promised to write to you in response to the series of questions you tabled recently on aspects of hazardous waste management. It may be helpful if I respond to them topic by topic.

There are currently four incinerators licensed to deal commercially with special wastes in Britain. I do not, however, have detailed information on the number of large chemical incinerators in the European Community or elsewhere which treat special wastes. I am unable either to provide the information you seek on the design of their furnace door.

Regarding incineration at sea, the disposal of wastes from the UK is licensed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. My Department does not keep records of the amount of special wastes incinerated in the North Sea or in other European waters.

Information on the import of wastes for incineration has been held by my Department only since October 1988 when the relevant provisions of the Transfrontier Shipment of Hazardous Waste Regulations came into force. Since then some 8,700 tonnes of imported special waste has been dealt with at the four commercially available incinerators.

Turning to your questions concerning the incinerator operated by ReChem International Ltd. at Ponteg, Pontypool, information on the amount of waste dealt with is not held by my Department. That is a matter for the local waste disposal authority, Torfaen borough council.

The results of the PCB sampling in soils and herbage around the plant undertaken by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution are as follows (all figures in microgrames per kilogram):

	mg/kg
PCBs in herbage:	
Range	3·0–19·7
Mean	8·4
Median	6·6
PCBs in soil:	
Range	9·0–19·0
Mean	13·5
Median	14·8

I understand that the Inspectorate has also taken samples of soil and herbage for Dioxin analysis. These samples are currently being analysed and I will write again as soon as the results are available.

The latest figures (August 1989) indicate levels of PCB in the flue gas of the incinerator to be considerably less than 0·01 milligrams per cubic metre. The latest figures for Dioxins and Furans are as follows (all in nanograms per cubic metre):

	Nanograms per cu. m.
2,3,7,8-tetrachlorodibenzofuran	0·05
Tetrachlorodibenzofurans (total)	0·12
2,3,7,8-tetrachlorodibenzodioxin	<0·025
Tetrachlorodibenzodioxins (total)	<0·025
Pentachlorodibenzofurans (total)	<0·025
Pentachlorodibenzodioxins (total)	<0·025
Hexachlorodibenzofurans (total)	<0·025
Hexachlorodibenzodioxins (total)	<0·025
Heptachlorodibenzofurans (total)	<0·05
Heptachlorodibenzodioxins (total)	0·05
Octachlorodibenzofuran	<0·025
Octachlorodibenzodioxin	0·05

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution inform me that the emission figures for both PCBs and Dioxins/Furans compare very favourably with those published for similar incinerators in Europe.

I am also informed by the Inspectorate that no equipment is currently available to give instantaneous readings of PCB or Dioxin in flue gas. However continuous sampling is undertaken and samples of flue gas are analysed on a routine basis for PCB and on a more random basis for Dioxin.

Regarding alternative methods to incineration of PCBs, a number of possible processes are under investigation. The most promising appear to be those involving exchange of the chlorine atom or microbiological systems. Neither is, however, likely to prove effective for high concentrations of PCBs for which high temperature incineration is likely to remain the only satisfactory form of disposal.

Figures with respect to the cumulative totals of PCBs manufactured over the last 30 years are not available in the form you asked for them. But from the start of commercial production in 1929 to 1980 some 1,055,000 tonnes of PCBs were produced worldwide, of which 66,800 tonnes were produced in the United Kingdom by Monsanto, Newport. Other major producing countries were the USA (648,000 tonnes), Japan (60,000 tonnes), Spain (25,000 tonnes) and Italy (24,000 tonnes). During 1980-84 only France, West Germany, Italy and Spain within the community continued to manufacture PCBs and after 1984 production continued only in France and Spain. My Department does not hold figures for PCB production after 1980.

My Department does not hold information on the amount of special waste treated by Leigh Environmental using their Sealosafe process, or its current state. That is a matter for the local waste disposal authority, Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council.

Information on the import of flyash through Swansea Docks is also not held centrally. That is a matter for the local waste disposal authority, Swansea District Council. I have no information on the analysis of this flyash for dioxins.'

I hope this is helpful."

Property Services Agency

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the competitiveness of Property Services Agency design costs.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 13 December 1989]:* Until the PSA has commercial accounting systems, any general estimates of the cost competitiveness of its services would be of doubtful value. In any event, with the introduction of competition it would not be appropriate to publish any estimated comparison between PSA's costs and competitors' fees as this would give competitors information which might harm the PSA's market position.

Exhaust Fumes

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which authorities have responsibility for checking the exhaust fumes from buses and other heavy vehicles what powers are available to them; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I have been asked to reply.

The annual tests for buses and heavy goods vehicles conducted by the Department's vehicle inspectorate include a visual check on smoke density. Over the past two years the inspectorate has increased substantially its programme of roadside checks on the condition of goods vehicles. This also includes a check on smoke emissions. Vehicles can be banned or owners required to rectify defects within a specified period.

In addition, the police are responsible for day-to-day enforcement of requirements set by the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations which include controls on vehicle emissions. They can require defects to be rectified within a specified period.

Radioactivity (Sellafield)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been *(a)* the average level and *(b)* the greatest reported level of worker exposure to radioactivity at the B-30 pond at Sellafield; and whether the worker exposure levels have ever exceeded legal limits.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have been asked to reply.

I am informed that average annual external doses to the most exposed group of B30 workers have reduced from 28·3 millisieverts in 1984 to 18·5 millisieverts in 1988. Following the introducton of the Ionising Radiation Regulations in 1986, internal doses have also been assessed. The addition of internal doses in 1988 had the effect of adding 2·5 millisieverts, to give a total average whole body dose of 21 millisieverts in that year.

I have asked the chairman of BNFL to write to the hon. Member on the question of average doses prior to 1984.

Since 1971, the annual statutory limit of 50 millisieverts external dose has been exceeded by two B30 personnel in 1978; one in 1980; and two in 1985. The highest dose received was an annual dose of 86·1 millisieverts in 1980.

War Veterans

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which local authorities in England and Wales allow a discretionary award for veterans disabled during the second world war or for their widows in the assessment of housing benefit.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have been asked to reply.

Local schemes for disregarding war widow's and war disablement pensions in excess of the statutory disregard are entirely at the discretion of the local authority.

The list has been compiled from the best information available to the Department and shows those local authorities that operate a local scheme of this kind. I regret that the information available is insufficiently detailed to restrict the answer only to those schemes aimed particularly at people receiving war pensions arising from the second world war.

Local Authorities in England and Wales operating a discretionary scheme for War Widow's and War Disablement Pensions

Adur
Amber Valley
Ashfield
Aylesbury Vale
Barking
Barnet
Basingstoke
Bexley
Birmingham
Blaby
Blackburn
Blackpool
Boston
Bournemouth
Bracknell
Bradford
Braintree
Breckland
Brent
Brentwood
Brighton
Bromley
Broxbourne
Broxtowe
Burnley
Bury
Calderdale
Cambridge
Camden
Canterbury
Cardiff
Carlisle
Castle Point
Ceredigion
Charnwood
Chelmsford
Cheltenham
Chester
Chesterfield
Chiltern
Chorley
Christchurch
Congleton
Corby
Coventry
Craven
Crawley
Crawley New Town
Crewe and Nantwich
Dacorum
Darlington
Dartford
Daventry
Delyn
Derby
Derbyshire Dales
Doncaster
Dover
Dudley
Durham
Dwyfor

Ealing
East Cambridgeshire
East Devon
East Dorset
East Hampshire
East Hertfordshire
East Staffordshire
Eastleigh
Ellesmere Port
Elmbridge
Enfield
Epsom and Ewell
Exeter

Fareham
Fenland
Forest of Dean

Gedling
Glanford
Gloucester
Gosport
Great Yarmouth
Guildford

Hackney
Hambleton
Hammersmith
Harborough
Haringey
Harlow
Harrow
Hart
Hartlepool
Havant
Havering
Hereford
Hertsmere
High Peak
Hillingdon
Hinckley and Bosworth
Horsham
Hounslow
Huntingdon
Islington
Kennet
Kingston-upon-Thames
Kingswood
Kirklees
Knowsley
Lambeth
Lancaster
Langbaurgh
Leeds
Leicester
Lewes
Lewisham
Lincoln
Lliw Valley
Luton
Macclesfield
Maidstone
Maldon
Medina
Meirionnydd
Mendip
Merton
Mid Bedfordshire
Middlesbrough
Milton Keynes
Mole Valley
Montgomery
Neath
New Forest
Newark
Newbury
Newham
Newport
North Bedfordshire
North Cornwall
North Dorset
North Hertfordshire
North Kesteven
North Shropshire
North Tyneside
North West Leicester
North Wiltshire
Northampton
Nottingham
Oadby and Wigston
Ogwr
Oldham

Penwith
Peterborough
Peterborough DC
Plymouth
Poole
Port Talbot
Portsmouth
Radnor
Redditch
Reigate and Banstead
Rhondda
Rhuddlan
Ribble Valley
Richmond upon Thames
Richmondshire
Rossendale
Rother
Rugby
Runnymede
Rushcliffe
Ryedale
Salford
Sandwell
Scarborough
Sedgefield
Sefton
Selby
Shepway
Slough
Solihull
South Bedfordshire
South Buckinghamshire
South Cambridgeshire
South Holland
South Lakeland
South Norfolk
South Northampton
South Ribble
South Staffordshire
South Tyneside
South Wight
Southampton
Southend on sea
Southwark
Spelthorne
St. Helens
Staffs. Moorlands
Stevenage
Stockton On Tees
Stratford On Avon
Stroud
Surrey Heath
Sutton
Swale
Swansea
Tameside
Tandridge
Tendring
Test Valley
Tewkesbury
Three Rivers
Thurrock
Tonbridge & Malling
Tower Hamlets
Tunbridge Wells
Vale of Glamorgan
Vale of White Horse
Vale Royal
Wakefield
Walsall
Waltham Forest
Wandsworth
Watford
Waverley
Wealden
Welwyn Hatfield
West Norfolk
West Somerset
West Wiltshire
Westminster
Weymouth & Portland
Wigan
Winchester
Windsor & Maidenhead
Wirral
Woking
Wokingham
Wolverhampton
Woodspring
Worthing
Wycombe
York

Total England and Wales—242

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

St. Helena

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many St. Helenians are at present working in the United Kingdom; and what is the nature of their work.

Mr. Sainsbury: There are 104 St. Helenians in Britain on work permits, who are employed in semi-skilled and unskilled jobs, mainly in the hotel and domestic service sectors. In addition, it is estimated that there are between 4,000 and 5,000 people of St. Helenian extraction currently in the United Kingdom, many of whom are second or third generation residents.

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the present number of unemployed on St. Helena; and what it was *(a)* one year ago and *(b)* five years ago.

Mr. Sainsbury: Seventy-one people are presently receiving unemployment benefit in St. Helena. In addition, 105 are working three days per week as part of a community scheme for the unemployed. In 1988 a total of 125 people were working in the latter category. No other figures are available.

NATO

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's current proposals for measures of information exchange at the conventional forces in Europe talks required each party to provide information on the types of each of the main categories of weapon equipment holdings.

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes. A copy of the proposals of 21 September is being placed in the Library of the House.

Vietnam

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Vietnamese Government concerning the political prisoners detained without trial in prison in Vietnam.

Mr Sainsbury: We have, with our partners in the European Community, raised the question of political prisoners with the Vietnamese authorities. The Twelve have also raised at the United Nations continuing reports of abuses of human rights in Vietnam, and have called on the Vietnamese to release, without delay, those prisoners detained without a fair trial.

Tibet

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when Government Ministers last met the Dalai Lama; and what plans they have to meet him to discuss the position in Tibet.

Mr. Maude: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave on 16 November to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside, (Mr. Parry), at column *498*.

West Bank and Gaza Strip

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy with regard to the establishment of a United Nations observer force in the West Bank and Gaza strip.

Mr. Waldegrave: A United Nations observer force in the Occupied Territories might well have a useful role to play if it were acceptable to the parties directly concerned.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Tibet

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what type and amount of aid the United Kingdom is currently providing to Tibet.

Mrs. Chalker: The United Kingdom is currently providing no aid to Tibet.

Cambodia

Mr. Mullins: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what changes Her Majesty's Government have made to their plans to send a representative to Phnom Penh in view of representations from the United States Government;

(2) what representations have been received from the United States Government regarding Her Majesty's Government's intention to send a delegation to Phnom Penh; and what has been Her Majesty's Government's response;

(3) when the recently announced diplomatic mission to Phnom Penh will take place.

Mrs. Chalker: The Government regularly exchange views with the Government of the United States. As indicated by my answer on 23 November to my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) two officials, one from the British embassy in Bangkok and the other from the Overseas Development Administration are currently in Cambodia. The dates of their visit are 8 to 17 December.

THE ARTS

Recording Britain Collection

Mr. Key: To ask the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received following the decision of the Victoria and Albert museum to call in and store *(a)* the Recording Britain collection of paintings commissioned in 1939 and *(b)* the 67 paintings from that collection on public display in Wiltshire; and what will be his response.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 11 December 1989]:* I have received no such representations, but understand that the Victoria and Albert museum has recalled the watercolours currently out on loan in order to ensure their long-term preservation. The paintings will be available for anyone to see on request and the museum will look favourably on requests for loans for specific displays provided the environmental and security conditions are satisfactory.

TRANSPORT

Thornaby Bypass

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to announce *(a)* the current year's transport supplementary grant determination and *(b)* his conclusions on the representations made to him by the hon. Member for Stockton, South about the Thornaby bypass.

Mr. Atkins: We plan to announce details of the 1990-91 transport supplementary grant settlement for England within the next few days. All hon. Members will be informed individually of decisions relating to their constituency.

Contracts

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many contracts over £92,500 have been let by his Department in the 1988-89 financial year and in the current financial year to date; and how many of these were *(a)* automatically renewed and *(b)* open to competition by advertisement throughout the European Community.

Mr. Atkins: The number of contracts awarded by the Department of Transport and covered by the provisions of the EC supplies directive, for which the current threshold is £92,000, was 35 in the calendar year 1988, and 45 so far in this calendar year. Of these 31 were awarded following advertisement in the EC Journal, and 49 were considered to be exempt from advertising.

Accountancy Firms

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many outside accountancy firms are employed by his Department; whether such employment is subject to guidelines; and whether he takes steps before employing an accountancy firm to discover whether the firms have been censured by Department of Trade and Industry inspectors in their inquiries under the Companies Act.

Mr. Atkins: The Department is currently taking advice from five accountancy firms on various subjects including financial and management consultancy, audit and information technology. In appointing firms the Department follows Treasury guidelines and consults the Treasury on each individual case, before a commission is awarded. No separate consultation is generally undertaken with the Department of Trade and Industry.

Roads

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether his Department consulted the European Commission regarding the special protection area in the Lee Valley which could be affected by the road proposals in the east London assessment studies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: No.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment his Department has made of the extent of contamination of the exchange land in Wanstead for common land proposed to be taken for the M11 link road; when the assessment was made and with what result; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The only exchange land on offer in Wanstead in connection with this scheme is for land which would be taken from Epping forest. An assessment of part of the site was made in 1982 for an earlier road scheme. It showed that the land was suitable for use as public open space.

In response to representations at the current public inquiry the Department's consultants made investigations of the remainder of the site on 22 November last. Their preliminary findings are expected in the next few days. I shall put a copy in the Library.

Berkshire County Council

Mr. Watts: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what amounts of borrowing approval have been granted to Berkshire county council for highways purposes on each of the last five financial years; and how much was used by the council in each of those years for highways purposes.

Mr. Atkins: The highways capital allocation issued to Berkshire county council in each of the last five financial years represents both borrowing approval and spending power. The latter can be supplemented by the use of capital receipts. Details of actual borrowing are not available; the table compares highways capital allocation with total highways expenditure.

£ million

	Highways capital allocation	*Total highways expenditure*
1985-86	10·280	[1]6·003
1986-87	11·060	[1]4·773
1987-88	9·110	[1]10·978
1988-89	10·540	[2]11·021
1989-90	4·880	[3]9·068

[1] Actual.
[2] Provisional.
[3] Budgeted.

Mr. Watts: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what amounts of transport supplementary grant have been allocated to Berkshire county council in each of the last five years; and how much of the allocation was used by Berkshire county council in each of those years.

Mr. Atkins: Transport supplementary grant is paid at a flat rate of 50 per cent. on an accepted programme of named major (over £1 million) schemes and on an undifferentiated block of minor (under £1 million) works. The table compares Berkshire county council's expenditure accepted for grant in each of these categories with the equivalent outturn information.

£ million

Accepted expenditure on major schemes		*Equivalent outturn expenditure*	*Accepted expenditure on minor works*	*Equivalent outturn expenditure*
1985-86	5·570	[1]4·176	0·332	[1]0
1986-87	6·269	[1]2·868	0·339	[1]0·230
1987-88	6·704	[1]5·753	0·300	[1]0·046
1988-89	7·226	[2]6·119	0·300	[2]0·845
1989-90	3·911	[3]3·629	0·479	[3]1·285

[1] Actual.
[2] Provisional.
[3] Budgeted.

Airport Security

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will approach Governments of technically advanced countries with proposals to provide sophisticated airport security equipment to developing countries, free of charge or at reduced charge.

Mr. McLoughlin: The provision of sophisticated equipment can be ineffective and wasteful unless the necessary supporting administrative framework is in place. We are assisting developing countries to introduce the organisation, legislation and training to support their own aviation security programmes. We are paying the salaries of two security specialists within the International Civil Aviation Organisation who have the specific task of helping states to do this.

Diesel Multiple Units

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from Yorkshire transport authorities concerning the problems caused by shortages of diesel multiple units and maintenance staff; what action is being taken by British Rail to rectify these problems; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: As it happens, I am meeting the West Yorkshire passenger transport authority today. I understand that BR has taken action including pre-planned cancellations, short formations of some trains and operating some loco-hauled trains. BR is keeping the local passenger transport authorities fully in the picture regarding its problems, plans and solutions.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Lee: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has about the British Railway Board's proposals for passenger and freight services through the Channel tunnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: The British Railways board has today published the plan which it is required to prepare under section 40 of the Channel Tunnel Act 1987. This plan sets out the board's current proposals for commercially viable passenger, freight and parcels services through the Channel tunnel serving various parts of the United Kingdom.

In addition to the board's proposals for passenger services between London and Paris and between London and Brussels, the plan includes proposals for a number of direct through services between destinations beyond London and mainland Europe providing over 3 million seats a year. The amount of traffic that will be attracted to such services is difficult to judge exactly before the Channel tunnel opens, and the board's proposals are intended to test the market for them. The initial service level may be expanded if the actual traffic exceeds expectations. If on the other hand the actual traffic level is insufficient to justify some of the services proposed, the board will need to reconsider the case for continuing to provide them. I am, however, optimistic that passengers will be keen to take advantage of this exciting new opportunity to travel directly between the regions and mainland Europe without having to change trains in London.

The plan also sets out the board's current proposals for freight and parcels services. I have asked the board to consider how they might improve the financial performance of their non-bulk freight sector to maximise the involvement of the private sector, and to reshape the business to seize the new opportunities presented by the Channel tunnel. I expect the board's proposals to develop, as their non-bulk strategy develops. Over 70 per cent. of the forecast rail freight traffic through the Channel tunnel will begin or end its journey beyond London, and the board's freight proposals reflect this emphasis. The detailed pattern of services is still under discussion with the board's freight customers and with potential private sector partners, but it is clear that the board's plans are based on the operation of fast through freight services between the United Kingdom regions and mainland Europe. These services will transform the opportunities available to United Kingdom manufacturers and traders for sending their goods through to the rest of Europe. Goods from Scotland and the north of England will be able to reach some continental destinations within 24 hours, and more distant places such as Munich and Milan within 48 hours, compared with the current transit time by road and ferry of at least 72 hours.

British Rail announced on 3 November that it had selected Eurorail, comprising Trafalgar House and BICC, as its preferred partner in a joint venture for Channel tunnel rail services. In addition to operation of the initial pattern of rail services through the tunnel, the joint venture will be responsible for constructing a new rail link between London and the tunnel; there is already a very high standard of rail infrastructure on the lines beyond London. Through services between the United Kingdom regions and mainland Europe are not, however, dependent on the construction of the new link. The proposals set out by British Rail in its plans are intended to come into effect as soon as the tunnel opens, and British Rail is confident that its existing network will have sufficient capacity for the additional Channel tunnel traffic for a number of years before the new link is needed.

I welcome the publication of this plan, which sets out clearly British Rail's proposals for making the most of the opportunities offered by the tunnel. Others will now want to express their views on the proposals put forward. The plan can do no more than set out British Rail's current view of the opportunities, and I have no doubt that British Rail will continue to develop its plans, both during the period up to the opening of the tunnel and thereafter, as the pattern of demand and the associated commercial opportunities become clearer.

Market Research

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many market research and sample surveys were carried out by or for his Department in the last 12 months; what was the cost of each; what was the total cost; how many were carried out in house; how many were carried out for his Department by outside organisations; and what percentage of the total expenditure was paid to outside organisations.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 11 December 1989]:* In the 12 months ended November 1989, a total of 79 market research and/or sample surveys were carried out by or for the Department of Transport. The total cost of this work was £2·7 million.

Of the 79 surveys, 12 were carried out in house and 67 were undertaken by outside organisations. The total cost of surveys contracted out was £2·5 million, or 93 per cent. of the cost of all such work.

PRIME MINISTER

Soviet Union

Q51. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next expects to pay an official visit to the Soviet Union.

The Prime Minister: I expect to visit the Soviet Union next June for talks with Mr. Gorbachev and to support the 'Britain in Kiev' exhibition.

Eastern Europe

Q112. **Mr. Andrew Hunter:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a further statement on recent developments in eastern Europe.

The Prime Minister: We greatly welcome current developments in Poland, Hungary, the German Democratic Republic and Czechoslovakia which are moving towards democracy and freedom. We are also closely watching developments in Bulgaria and hope that they will lead in the same direction. We are taking many practical steps to help this process and are prepared to do more.

European Council

Q138. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next expects to meet the President of the European Council; and what matters she proposes to raise.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to meet President Mitterrand again before the end of the French presidency of the EC.

Field Sports

Q151. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will co-ordinate Government action to introduce legislation to make hare-coursing, stag and deer hunting, fox hunting and beagling illegal.

The Prime Minister: No. Field sports are a matter for the decision of the individual.

North Sea

Q165. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Prime Minister what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to stop industrial waste dumping in the North sea, by 31 December, in line with its written declaration at the second ministerial conference on the protection of the North sea in 1987; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The United Kingdom is fully meeting international agreements reached unanimously by the North sea countries. Ministers at the second North sea conference agreed that disposal at sea of industrial wastes should not be prohibited if there were no practical alternative means of disposal on land and if it could be shown to the Oslo commission that the materials caused no harm in the marine environment. The Oslo commission in 1989 agreed the procedure by which a country would show that a waste met these criteria.

No deadline has been set internationally for termination of sea disposal. However, the Government are seeking to end sea disposal of these wastes at the earliest possible time. Of the 20 licences issued in 1987 for disposal of liquid industrial waste at sea more than half will not be renewed next year. The remainder will be terminated as soon as environmentally acceptable alternative means of disposal have been identified and implemented. The Oslo commission agreed earlier this year that even when an alternative disposal option is identified a transitional period will be needed before sea disposal can end, to give time for introduction of the alternative arrangements.

Homelessness

Q180. **Mr. Harry Ewing:** To ask the Prime Minister if, over Christmas, she will visit those sleeping rough in the parks and streets of London.

The Prime Minister: Homelessness is a major concern to us all. The Government's hostel initiative has produced 21,000 hostel bedspaces since 1981; and some of the special £250 million homelessness package announced on 15 November will directly help vulnerable single people at risk of becoming roofless.

Clydesdale

Q201. **Mr. Hood:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next intends to visit Clydesdale; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Warsaw Pact

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list, for each of the countries of the Warsaw pact what technical and administrative assistance Her Majesty's Government are making available or can offer to assist the conduct of free general elections.

The Prime Minister: Help to prepare for fully democratic elections is a central objective of the know-how Funds for Poland and Hungary. Hungarian and Polish parliamentarians have visited Britain to study democratic procedures. We are also helping with local government training. We hope that other eastern European countries will qualify for such help in due course.

British Aerospace (Rover Deal)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister on what date and at what time she was made aware of the sweeteners being offered to British Aerospace on the Rover deal.

The Prime Minister: I was kept aware throughout of the progress of the negotiations with British Aerospace and was of course aware of the basic terms and conditions of the agreements reached with British Aerospace. This major privatisation has provided an excellent return for the United Kingdom taxpayer, for the Rover work force and dealer network and for the company's customers.

Korea

Mr. Sims: To ask the Prime Minister what representation she made to the President of Korea on his recent visit about the level of duties and taxes on Scotch whisky in Korea; and what further steps Her Majesty's Government plan to take in this matter.

The Prime Minister: I made representations to the Korean President during his visit at the end of November about the discriminatory features of Korea's tax and tariff treatment of Scotch whisky and other imported spirits, as well as other restrictions on the import and distribution of these products. There has been some liberalisation which has benefited Scotch whisky but discriminatory treatment continues to hold back sales in Korea. The Government will continue to take every opportunity, both bilaterally and through the European Community, to persuade Korea to take the necessary actions.

Angola

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Prime Minister whether the subject of Angolan unity came up in her recent conversations with President Bush; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I did not discuss Angolan unity with President Bush. The Government have consistently stressed the need for a political settlement in Angola. We support President Mobutu's work as mediator and trust that this will lead to an early end to the fighting and to negotiations without pre-conditions between the MPLA Government of Angola and UNITA.

Friends of the Earth

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister when she last met the director of Friends of the Earth (UK); for how long they met; what issues were discussed; and what plans she has to meet other non-governmental organisation environmentalists.

The Prime Minister: I met Mr. Jonathon Porritt, together with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, on 1 December when we discussed a number of environmental issues of mutual concern. I meet representatives of other environmental groups from time to time.

Correspondence

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Prime Minister why Mr. Dennis Griffiths, of 25 Grant road, Stoke, Coventry, has not yet received a substantive reply to his letter of 24 June, following her acknowledgement of its receipt; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I receive an enormous number of letters each week from Members of Parliament and members of the public. It is not possible for me to deal with all these letters personally and I must accordingly refer most of them to the Minister and the Department with the responsibility for the policy in question.

Mr. Griffiths' letter of 26 June was sent an acknowledgement on 20 July and the letter was passed that day to the Department of Social Security for further action. I understand that a response was sent by the Department of Social Security on 13 December 1989. I very much regret the long delay.

Environmental Co-operation

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Prime Minister what recent representations she has received on the need for Europwide environmental co-operation.

The Prime Minister: I and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment are in regular contact with our European counterparts and play an active part in developing constructive Europewide co-operation on a broad range of environmental matters.

At the Environment Council on 28 November we supported the creation of a European Environment Agency to improve the quality of environmental information across Europe. The agency will be established initially on a European Community basis, but will subsequently be open to wider European participation.

The United Kingdom is playing an active role in preparations for the ministerial conference on sustainable development to be held in Bergen in May 1990 under the auspices of the United Nations Commission for Europe and we hosted an international preparatory workshop in 24 to 26 September.

My hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Transport chaired the special session of the European conference of Ministers of Transport on 23 November, at which Ministers agreed on the need for environmentally sustainable transport policies.

Engagements

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 14 December.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 14 December.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 14 December.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening a reception will be held at No. 10 Downing street on behalf of the Royal National Institute for the Blind.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Stock Exchange

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what position the London stock exchange held in the international league of trading volumes in 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Redwood: I have been asked to reply.

On the basis of total turnover in equities and fixed interest stocks the International Stock Exchange of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland Limited ranked third in 1987 and second in 1988. It was also the third largest exchange in terms of market capitalisation of domestic equities in both 1987 and 1988.

WALES

Ambulance Service

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet ambulance workers based at the Queensferry station to discuss their views concerning their salary levels and their claims for arbitration; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: I had the opportunity to meet trade union representatives of Clwyd ambulance workers at Colwyn Bay on Friday 8 December and their views were fully put to me. The only sensible way forward in the current pay dispute is for the unions to call off their action and resume talks with the management side of the Whitley council.

Water Quality

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if, pursuant to his reply of 5 December, he will list the names and locations of the 89 of Dwr Cymru's water treatment works for which a relaxation of standards under the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 1989 has been granted relating to the level of permissible aluminium.

Mr. Grist: The information in respect of the 34 relaxations granted under sections 4(1)(c) and 4(2) of the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 1989 for Dwr Cymru treatment works/sources is shown in the table.

Clwyd
Llanbedr
Afon Ddu
Penmaenmawr Mountain Stream
Dolwen Reservoir
Afon Clywedog
Ffynnon Asaph

Gwynedd
Mynydd Llandegai
Cwmystradllyn
Garndolbenmaen
Afon Cwm Llan
Beddgelert
Bettws y Coed
Rhyd
Corris
Cwmygof
Drws y Coed
Nant Braich y Rhiw
Abergynolwen
Bontddu Stream
Cwm y Gof Stream
Llyn Fedw

Dyfed
Pendine
Llyn-y-Fan
Rhos I
Faedre Fawr
Llanybydder
Llygadllwchar
Treffynon
Cilgerran
Mynydd Crwn Bach

LLanfrynach
Ffynnon Gaseg
Wern Ddu
Rhos 2
New Inn
Newcastle Emlyn
Faldybrenin
Ffynnon Rhys
Tregarron
Pontygotty

Powys
Cray Reservoir (1)
Garwleisian
Cray Reservoir(2)

West Glamorgan
Cwm Kenfig
Glyncorrwg
Upper Lliw Reservoir

Mid Glamorgan
Blaengarw High Level
Blaengarw Low Level
Garw Nanthir
Tyn y Waun
Perthcelyn
Penderyn
Blanencaerau
Dimbath
Caerau

In respect of the information regarding the undertakings accepted under section 20(5)(b) of the Water Act 1989, I refer the hon. Gentleman to my answer of 16 November to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones).

Rural Areas

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions have taken place between his Department and the Welsh Development Agency concerning the implementation of his new rural initiative programme in those rural areas of Wales which lie outside the jurisdiction of Mid-Wales Development; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: My Department and the agency regularly discuss matters of mutual interest including rural affairs.

Local Authority Capital Expenditure

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total for local authority capital expenditure in 1990-91 and for 1989-90; what is that increase as a percentage in real terms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: As I announced on 29 November, my proposals assume gross spending in 1990-91 of £475 million. This represents an increase of 6·9 per cent. over the 1989-90 equivalent (£444 million). The relevant GDP deflator is 5 per cent. Further resources will be provided if expenditure on mandatory home renovation grants exceeds the £75 million I have allowed for it.

Development Bodies

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to realise the property assets of *(a)* the Mid-Wales Development Board and *(b)* the Welsh Development Agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: Since their inception, property assets have been sold by the two development agencies the proceeds of which have contributed to the massive increase in their gross expenditure in recent years. This will continue.

Dee Crossing

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the details of his award of finance to support the A548 Dee crossing for which funding has been set; what are the amounts per year; what is the starting date and the proposed completion date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on Thursday 7 December. Support for the years beyond 1990-91 will be considered in future annual transport grant settlements and in the light of progress on the scheme. The timing of construction is a matter for Clwyd county council.

Teachers

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many *(a)* primary and *(b)* high school teachers in Clwyd, in numbers and as a percentage, receive incentive allowances; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is the percentage in each of the local education authorities of Wales of teachers receiving incentive allowances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: The latest information relates to March 1988 and is shown in the table.

Teachers receiving incentive allowances

	Number	*Percentage*
Clwyd—		
Primary/Nursery	243	25·6
Secondary	932	53·5
All Teachers[1]		
Clwyd	—	45·3
Dyfed	—	36·0
Gwent	—	37·3
Gwynedd	—	34·3
Mid Glamorgan	—	29·9
Powys	—	33·1
South Glamorgan	—	38·1
West Glamorgan	—	38·4

[1] All teachers includes teachers in Special schools, and excludes Headteachers and Deputy Headteachers.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he intends to take to eliminate the shortage of primary school teachers in Clwyd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Government's role is to ensure that sufficient qualified teachers are available to meet employers' needs. It is the responsibility of local education authorities to ensure that teachers are recruited to meet the needs of schools in their areas. In responding to the survey of teaching vacancies in September this year, Clwyd did not indicate that there was a shortage of primary teachers in the county.

This year the intake of students to primary courses in initial teacher training institutions was over 15 per cent. higher than in 1988. In Welsh institutions the increase was 22 per cent. above the 1988 figure and 28 per cent. above the targets for those institutions. We have also invited bids from LEAs in Wales for education support grant to assist with the cost of developing schemes of recruitment directed at meeting local shortages. No bid has been received from Clwyd.

Schools (First Aid)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will meet St. John Ambulance and the Red Cross in Wales to discuss the place of first aid instruction in schools in Wales; and if he will make a statement;

(2) which local education authorities in Wales have arranged for first aid instruction in their schools; what type of instruction is provided; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: Any discussions about the place of first aid instruction in schools should most appropriately be conducted between the first aid organisations and local education authorities.

All local education authorities make provision for first aid instruction. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman with detailed information on the extent of provision and type of instruction in schools and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

"Trade Routes to the Future"

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action he is planning to take with reference to the recent Confederation of British Industry report, "Trade Routes to the Future", as it affects Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I wrote to the CBI on 4 December. A copy of my letter has been placed in the House of Commons Library. Since then I have announced plans to dualling the A5 across Anglesey, one of the routes identified in the report as in need of improvement.

Doctors

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many doctors whose basic medical training and qualifications were received abroad are employed as general practitioners in Wales in 1989; and what was the comparable figure for each of the past five years;

(2) how many doctors whose training and basic medical qualifications were received outside the United Kingdom are employed as general practitioners in each family practitioner committee area in Wales; and what was the comparable figure for each of the past five years;

(3) what percentage of general practitioners in each family practitioner committee area in Wales received their basic training and qualifications outside the United Kingdom; and what was the equivalent percentage for each of the past five years;

(4) what percentage of general practitioners in Wales received their basic medical training and qualifications outside the United Kingdom; and what was the comparable figure for each of the past five years.

Mr. Grist: Information on where general practitioners received basic medical training is not held centrally. However the latest available information on country of birth is shown in the table which will show the hon. Gentleman that the position for Wales in 1989 was almost identical to that in 1983.

Family Practitioner Committee	*Practitioners born outside Great Britain*[1]									
	1983		*1984*		*1985*		*1986*		*1987*	
	Number	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*
Clwyd	48	24·7	46	23·4	45	22·5	47	22·3	49	22·9
Dyfed	11	6·0	12	6·4	13	6·7	15	7·6	14	6·8
Gwent	77	34·7	79	35·0	83	35·0	78	33·1	78	32·5
Gwynedd	10	7·3	8	5·8	11	7·9	9	6·5	9	6·3
Mid Glamorgan	123	45·4	126	46·0	125	45·3	133	47·5	138	47·4
Powys	9	12·9	10	13·9	10	13·9	11	14·5	10	13·3
South Glamorgan	21	10·0	21	9·7	25	11·4	25	11·3	25	11·1
West Glamorgan	26	14·6	27	15·0	29	15·6	29	15·4	28	14·4
Wales	325	22·2	329	22·1	341	22·4	347	22·4	351	22·1

[1] Unrestricted principals as at 1 October.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many doctors whose training and basic medical qualification were received outside the United Kingdom are employed in hospitals in Wales in 1989; and what was the comparable figure for each of the past five years;

(2) what percentage of hospital doctors in each health authority area in Wales received their basic medical training and qualification outside the United Kingdom; and what was the comparable percentage for each of the past five years.

Mr. Grist: Information on where hospital doctors received basic medical training is not held centrally. However available information on country of birth is shown in the table:

Hospital doctors born outside the United Kingdom[1]

Year	*Number*	*Per cent.*
1984[2]	833	32·5
1985[2]	854	32·6
1986[2]	863	32·1
1987	850	31·2
1988	841	30·2

[1] Staff in post as at 30 September.

[2] Excludes doctors born in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what assessment he has made of the hours worked by junior hospital doctors in Wales;

(2) what assessment he has made of the level of morale among junior hospital doctors in Wales.

Mr. Grist: Information is not held centrally about hours worked by junior hospital doctors. Information held relates to the number of units of medical time (UMT) for which doctors are contracted. Earlier this year the Department undertook a review. The Department has since requested health authorities to submit proposals to reduce further the hours worked by junior doctors. No assessment of the level of morale among junior doctors as such has been undertaken.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what assessment he has made of the number of individuals who have received their medical training and qualification outside the United Kingdom and who will have to be recruited by hospitals in Wales in each of the coming five years;

(2) what assessment he has made of the problems of recruiting and retaining the services of junior hospital doctors to posts at hospitals in Wales.

Mr. Grist: It is not possible reliably to assess the demand for overseas qualified doctors in each of the next five years. Consideration is still being given to the distribution by specialty of those doctors eligible to pursue a career in the United Kingdom and those overseas doctors who are seeking to undertake training for a limited period in the United Kingdom. The implementation of the package of proposals in "Achieving a Balance" for the reform of the hospital medical staffing structure will alleviate recruitment problems and the Department, with the assistance of the recently established Welsh Council for Postgraduates in Medical and Dental Education, is developing plans for a training package specifically for overseas doctors employed in Wales. This scheme and other initiatives under consideration are designed to attract junior doctors to the National Health Service in Wales.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what examination he has undertaken of the effectiveness of induction and supplementary training given immediately on appointment to any doctor whose medical training and qualifications have been received outside the United Kingdom;

(2) what examination he has undertaken of the effectiveness of inquiries made prior to the employment in any hospital in Wales of a doctor whose medical training and qualifications have been received outside the United Kingdom.

Mr. Grist: The Department has issued firm guidance to health authorities in Wales on the procedures to be followed in employing overseas qualified doctors and in particular emphasised the importance of checking that doctors are properly registered for the work they are to do before taking up employment.

Overseas qualified doctors applying for registration must satisfy the General Medical Council about their professional experience, clinical knowledge/skills and their command and understanding of the English language. The Department is satisfied with the criteria employed by the General Medical Council to assess the suitability of overseas qualified doctors. All such doctors work under the direct supervision of a consultant who provides further training as appropriate.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what percentage of hospital doctors in Wales received their basic medical training and qualification outside the United Kingdom; and what was the comparable percentage for each of the past five years;

(2) how many doctors whose training and basic medical qualifications were received outside the United Kingdom are employed in hospitals in each health authority in Wales; and what were the comparable figures for each of the last five years.

Mr. Grist: Information on where hospital doctors received basic medical training is not held centrally. However, information is available on place of birth and I will reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as the information by health authority can be extracted.

ENERGY

Magnox Reactors

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about the long-term safety reviews of the Magnox reactors.

Mr. Michael Spicer: There is an ongoing programme of long-term safety reviews of Magnox stations. This will be continued by Nuclear Electric.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment he has made of the maximum operating life of Magnox reactors; if he will take steps to require the Central Electricity Generating Board to set a maximum operational period for the reactors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The maximum operating life of a Magnox station is a matter for the owner of the station subject to the requirements of the nuclear installations inspectorate.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what percentage of the decommissioning costs for the Magnox reactors pertains to *(a)* phase one, *(b)* phase two and *(c)* phase three.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for the Magnox operators.

Flue Gas Desulphurisation

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the progress being made to fit flue gas desulphurisation equipment to power stations.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The retrofitting of flue gas desulphurisation equipment to the 4,000 MW coal-fired power station at Drax in Yorkshire is proceeding satisfactorily. The electricity industry is identifying subsequent stations for retrofits.

CEGB (Safety Breaches)

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received over the amount of fines imposed on the Central Electricity Generating Board after pleading guilty to charges of nuclear safety breaches brought by the nuclear installations inspectorate whether this was the first such prosecution and conviction of the Central Electricity Generating Board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have received no such representations. This is the first occasion on which the

Central Electricity Generating Board has been prosecuted by the Health and Safety Executive in respect of breaches of their licence conditions.

Electricity Industry

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list (i) the statutory requirements governing the publication of reports of the constituent bodies of the electricity supply industry in England and Wales (ii) the dates on which such reports have been published in each year since nationalisation, either for existing or predecessor corporations and (iii) indicate, where appropriate, when the reports for 1988-89 will be published.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The statutory requirement governing the publication of reports of the constituent bodies of the electricity supply industry in England and Wales are: the Electricity Act 1947, as amended by the Electricity Act 1957, section 46; and the Electricity Act 1957, sections 10 and 11. These reports have been published each year and have been placed in the Library of the House.

All area boards have published their reports and accounts for 1988-89 and I understand that the Central Electricity Generating Board and the Electricity Council intend to publish their reports and accounts before the end of December.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy under the regulations for the forthcoming privatisation of electricity, what plans he has to give powers to a regulatory body to ensure that the electricity board must legally give customers every opportunity to pay according to their means.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Under their licences, public electricity suppliers will implement approved procedures for dealing with customers facing difficulties with their bills which will include taking particular account of the consumer's ability to pay. These procedures can be enforced by the director under section 25 of the Electricity Act 1989.

Offshore Installations

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what regulations are in force in relation to secondary means of evacuation from offshore oil and gas installations.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Offshore Installations (Construction and Survey) Regulations 1974 (SI 1974/289), the Offshore Installations (Emergency Procedures) Regulations 1976 (SI 1976/1542) and the Offshore Installations (Life-saving Appliances) Regulations 1977 (SI 1977/486).

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what tests are undertaken by his Department, independent of the oil industry, in assessing the safety, quality and effectiveness of all means of evacuation from offshore oil and gas installations generally, and in relation to individual installations.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My Department utilises the experience of the marine surveyors of the Department of Transport to ensure that all life-saving appliances are of an approved type, are suitably located, properly maintained and in good working order. Certifying authorities also carry out independent surveys of offshore installations and their equipment, including escape routes. In addition, independent contractors undertake research and development projects sponsored by my Department.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has any proposals to introduce regulations or guidance in relation to the provision of smoke hoods on offshore oil and gas installations.

Mr. Peter Morrison: A research and development programme has been commissioned jointly by my Department and the oil and gas industry to establish performance specifications for smoke hoods to be used offshore and for a test procedure for assessment purposes. Subject to the outcome of this programme, consideration will be given to the introduction of a statutory requirement for the provision of smoke hoods or other devices capable of performing the same or a similar function.

Plutonium

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what were the sources of information underlying the figures in his departmental press release No. 180, issued on 5 December, on imports and exports to the nearest kilogramme of separated and unseparated plutonium.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The figures on imports and exports of plutonium were compiled from data supplied by British Nuclear Fuels plc and the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy why, in note 4 to paragraph 1(A) of his departmental press release number 180 on plutonium figures the percentages cited have been rounded to the nearest 5 per cent.; and whether his Department possesses data to a greater degree of accuracy than this.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The estimates of fissile content are shown to the same precision as in the estimates given by the electricity boards to my Department.

Nuclear Plants

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has had any recent communications from the chairman of British Nuclear Fuels plc concerning its plans to make a planning application for the construction of new commercial scale nuclear plants at its sites at Sellafield and Chapelcross.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend met the chairman of British Nuclear Fuels plc on 16 November when their discussion touched upon the feasibility study that the company is carrying out into the options for replacing its stations at Calder Hall and Chapelcross.

British Nuclear Fuels plc

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will take steps to require British Nuclear Fuels plc to inform customers what percentage of the price charged for services relates to the need to reduce environmental impact.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No. This is a commercial matter between BNFL and its customers.

Carbon Dioxide

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what measures he is taking to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide from energy sources; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: My Department's current policies include encouragement of cost-effective energy efficiency, the development of renewable energy resources and support for diversified and efficient electricity supply options provide a firm basis for any future action. The need for further measures will be considered in the light of the report of the intergovernmental panel on climate change (IPCC), due in autumn 1990.

Onshore Licensing

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will make an announcement on the results of the third onshore licensing round.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I have today announced the conditional award of 22 landward exploration licences for blocks in England, Scotland and Wales. The licences allow companies to search and drill for petroleum, subject to the procedures of the planning system and the technical approval of my Department. Where the licences extend into coastal waters stringent conditions will be set to ensure that local interests will be fully taken into account before operations are undertaken.

Details of the awards have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Offshore Installations

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) whether he has any proposals to introduce regulations or guidance relating to the installation of free-fall lifeboats on offshore oil and gas installations;

(2) whether he has any proposals to introduce regulations or guidance in relation to the provision of the secondary evacuation equipment known as skyscape on offshore oil and gas installations.

Mr. Peter Morrison: In August 1989 my Department issued a statement of intent which included proposals to amend the Offshore Installations (Life-saving Appliances) Regulations 1976 to allow for the use of any approved method of launching lifeboats, including free-fall lifeboats.

The skyscape system has been accepted by the Department of Transport as a suitable means of escape to the sea and is being considered by a number of operators for use on new installations. The statement of intent proposes that there should be more specific guidance on means and location of descent to the sea.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Immigration

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what restrictions there are on the award of *(a)* entry visas and *(b)* residence permits for citizens of the German Democratic Republic wishing to settle in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: All citizens of the German Democratic Republic require visas to enter the United Kingdom for any purpose. Visas are issued in accordance with the immigration rules set out in House of Commons paper 388.

Tobacco and Alcohol

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his reply on 4 December to the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill), if he will give a regional breakdown of the figures for prosecutions for illegal sales of tobacco and alcohol, respectively, to children.

Mr. John Patten: Information held centrally on the number of prosecutions against the illegal sale of tobacco and alcohol to children by police force area in England and Wales for 1984 to 1988 is given in the table.

Defendants proceeded against at magistrates' court for illegal sales of tobacco and alcohol to children by police force area from 1984-88
England and Wales

Numbers proceeded against

	Tobacco					*Alcohol*				
Police force area	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Avon and Somerset	—	—	—	—	1	16	26	13	12	17
Bedfordshire	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	6	3	7
Cambridgeshire	1	—	—	—	—	2	1	—	4	9
Cheshire	—	—	1	—	2	8	10	15	10	30
Cleveland	1	—	—	—	—	7	—	—	4	2
Cumbria	—	—	1	—	—	8	16	10	5	20
Derbyshire	—	1	—	2	—	7	8	7	9	19
Devon and Cornwall	—	—	—	—	1	15	19	11	17	14
Dorset	—	—	—	—	—	13	11	16	5	4
Durham	3	—	—	—	—	8	—	4	12	14
Essex	—	—	2	1	—	1	—	1	—	5
Gloucestershire	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	1	—	7
Greater Manchester	7	7	4	3	—	17	20	20	40	92
Hampshire	1	—	—	—	—	10	7	10	13	14
Hertfordshire	—	—	—	—	1	8	4	5	5	11
Humberside	—	—	1	—	1	7	14	2	3	2
Kent	1	—	—	1	—	3	2	—	3	4
Lancashire	3	2	—	3	1	8	12	12	47	50
Leicestershire	3	—	—	1	—	2	4	—	1	8
Lincolnshire	—	—	—	—	—	3	2	4	10	12
Merseyside	1	1	—	1	10	15	2	8	6	9

	Numbers proceeded against									
	Tobacco					*Alcohol*				
Police force area	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Metropolitan police district[1]	2	—	2	—	1	—	4	11	4	17
Norfolk	1	—	—	—	—	8	4	8	2	11
Northamptonshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	2	—	1
Northumbria	1	1	1	—	1	8	1	7	4	15
North Yorkshire	2	—	1	—	—	15	10	26	3	13
Nottinghamshire	2	2	1	—	—	1	2	—	1	7
South Yorkshire	—	—	—	1	—	1	2	9	8	73
Staffordshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	8	11	13	15
Suffolk	—	—	—	1	—	3	—	—	2	5
Surrey	—	2	—	1	—	3	1	6	6	7
Sussex	—	—	—	—	—	5	5	12	7	15
Thames Valley	—	—	—	—	—	4	3	1	2	15
Warwickshire	—	1	—	—	—	6	4	6	3	1
West Mercia	2	1	—	—	1	23	13	15	4	10
West Midlands	11	5	1	—	3	31	21	3	7	27
West Yorkshire	2	4	2	1	4	18	12	11	15	13
Wiltshire	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	2	6
Dyfed-Powys	—	—	—	—	1	6	6	4	1	4
Gwent	—	—	—	—	—	3	6	6	22	35
North Wales	—	—	—	—	—	11	3	5	3	13
South Wales	1	1	—	—	1	8	9	7	15	20
England and Wales	45	28	17	18	29	314	274	296	333	673

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[1] Includes the City of London.

Pornography

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 5 December, *Official Report*, column *192*, what are *(a)* the terms of reference of the review, *(b)* the names of those he will charge with conducting the review, *(c)* the expected commencement and finishing dates of the review into the possible link between pornography and sexual violence towards women and children; and whether he will allow public representations to be made to the review.

Mr. Mellor: The Home Office research and planning unit is at present drawing up the specification for a review of research reports on possible links between pornography and sexual violence. Broadly, the terms of reference will be to review the available research in this country, the United States of America and in other European countries on the effects of pornography, including any link with violence or sexual aggression, and effects on attitudes to women.

We are considering who is best qualified to carry out the review. We plan that it should begin in January and be completed in April. The report would be published in the usual way.

It would not be right to ask the researchers to accept public representations, which would fall outside their terms of reference. We are always ready to consider representations ourselves.

Contracts

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many contracts over £92,500 have been let by his Department in the 1988-89 financial year and in the present financial year to date; and how many of these were automatically renewed or advertised throughout the European Economic Community.

Mr. Waddington: This information is readily available only by calendar year. The number of contracts awarded by my Department covered by the provisions of the EC supplies directive, for which the current threshold is £92,000 was 71 in 1988 and 56 to date in 1989. Of these, 112 were awarded following advertisement in the EC Journal and 15 were considered to be exempt from advertising and may have been awarded to the previous supplier.

Immigration Service (Vacancies)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many employee vacancies there are currently at *(a)* Lunar house, Croydon and *(b)* the nationality department at Liverpool.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: At 7 December there was an overall total of 85 vacancies in the immigration and nationality department in Croydon, and four in the Immigration and Nationality Department's Liverpool nationality office.

Ambulance Dispute

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will initiate an inquiry into levels of stress on police now engaged in ambulance work and its effects on their future efficiency as police officers.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have no plans to do so.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the cost in police time and resources, for each police authority area, of the ambulance dispute since September.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The readily available information is that up to 8 December police forces had provided about the number of man hours shown in the table in assisting the ambulance service in their areas.

Approximate number of man hours

	Number
West Midlands	8,200
Bedfordshire	5,900
Lincolnshire	1,500
Dorset	650
Derbyshire	6,800
Hampshire	3,500

	Number
Hertfordshire	12,200
South Yorkshire	4,400
West Yorkshire	570
Warwickshire	460
Surrey	450

For the Metropolitan police district I would refer the hon. Member to the answer I have given him today in reply to another question.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total number of police, per day, by Metropolitan police division, employed on ambulance duties since September.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand that in the Metropolitan police district from 8 November to 12 December the approximate number of police officers by area employed on duties assisting the ambulance service in each 24-hour period has been as follows:

Approximate number of officers

Area	*Number*
1	72
2	44
3	64
4	40
5	60
6	72
7	74
8	34
TOTAL	460

On each of 23 and 24 October the total was about 670 and on 7 November the total was about 830.

IRA Prisoners

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many convicted members of the Irish Republican Army currently held in British prisons enjoy category B status apart from the six men convicted after the Birmingham pub bombings;

(2) how many Irish Republican Army members currently serving sentences of life imprisonment enjoy category B status apart from the six men convicted after the Birmingham pub bombings.

Mr. Mellor: There are at present in prisons in England and Wales 37 prisoners convicted of terrorist offences believed to have been carried out by the IRA. Twenty-four are serving life sentences, one (excluding the Birmingham Six) not being in category A.

Remission

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has made of the effect on the prison population for *(a)* those with prison sentences and *(b)* those on parole in England and Wales, as a result of his proposals for the removal of remission in (i) 1990, (ii) 1991 and (iii) 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The removal of remission is one of a number of changes which we have in mind. Any estimates of the effect on the prison population should take account of all the proposed changes and will be announced in due course.

Emergency Services (Pay)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list at 1989 prices the pay of *(a)* a leading fireman and *(b)* a police constable for each year since 1974.

Mr. John Patten: The information is not held in the form requested. The annual rates of pay at historic prices are as follows:

	£
Leading Firemen/Women	
7 November 1974	2,913
1 February 1975	3,123
7 November 1975	3,435
7 November 1976	3,606
7 November 1977	4,040
7 November 1978	4,935
7 November 1979	5,943
7 November 1980	6,715
1 April 1981	7,060
7 November 1981	7,773
7 November 1982	8,355
7 November 1983	9,006
7 November 1984	9,654
7 November 1985	10,350
7 November 1986	11,106
7 November 1987	11,916
7 November 1988	12,942
7 November 1989	14,055
Police Constables	
1 September 1974	1,632– 2,636
1 September 1975	2,400– 3,476
1 September 1976	2,609– 3,685
1 September 1977	2,775– 3,918
1 September 1978	3,189– 4,809
1 September 1979	4,086– 6,471
1 September 1980	4,956– 7,848
1 September 1981	5,610– 8,883
1 September 1982	6,189– 9,798
1 September 1983	6,708–10,620
1 September 1984	6,809–11,193
1 September 1985	7,212–12,033
1 September 1986	7,752–12,936
1 September 1987	8,352–13,938
1 September 1988	8,352–15,123
1 September 1989	9,900–16,521

Between October 1974 and October 1989 the retail prices index increased by 309·4 per cent.

Emergency Centres

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will identify those home defence sub-regions currently without a Government wartime emergency centre.

Mr. John Patten: Such centres are not available in regions 8.1 and 10.1.

Nuclear Blast Simulation

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will identify those nuclear blast simulations in the United States of America since 1980 with which his Department's scientific research and development branch has been associated; and what was the cost in each case and what arrangements are being made for future collaboration.

Mr. Waddington: The information requested is as follows:

Year and Name of trial	*Cost of United Kingdom involvement (excluding staff)* £	*Staff costs* £
1981 Mill Race	20,000	[1]—
1983 Direct Course	176,648	57,021
1985 Minor Scale	421,152	63,069
1987 Misty Picture	470,510	68,649
1989 Misers Gold	[2]390,000	78,780

[1] Staff costs not separately available.

[2] Estimate.

No decision has been taken on participation in further such simulations.

Emergency Communications Network

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about *(a)* the susceptibility to nuclear electromagnetic pulse and *(b)* any softwear problems of the solid-state message switch devices currently being introduced into the wartime Government emergency communications network.

Mr. John Patten: The equipment underwent satisfactory susceptibility tests prior to purchase. The need for software improvements was identified following initial operational experience of the equipment, and revisions were introduced in 1988. Consideration is being given to the need for any additional refinements in the light of further experience.

Civil Defence

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the proposed criteria for suitability of civil defence volunteers drawn up by the London fire and civil defence authority.

Mr. John Patten: This is entirely a matter for the London fire and civil defence authority.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the all-hazards approach to planning will involve civil defence community volunteers in civil emergencies.

Mr. John Patten: The use of civil defence community volunteers is a matter for individual local authorities to determine. We are aware that some local authorities have involved such volunteers in their response to recent civil emergencies.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the London fire and civil defence authority has co-operated in providing his Department with information about London boroughs' civil defence expenditure.

Mr. John Patten: Yes.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what national voluntary organisations are being considered for the recruitment of civil defence volunteers; and if he will make a statement:

(2) which national voluntary organisations have been contacted by his Department during the past 12 months on the matter of civil defence community volunteers.

Mr. Waddington: The involvement of national voluntary organisations in assisting local authorities with their community volunteer schemes is one of the options we are considering as part of a wider review of the role and organisation of civil defence community volunteers. No decisions on future policy have yet been taken. A discussion paper examining the options was circulated to interested parties earlier this year. The national voluntary organisations formally consulted were the Women's Royal Voluntary Service; British Red Cross; St. John Ambulance Brigade; and Civil Aid.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether details of advances of civil defence grant aid for the London boroughs have been contained in returns made by the London fire and civil defence authority for the financial years 1989-90 and 1990-91; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: No such details are required in returns made to the Home Office by the London fire and civil defence authority. Advance payments in connection with civil defence grant are decided in the light of estimates of qualifying expenditure submitted by local authorities. Such advances are made to county councils and fire and civil defence authorities rather than to individual boroughs and districts.

Bruntington Airport

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department why the decision was made to transfer the bulk of the emergency fire service vehicles to Bruntington airport; and to which company any maintenance contract for the vehicles has been awarded.

Mr. John Patten: It is Government policy that appropriate services which have hitherto been undertaken in-house should be market-tested. In the light of considerations of effectiveness, efficiency and cost, and subject to satisfactory contracts, it is intended to transfer the storage and maintenance of the emergency fire service equipment to the private sector. Such contracts are still under negotiation, but a limited instruction has been given to TNT Express (UK) Limited to maintain a proportion of the equipment as an interim arrangement.

West Midlands Police

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will ask the chief constable of the West Midlands for a report on what date and in what circumstances Detective Inspector Paul Matthews left the force.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the chief constable that Inspector Matthews was required to resign from the force on 23 September 1986 following formal discipline proceedings. The officer had been found guilty of failing to obey lawful orders.

Prison Visitors' Centres

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy on the provision of prison visitors' centres.

Mr. Mellor: We believe that visitors' centres can be of considerable benefit to visitors, prisoners and staff. They are now a standard feature in the design of new establishments. Unfortunately, it is not possible to provide funds to erect purpose-built centres at those existing establishments which do not already have a centre. We are keen, however, to encourage establishments to make suitable provision wherever this is possible—for example, by making use of existing accommodation. I am placing in the Library a copy of a note, "Visitors' Centres: Some Guidelines for Establishments and Voluntary Organisations", which is being issued to the governors of all establishments.

We already make a regular contribution towards the running costs of five visitors' centres and emergency grants have also been made to a further four centres in this financial year. From April next year additional funds will be available to offer similar support to new centres.

Football Safety

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he intends to ask for a report on crowd safety at the Middlesbrough v. Leeds United game on Saturday 9 December; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I am aware of this incident which led to a number of spectators sustaining minor injuries and the chief constable has been asked for a report. We have also sought information from the Cleveland county council which is responsible for the ground's safety certificate. I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

EMPLOYMENT

Interview Expenses

Mr. Dover: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will extend the arrangements for interview expenses to be claimed for travel to local interviews.

Mr. Eggar: I have currently no plans to make further changes in the rules of the scheme.

Disabled Adults

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he expects to publish his Department's internal review on employment assistance to disabled adults.

Mr. Eggar: The review is at an advanced stage. The consultative document which will follow the review will be published as soon as possible.

Sheltered Placement Scheme

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he plans to raise the grant ceilings available to sheltered placement scheme sponsors.

Mr. Eggar: I shall be informing sponsors as soon as possible about arrangements for the sheltered placement scheme grant ceiling levels for 1990-91.

European Social Fund

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how much of the European social fund grants for 1990 in Great Britain is being allocated to the Training Agency; and for what purposes;

(2) what is the sum of European social fund grants for 1990; and what percentage is going to the voluntary sector.

Mr. Eggar: The European Commission has not yet informed us how much support it is going to make available for any programmes in 1990.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of the European social fund for projects in Great Britain has gone to the voluntary sector programme in the past five years.

Mr. Eggar: The European social fund allocations to voluntary sector applicants for years 1987 to 1989 inclusive are listed in the following table. These figures relate to organisations registered as charities or as companies limited by guarantees; and are expressed as a percentage of the total allocation to Great Britain rounded to the nearest £ million.

Year	*Percentage*
1987	4·11
1988	5·76
1989	6·11

The figures for the earlier years can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

HEALTH

AIDS

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will make a statement of the Government's policy towards fighting AIDS.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: As we made clear in our response to the seventh report of the Social Services Committee on AIDS, published on 24 November (Cm. 925), the Government remain committed to encouraging effective and responsible action among statutory and voluntary bodies and individuals to stem the spread of HIV; foster research to improve our understanding of AIDS and HIV infection: provide appropriate services for those affected by HIV and encourage a climate of understanding and compassion towards them; and to contribute to the international effort to control HIV and AIDS.

Dental Fillings

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research has been carried out on the possible toxic effect of mercury amalgam fillings currently used on dental patients in the National Health Service.

Mr. Freeman: In 1986, the Committee on Toxicity examined the available evidence on the risks and benefits of using dental amalgam. It found that there was some evidence that mercury is released from dental amalgam during the period following insertion and on removal of the restorations. However, it also found that long-term clinical evidence would seem to suggest the view that substantial amounts of mercury are not released from amalgam fillings. The committee stated that in its opinion the use of dental amalgam is free from risk of systematic toxicity and only a very few cases of hypersensitivity occur. In its view further research in this area would not merit priority.

Miscarriages

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many pregnant mothers suffered miscarriages in the last year for which figures available; and how many of these had received the amniocentesis test during pregnancy.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not held centrally.

Self-governing Hospitals

Mr. Cummings: To ask Secretary of State for Health which hospitals and services in the northern region have expressed a wish to become self-governing.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) on 29 November at columns *297-300*.

Medicines Control Agency

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will list the outstanding applications for a licence before the Medicines Control Agency; and how long each application has been awaiting approval.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We are unable to list the outstanding licence applications held by the Medicines Control Agency because this information is, in accordance with the Medicines Act 1968, treated as confidential.

We can however say that the number of applications for new licences awaiting a decision as at 30 November 1989 was:

	Number
Product licences	1,766
Product licences (parallel imports)	1,006
Manufacturers licences	21
Wholesale dealers licences	32
Non orthodox practitioner licences	3

The average time taken* to grant product licences and product licences (parallel imports) as at 30 June 1989 (latest available figure) was:

	Months
for new active substances	24
for abridged applications referred to Committees under the Medicines Act	32
for other abridged applications	16
for parallel imports	19

The estimated time taken to grant the following licences is currently:

	Days
for manufacturers licences	80-90
for wholesale dealers licences	80-90
for non orthodox practitioner licences	40

Note:

It should be noted that all times quoted are gross processing times and take no account of delays while companies prepare their replies to queries raised on applications.

Drug Tariff Committee

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will list the products at present before the drug tariff committee; and how long each product has been awaiting approval.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There is no drug tariff committee. Drugs and medicines are automatically included in the drug tariff, subject to any licensing requirements, unless they are specifically excluded from NHS prescription by general practitioners by virtue of the selected list scheme. The inclusion in the drug tariff of appliances, dressings and chemical reagents is subject to their approval by the Secretary of State.

Currently there are about 50 products on which suppliers are awaiting a response from the Department. The earliest application on which a response is still outstanding was received on 3 May 1989. Details of the products under consideration are commercially confidential.

NHS Patients (Leeds)

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of patients admitted to Leeds Western and Eastern area health authorities for National Health Service treatment had previously received *(a)* diagnosis and *(b)* treatment privately for the same or allied ailments.

Mr. Freeman: This information is not collected centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairmen of the health authorities to see if they can provide the information he requires.

Eye Test Charges

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has had any representations from opticians concerning the introduction of eye test charges since 1 April.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have received a number of representations from opticians since the introduction of charges for sight tests on 1 April this year.

General Practitioners

Mr. Wells: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what grants are *(a)* currently available or *(b)* proposed for the future to extend or refurbish general practitioners' surgeries and waiting rooms.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The two main types of grant which are currently available to general practitioners who improve their practice premises are cost rents and improvement grants. Both schemes are set to continue in future with certain improvements, in particular to enable family practitioner committees to target new investment on areas of greatest need.

Health Service Pay

Mr. Dover: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will investigate the pay levels for nurses and other health staff returning to the National Health Service after a period of employment in the private health sector.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The pay of NHS staff generally is determined either following the advice of the pay review bodies, or through direct negotiation in the Whitley councils. Arrangements for determining the starting pay for health staff returning to the NHS after service elsewhere, including the private sector, are a matter for those councils or, in the case of the review body groups, for the appropriate negotiating council or committee.

Mr. Dover: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about the arrangements for negotiating pay and conditions of service in hospitals wishing to opt out of the National Health Service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Hospitals and other units granted NHS trust status will remain fully part of the NHS. Staff who transfer from health authority to NHS trust employment on establishment of a NHS trust will retain their existing contracts and all rights arising from them, subject to the substitution of the new employer for the old and any consequential technical changes. Once established, it will be for NHS trust management boards to determine the arrangements for negotiating pay and conditions of service of their staff.

Yellow Card System

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to introduce payments to general practitioners for reporting adverse reactions through the yellow card system.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have no plans to do so.

Vaccination

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has received any reports of damage, either temporary or permanent, to children receiving the mumps, measles and rubella vaccine.

Mr. Freeman: A total of 555 yellow card reports of suspected adverse reactions, both serious and non-serious, to measles, mumps and rubella vaccination (MMR) have been received since its introduction in October 1988. More than 2·5 million doses of the vaccine have been distributed.

Monitoring of the safety of all vaccines by the National Institute of Biological Standards and Control, public health laboratories communicable disease surveillance centre, the Department and the manufacturers continues.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to ensure that parents who do not wish to have their children vaccinated are not subject to undue pressure from general practitioners.

Mr. Freeman: We have no plans to issue specific guidance in this respect. It is for GPs—who are professionally trained in this matter—to discuss vaccination with parents. All parents have the right to refuse vaccination for their children but we hope that they will not do so.

Heart Transplants

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has any plans to fund Leeds as a heart transplant centre; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: We have no immediate plans to announce the designation of further heart transplant centres. Earlier this year we announced that two additional centres would receive supraregional designation and funding from 1 April 1990. The new centres are at St. George's hospital in Tooting and the Northern general hospital in Sheffield. The supraregional services advisory group keeps the service under review and advises Ministers accordingly.

Ambulance Service

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will state the range and nature of each extended skill qualification available to the personnel of the ambulance service together with the current incremental payment per annum for each.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Extended ambulance training to the NHS Training Authority standard is designed to save life and reduce morbidity and mortality by extending the skills of selected ambulance staff in endotracheal intubation, intravenous infusion and cardiac care. Some ambulance staff have received training to meet all or part of the NHS Training Authority package or to local standards but currently do not receive additional payment for this. The management side's final pay offer includes an additional £500 a year backdated to 1 April 1989 for staff with extended training to NHS Training Authority standards and required to use paramedical skills. There is also an undertaking to agree, by 28 February 1990, a national framework for the recognition of staff trained to intermediate standards with payments also backdated to 1 April 1989.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the numbers of personnel of the London ambulance service currently trained to NHSTA certificate standards who would qualify for the advertised additional £500 pay; and what increase in such numbers is planned by the London Ambulance Board.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The management of the London ambulance service is the responsibility of the South West Thames regional health authority to which I refer the hon. Member.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the pay, at 1989 prices, of a qualified ambulance person for each year since 1974.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information about national basic pay rates for qualified ambulance men/women since 1974 at 1989 prices is in the table.

Ambulancemen basic pay 1974-1988 at 1989 prices

Date of settlement	*Basic pay* £	*Basic pay at 1989 prices* £
1 January 1974	1,981	9,632
1 January 1975[1]	1,981	8,227
1 January 1976[1]	2,607	8,576
1 January 1977[1]	2,503	7,296
1 January 1978[1]	2,701	6,721
1 January 1979	2,912	6,697
1 April 1980[2]	3,994	7,943
1 January 1981	4,304	7,320
1 April 1982	4,579	6,459
1 April 1983	4,797	6,495
1 April 1984	5,014	6,499
1 April 1985[3]	8,604	10,434
1 April 1986	9,120	10,801
1 April 1987	9,576	10,864
1 April 1988	10,093	10,925
1 April 1989[4]	11,001	—

[1] Period of Pay Restraint.

[2] Following Final Clegg Award Payment. Interim payments were made on 1 August 1979 and 1 January 1980.

[3] New Pay Structure includes Special Duty payments and an element for overtime.

[4] Final Pay Offer.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what representations he has received from police forces and the Police Federation concerning the ambulance dispute;

(2) what representations he has received from regional and district health authorities concerning the conduct of the ambulance dispute.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A few representations have been received from district health authorities and none from the police or Police Federation.

Blood

Mr. Terry Fields: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if, pursuant to the answer in the *Official Report*, 7 December, column *369*, he will list private sector organisations which have received blood from National Health Service sources; and what costs were recovered for collection, processing, handling and transporting blood.

Mr. Freeman: Information on individual non-National Health Service hospitals which have received blood from the National Health Service is not held centrally. Charges made to the private sector to recover the costs to the national blood transfusion service of collection, processing, handling and transport of blood amounted to £1,846,123 for the financial year 1987-88, and a provisional figure of £1,980,647 for 1988-89.

Resource Management

Mr. Gerald Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if, pursuant to his answer on 28 November, *Official Report*, column *228*, he will name the 20 hospitals who will move into full resource management in this financial year; if he will give details of the programme for the remaining sites; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I am able to announce the names of 20 hospitals which will proceed further with the implementation of resource management. This involves the purchase of computerised databases and nurse information systems in this financial year. All these hospitals have been preparing for resource management since my announcement in March 1989 that we were extending the programme. I am pleased we have made such rapid progress. This is a tribute to the hard work of the Health Service and augurs well for the future. The hospitals are:

Region and hospital
Northern
  Darlington Memorial
  Royal Infirmary, Sunderland
  Royal Victoria Infirmary, Newcastle
  North Tyneside General

Yorkshire
  Airedale General Hospital
  York District General Hospital
  St. James's University Hospital, Leeds
  Pontefract General Infirmary

Trent
  Sheffield Children's Hospital
  Northern General, Sheffield
  Chesterfield and North Derbyshire Hospital
  Doncaster Royal Infirmary
  Leicester Glenfield

East Anglian
  Addenbrookes

South East Thames
  Greenwich District Hospital
  St. Thomas' Hospital

Oxford
  Radcliffe Infirmary

Mersey
  Southport District General Hospital
  Whiston St. Helens Hospital
  Leighton Hospital, Crewe

Of the remaining sites I expect that the 30 sites of the original 50 announced in March 1989 will themselves move to full resource management during 1990-91. I expect others to join them and the National Health Service management executive is finalising details of a further 50 hospitals which will commence their preparation for resource management as soon as possible. This preparatory phase is crucial in determining how to involve doctors in the management of hospital resources with the aim of improving patient care; the management executive is discussing with the JCC what guidance can be given on this.

Abortion Bill

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received regarding the RU486 abortion pill; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In the past 12 months we have received some 30 representations about the drug RU486 expressing views for and against its introduction.

Cot Deaths

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research has been done into the possible link between artifically softened water and cot deaths; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We are aware of no such research. As we indicated in the Government's reply to the Social Services Committee report on perinatal, neonatal and infant mortality (Cm 741), the Medical Research Council is currently undertaking a major review of literature on research into the causes of sudden infant death. I will arrange for this question to be brought to its attention.

Community Care

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on what date he expects the report on the development of community care services under section 11 of the Disabled Persons Act to be laid before Parliament.

Mr. Freeman: The first report will be laid before Parliament before the end of this year.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Parliamentary Pension Fund

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will take steps to ensure that all parliamentary contributory pension fund moneys are invested in ethically acceptable investments and that investments in South African companies are disposed of.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Determination of the investment policy relating to parliamentary contributory pension fund moneys is a matter for the trustees of that fund. I understand that they have laid down broad investment policy guidelines which are designed to preserve the asset base of the fund and to ensure that the liabilities of present and future pensioners are met.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Zoonoses Order

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will repeal the Zoonoses Order.

Mr. Maclean: I have no plans to repeal the Zoonoses Order 1989.

Animal Diseases

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether any decisions have been taken by the Council of Ministers in the post-1992 control of foot and mouth disease, classical and African swine fever and rabies; and if he will list the incidence of each of these diseases in each member state.

Mr. Maclean: Community measures, agreed by the Council, are already in place for the control or eradication of these diseases but no decisions have been taken on measures to apply after 1992.

The number of outbreaks reported in member states in the last five years are as follows:

	1985	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*[1]1989*
Foot and Mouth Disease					
Federal Republic of Germany	—	—	2	4	—
Italy	131	150	167	7	74
Spain	—	1	—	—	—
Classical Swine Fever					
Belgium	67	80	83	2	8
France	2	20	5	15	—
Federal Republic of Germany	351	46	41	3	62
United Kingdom	—	10	1	—	—
Greece	1	—	—	—	—
Italy	26	29	13	12	10
Luxembourg	—	—	1	—	—
Netherlands	36	1	1	—	—
Spain	1	—	—	—	—
African Swine Fever					
Belgium	12	—	—	—	—
Italy	33	21	22	20	28
Netherlands	—	2	—	—	—
Portugal	51	672	645	698	279
Spain	390	393	793	618	1[illegible]
Rabies (number of cases in domestic and wild animals)					
Belgium	446	342	242	514	398
Denmark	10	105	48	—	1
France	2,013	2,465	2,068	2,223	2,192
Federal Republic of Germany	6,865	5,259	3,791	2,628	1,744
Greece	1	—	1	—	—
Italy	122	29	—	21	47
Luxembourg	67	137	23	4	13
Netherlands	16	1	86	52	8
Spain (Mainland)	—	—	2	—	1

[1] Part year only.

Meat (Humane Slaughter Labelling)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to introduce a scheme of humane slaughter labelling of meat.

Mr. Maclean: The slaughter of any livestock whose meat is intended for sale must be carried out in accordance with statutory welfare conditions. The food advisory committee is to undertake a review of food labelling and will be considering very carefully the question of additional labelling to indicate farming practices and methods of slaughter.

Salmonella

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many veterinary investigation officers have been checked to see if they are carriers of salmonella; and what were the results;

(2) whether veterinary investigation officers who are used to investigate salmonella outbreaks in poultry flocks are required to be confirmed non-carriers of salmonella.

Mr. Maclean: My veterinary officers, who carry out investigations into cases of possible salmonella infection in poultry flocks, are not routinely checked to see if they are carriers of the disease nor are they required to be confirmed non-carriers of salmonella. Strict measures are taken to ensure proper hygiene and disinfection when veterinary officers visit farms.

North Sea (Industrial Waste)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what applications have been made by Her Majesty's Government for any derogation from the terms of the North sea conference agreement of 1987 prohibiting the deposit of industrial waste in the North sea after 31 December; and if he will state the quantities of material concerned, the amount of toxic content, and the periods for which application has been made.

Mr. Gummer: The ministerial declaration from the 1987 North sea conference provides for a country to show to the competent international organisation that a waste to be disposed of causes no harm in the marine environment. It has been agreed that the Oslo commission is the competent international organisation for this purpose, and the Oslo commission has agreed an appropriate procedure to be followed. Submissions have been made to the Oslo commission in respect of three wastes comprising an annual volume of 51,000 tonnes. Under the conditions of disposal the wastes are not toxic in the marine environment. The Oslo commission procedure requires that licences be reviewed every three years.

EC Sugar Regime

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will meet representatives of United Kingdom industrial sugar associations before deciding upon his attitude to the reform of the European Community sugar regime;

(2) when he expects the Commission to publish its proposals for the reform of the European Community sugar regime.

Mr. Gummer: Consultations with organisations interested in the review of the sugar regime are already under way. I will take all views put to me into account when deciding upon my approach to the review.

EC Food

Mr. Madden: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make urgent arrangements to ensure European Community meats and butter are distributed in future by Bradford council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Bradford council did not register an interest in operating this scheme and consequently I was, and am, unable to make any allocation of produce to the council under the current arrangements.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what reports he has received from Bradford about inconvenience experienced by pensioners and others eligible to receive European Community butter and meats when collecting such butter and meats.

Mr. Gummer: We have received two letters enclosing some press cuttings concerning the inconvenience of queuing experienced by those seeking to obtain butter and beef in the Bradford area under the EC surplus food scheme.

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will set out the precise guidelines on the administrative arrangements for the distribution of surplus EEC butter and in particular who should collect the 5p for each pack and the intended use of the money so collected.

Mr. Gummer: The administration arrangements for the application of the surplus food scheme are set out in the intervention board's leaflet LP 39, a copy of which is being sent to my hon. Friend. To cover their administrative costs, designated organisations may levy a charge upon recipients of the food not exceeding 20p per kilogramme.

Wastes

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 11 December to the hon. Member for South Shields, which countries he is in touch with in connection with the relevant wastes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Comments on our submissions have now been received from Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, the Federal Republic of Germany and Norway.

National Fruit Collection

Mr. Speed: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make a statement on the future of the national fruit collection and further changes at Agricultural Development and Advisory Service centres.

Mr. Maclean: The national fruit collection, originally established at Wisley and currently situated at Brogdale experimental horticulture station in Kent, is a unique and internationally renowned source of genetic material and part of the nation's heritage. We have consistently made clear that we shall continue to provide financial support for the collection so as to safeguard its long-term future, although we would not necessarily retain it at the Brogdale site. After very careful consideration we have concluded that Wye college, part of the university of London, should become the collection's permanent home since this offers the best prospects for its future security and stability.

We announced in March that we propose to close Brogdale EHS unless alternative industry funding was forthcoming. Extensive inquiries have failed to identify sufficient industry support to sustain its R and D programme which is intended primarily for commercial growers. In the circumstances we have decided that Brogdale EHS should close as an ADAS experimental station on 31 March 1990.

Against this background we examined carefully the options for the future management of the collection. We would have liked the collection to have remained at Brogdale, but this was, unfortunately, not possible. In particular we were concerned that it would have been isolated there from wider horticultural, academic and scientific expertise and that in the long run the additional overhead inherent in a small, separate unit would have proved too great. We were attracted by Swale borough council's offer to take on the management of the collection at the Brogdale site. But we had to conclude that a borough council could not offer the perpetuity of commitment or scientific strength which is needed for the collection. This led us to the view that it was not in the best interests of the collection to stay at Brogdale after its closure as an ADAS station.

Two organisations—Wye college and the East Malling Trust—offered to manage the collection on their own sites. We carefully studied the detailed information they provided and concluded that there was a clear case in favour of Wye college. As part of the university of London, Wye college will be able to ensure the collection's long-term security and continued independence from other fruit research and breeding activites, in particular for plant variety rights (PVR) testing, a point to which much importance is attached internationally. Moreover, the college is well placed to develop the collection's use for scientific and educational purposes. We naturally gave very careful consideration to the impressive bid put forward by the East Malling Trust. We were, however, forced to the conclusion that it would be preferable to continue to keep the national fruit collection separate from other Government and industry funded activities on the East Malling site. It is in keeping with the collection's health status and current usage that it remains independent from the research and breeding at East Malling.

We have therefore decided that the collection should be transferred to Wye college. The transition will take about five years, during which the integrity of the genetic material will be properly safeguarded. In particular, the existing trees will not be removed until we are satisfied that transfer to the new site has been fully and satisfactorily accomplished.

Finally, as a further step towards the rationalisation of ADAS R and D facilities, Trawsgoed experimental husbandry farm, near Aberystwyth, Dyfed, will cease to operate as an ADAS experimental centre as from 31 March 1991. An announcement today by the Agricultural and Food Research Council outlines the council's future plans for grassland and environmental research, and makes reference to the Trawsgoed farm facilities and the part of the regional laboratory complex now surplus to ADAS reqirements. The latter was foreshadowed in the answer of my right hon. Friend the then Minister of Agriculture of 21 March and represents a successful outcome to the search of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales for alternative uses for the laboratory. Negotiations are in train to transfer to AFRC the farm and laboratory facilities which the council will require in order to implement its plans.

The Pwllpeiran site of the present combined Trawsgoed/Pwllpeiran EHF will not itself be affected by the changes at Trawsgoed. However, discussions on its future are taking place, in order to complete the programme of rationalisation in ADAS following the Government's withdrawal from funding of near-market R and D.

Conservation of Flora

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on his Department's responsibilities for the genetic conservation of flora.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 12 December 1989]:* My Department makes a grant in aid to the royal botanic gardens for the purposes set out in the National Heritage Act 1983 which includes the keeping of its national reference collections. In addition my Department provides funding for the collection of vegetables at the Institute of Horticultural Research, Wellesbourne and maintains the national fruit collection at its experimental horticultural station at Brogdale. As I announced today in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed), we are safeguarding the collection's future by transferring it to Wye college, part of the university of London.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether there are any plans to update the guidance given in the "Handbook for Delegated Medical Practitioners" as it relates to myalgic encephalomyelitis.

Mr. Scott: I understand that there are no plans to update the section of the handbook for delegated medical practitioners relating to myalgic encephalomyelitis. This handbook is prepared by the Attendance Allowance Board which is independent of the Department and Ministers.

Disabled People

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if people currently eligible for rate relief under the Rating (Disabled Persons) Act 1978 will be eligible for equivalent rebates under the poll tax when it is introduced in England.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Relief under the Rating (Disabled Persons) Act 1978, which is designed to avoid imposing higher rates on disabled people if they have to make alterations to their home, will no longer be required when domestic rates are abolished and the community charge introduced. Disabled people on lower incomes will be entitled to community charge benefit, which will reduce their bill: they will receive higher amounts of benefit than other people on a similar income whose personal circumstances are otherwise the same.

Vaccine Damage Payments Scheme

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he intends to increase publicity for the vaccine damage payments scheme;

(2) in what ways the existence of the vaccine damage payments scheme has been made known to parents since the inception of the scheme.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Department of Health and Social Security issued health notice HN(79)7 and local authority social services letter LASSL(79)1 in January 1979 informing heath and local authorities of the introduction of the scheme and asking them to bring it to the notice of staff and others working with possible beneficiaries. The notice and letter are still current. The Department tries to ensure that its leaflet on the scheme is widely available in places where potential claimants are likely to seek help, including social services departments, citizens advice bureaux and voluntary organisations. There is general information on the scheme in our leaflet for sick or disabled people which is freely available in the Department's local offices and post offices. We have no plans at present for further publicity.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he plans to allow children damaged by the mumps, measles and rubella vaccine to receive payments from the vaccine damage payments scheme.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The list of diseases to which the Vaccine Damage Payments Act applies includes measles and rubella. We are considering whether to add mumps to the list and I shall let the right hon. Member have our decision as soon as possible.

Pensioners

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what specific addition to the retirement pension has been or is to be made to ensure that pensioners not qualifying for income support do not suffer any reduction in living standard as a result of the introduction of the community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The community charge will be included in the retail prices index which is used to calculate increases to the state retirement pension.

Income Support

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give, for each client group, a table for rates of income support showing (i) the illustrative figures in the technical annex to the 1985 White Paper, (ii) the illustrative figures uprated by the retail prices index since then, (iii) the illustrative figures uprated by the Rossi index, (iv) the amounts provided to compensate for the 20 per cent. rates or poll tax contribution and (v) the proposed income support rates for April 1990.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[pursuant to her reply, 13 December 1989, c. 669-70]:* I regret that the information given for disabled pensioners aged 60 or over was incorrect. The corrected information is in the table.

Income Support Client Group	*Technical Annex to the 1985 White Paper*	*Uprated by*		*Compensation for 20 per cent. Community Charge Contribution*[3]	*Proposed rates from April 1990*
		RPI[1]	*ROSSI*[2]		
	£	£	£	£	£
Pensioners					
Age 80+ single	42·85	52·49	50·19	1·30	53·75
Age 80+ couple	65·45	80·18	76·65	2·30	81·85
Age 75-79 single	40·60	49·73	47·55	1·30	51·10
Age 75-79 couple	63·25	77·48	74·07	2·30	79·20
Age 60+ disabled single	42·85	52·49	50·19	1·30	53·75
Age 60+ disabled couple	65·45	80·18	76·65	2·30	81·85
Age 60-74 single	40·60	49·73	47·55	1·30	48·50
Age 60-74 couple	63·25	77·48	74·07	2·30	75·55
Sick and Disabled[4]					
Age 18-24 single	36·25	44·41	42·46	1·15	44·20
Age 25+ single	42·85	52·49	50·19	1·30	52·10
Age 25+ couple	65·45	80·18	76·65	2·30	79·70
Lone Parent					
With 2 children[5]	65·00	79·62	76·12	1·30	78·75
Unemployed					
Age 18-24 single	24·00	29·40	28·11	1·15	28·80
Age 25+ single	30·60	37·48	35·84	1·30	36·70
Couple no children	48·00	58·80	56·21	2·30	57·60
Couple 2 children[5]	78·95	96·71	92·45	2·30	95·55

[1] Based on movement in the index of Retail Prices between November 1985 and October 1989 (the latest for which the index is available).

[2] Based on movement in the index of Retail Prices (less housing) between November 1985 and October 1989.

[3] Amounts included in benefit levels from April 1989. These amounts, which replaced those previously included from April 1988 to compensate for the 20 per cent. rates contribution, now form part of the overall benefit levels to be uprated from April 1990.

[4] In receipt of disability premium.

[5] Assumes one child under age 11 and one child aged 11-15.

SCOTLAND

Fisheries

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the netting stations, whether or not in current use, to which district boards have granted exemptions from fishery assessments.

Mr. Lang: A district salmon fishery board has power to impose a fishery assessment in its district at such uniform rate or rates as it determines. There is no power for district boards to grant exemptions from the fishery assessment.

Tobacco and Alcohol

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many prosecutions have taken place in respect of illegal sales to children of *(a)* tobacco and *(b)* alcohol in each of the past five years for which figures are available; and what steps he proposes to improve enforcement of the law.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The available information is set out in the table. It is not possible to identify offences of selling tobacco to children separately in the Scottish Home and Health Department's classification of crimes and offences.

Measures are under consideration to facilitate law enforcement on the sale of alcohol to children and to improve controls on off-sales, but it is not yet possible to say what form any relevant provision will take. The problem of access by children to tobacco products is also under consideration, but I am not yet in a position to say what may be the outcome.

Persons proceeded against for sale of drink to persons aged under 18

Year	*Number*
1984	194
1985	175
1986	212
1987	231
1988[1]	270

[1] Provisional.

Unemployment

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what the present rate of unemployment is in Scotland; and what the European average is.

Mr. Lang: In November 1989 the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in Scotland was 8·6 per cent. of the work force

The latest available estimate of the seasonally adjusted standardised European Community unemployment rate was 9·1 per cent. of the labour force in September 1989.

National Heritage

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether his Department consulted the Forestry Commission prior to publication of the consultation paper on Scotland's national heritage.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No.

Nature Conservancy Council

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the chairman of the Nature Conservancy Council consulted him over the Nature Conservancy Council's own proposals for a federal structure prior to his announcement of 11 July.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The chairman of the Nature Conservancy Council wrote to my right hon. and learned Friend in December 1988 to advise him that a study into a federal model was being conducted by NCC.

Health Service

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each year since 1959 *(a)* the total amount spent on health and *(b)* the capital expenditure, giving the figures at constant prices.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information is readily available only from 1974-75 and this is set out in the following tables:

(a) Total National Health Service Expenditure in Scotland

	£ million cash	*Adjusted by the GDP deflator to 1988-89 prices*
1974-75	458	1,809
1975-76	603	1,894
1976-77	685	1,898
1977-78	777	1,891
1978-79	893	1,964
1979-80	1,064	2,003
1980-81	1,343	2,137
1981-82	1,531	2,219
1982-83	1,660	2,244
1983-84	1,773	2,289
1984-85	1,901	2,339
1985-86	2,015	2,352
1986-87	2,144	2,421
1987-88	2,328	2,497
1988-89	2,591	2,591

(b) Total Capital Expenditure on the National Health Service in Scotland

	£ million cash	*Adjusted by the GDP deflator to 1988-89 prices*
1974-75	33	130
1975-76	42	132
1976-77	41	114
1977-78	42	102
1978-79	52	114
1979-80	64	121
1980-81	69	110
1981-82	89	129
1982-83	103	139
1983-84	108	140
1984-85	118	145
1985-86	132	154
1986-87	116	131
1987-88	120	129
1988-89	131	131

Teachers

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland by how much he expects the level of vacancies for teachers to rise in the next 10 years.

Mr. Lang: I refer the hon. Member to table 15 of the Scottish Education Department's statistical bulletin No. 12/B7/1989 entitled "Teachers—Key Statistics on Demand and Supply", a copy of which is in the House of Commons Library. Action to respond to the increased demand for teachers by increasing the intake of colleges of education is already well in hand.

School Boards and Children's Panels

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the level of recruitment of new children's panel members that has been achieved, with particular reference to the Strathclyde, Lothian and Central regions.

Mr. Lang: Recruitment of members of children's panels is a matter for each regional and island authority. Information is still being gathered centrally about the level of recruitment this year. Normally there are more applicants than vacancies. There is always a problem attracting sufficient suitable male applicants, and Lothian and Strathclyde regions are undertaking a second local recruiting exercise with a view to attracting more men. Central Region has, I understand, been able to meet its requirements this year from the applications received following the initial campaign.

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will make a statement on the respective sums spent upon the recruitment of school board and children's panel members;

(2) what sum has been spent over the last year on the recruitment of members for school boards.

Mr. Lang: School board members are elected. The organisation of school board elections is a matter for education authorities. Figures on expenditure by central Government on information about school boards were set out in my reply of 27 October to the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish).

On the question of expenditure on recruitment for children's panel members, I refer the hon. Member to my separate reply today.

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what sum was spent on advertising for the recruitment of new children's panel members in Scotland in the current autumn.

Mr. Lang: The costs incurred centrally in the recent national advertising campaign for applicants to be considered for membership of children's panels amounted to £45,000. It is understood some regions have undertaken further local advertising, but details of these costs are not available centrally.

Secondary Schools

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his Department's new staffing formula for secondary schools, giving explanations for the multiplier of 0·059 and the additional factor of 10·24 which is applied to school rolls in that formula.

Mr. Lang: I will write to the hon. Member to provide him with information about the conclusions of the staffing review.

Education Expenditure

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how much money will be spent on student loans in Scotland in 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93;

(2) how much money will be spent on student grants in Scotland in 1989-90, 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93;

(3) by how much his education budget will increase in cash and percentage terms in the years 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93, excluding the costs of student maintenance.

Mr. Rifkind: My detailed expenditure plans within the totals I announced on 6 December (*Official Report*, columns 328-33) will be set out in the Scottish Commentary on Public Expenditure to 1992-93, which will be published in the new year.

Training Schemes

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cases have been found by the Training Agency of agencies or managers claiming money for trainees who did not attend their schemes.

Mr. Lang: The Training Agency's investigations have not revealed cases in Scotland where false claims were made in respect of trainees who did not participate in Employment Training, nor has it been offered substantive evidence of such cases.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many inspectors the Training Agency has for employment training schemes in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: The Training Agency has 115 staff in Scotland monitoring training agents and training managers, and six training standards inspectors. Financial checks on all employment training providers are carried out by the Training Agency's professional accountant. The Training Agency also employs independent consultants to undertake a range of quality development tasks.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many experts have been dispensed with since employment training schemes started.

Mr. Lang: Since employment training started the Training Agency in Scotland has not found it necessary to dispense with the services of any training agent for employment training.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many training managers have been dispensed with since employment schemes started.

Mr. Lang: In Scotland the contract of one training manager for employment training has been terminated since employment training first started.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much will be spent in Scotland on the employment training scheme in 1989-90 and 1990-91.

Mr. Lang: The total planned expenditure on employment training in Great Britain in 1989-90 is £1,271 million. No separate detailed figure is provided for Scotland. However, the Scottish share is estimated at approximately £153 million. An equivalent figure for 1990-91 is not yet available.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what action has been taken by the Training Agency to ensure that the traineeships offered by training agencies and training managers match Scotland's employment needs;

(2) what analysis has taken place of the skill deficiencies which employment training is remedying.

Mr. Lang: Training proposals from prospective training agents and training managers are agreed with the Training Agency and form part of the final contract. Before agreeing to seek proposals the Training Agency must first be satisfied that they are in line with local labour market needs.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action is taken by the Training Agency where the misappropriation or misapplication of public funds is suspected on employment training schemes.

Mr. Lang: If misappropriation or misapplication of public funds is identified the Training Agency will undertake a full and thorough investigation.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action is taken to ensure that all trainees on the employment training schemes receive the appropriate off-the-job training.

Mr. Lang: Off-the-job training provision is examined as part of the ongoing programme monitoring carried out by Training Agency staff under the approved training organisation process.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what checks are undertaken by the Training Agency to ensure that those said to be on employment training schemes are actually attending.

Mr. Lang: The ongoing programme monitoring by Training Agency staff under the approved training organisation process includes examination of records of attendance. The Training Agency has recently introduced a revised stringent system of checks.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidelines the Training Agency gives its staff on the frequency and volume of the monitoring of employment training schemes.

Mr. Lang: Frequent visits to training agents and training managers are undertaken by Training Agency staff in accordance with a sampling framework. The appropriate sample size for both training agents and training managers will depend on the size of the individual organisation and number of locations at which it operates. The frequency of visits will vary and will be governed by the agency's confidence in the organisation visited.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what independent research he has commissioned into the working of the employment training scheme in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: The Government have not commissioned any independent research into the working of employment training in Scotland. However, the Government are aware of a study of employment training in Scotland, commissioned by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, the standing forum on special employment measures and the Scottish Trades Union Congress, which found that

> "despite the undoubted difficulties and drawbacks of current Employment Training, there are positive and constructive options developing which would, if taken further, lead to an improvement in the quality of Employment Training and in the longer term, to the development of an integrated policy on adult training operated through local enterprise companies".

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has about the nature of firms, voluntary organisations or other bodies offering placements on the employment training schemes.

Mr. Lang: It is in the first instance for training managers to build up and maintain a database on appropriate placements for employment training; the Training Agency monitors this as part of its ongoing monitoring process.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of trainees on employment training schemes enter permanent full-time jobs as a result of their training.

Mr. Lang: This information is not available in the form requested. The result of the first regular 100 per cent. follow-up survey shows that in Great Britain 59 per cent. of leavers who had completed their training went into jobs, self-employment or further full-time training.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether any agents or managers have been warned or dismissed for not providing the appropriate off-the-job training on employment training schemes.

Mr. Lang: I cannot provide details of training agents and training managers who have been warned for not providing the appropriate off-the-job training because the terms of contract with training agents and training managers require such communications to be treated as commercial in confidence. No contracts have been terminated for reasons connected with the provision of off-the-job training.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether there are any controls placed on the methods used by training agents to obtain employment training scheme placements from employers.

Mr. Lang: It is the responsibility of the training managers (not training agents) to negotiate placements with employers as part of their contractual responsibilities. The suitability of such placements is monitored by the Training Agency as part of its ongoing monitoring process.

Bus Companies

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to be able to clarify the ownership situation with regard to the proposed merger of the Scottish Bus Group and Highland Scottish; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Highland Scottish Omnibuses Limited is a subsidiary of the Scottish Bus Group and will in due course be advertised for sale as part of the programme of privatisation of the group. It is not possible at this stage to say when Highland Scottish Omnibuses Limited will be offered for sale but it is expected that the first companies will be advertised early in 1990 and that the whole programme will be complete in early 1991.

Conductive Education

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress has been made in considering the possibility of opening in Scotland a new centre using conductive education.

Mr. Lang: I am glad to announce that, subject to approval of detailed proposals, we plan to go ahead with the establishment of a new centre in Scotland for the education of children with motor disorders, such as cerebral palsy. We are making provision within the Scottish education programme for £2·5 million spread over the next three years as the Government's contribution to setting up and running the centre.

The work of the centre will be based on conductive education as practised at the Peto institute in Hungary. It will have a multi-disciplinary staff and will cater initially for about 40 children in the age range two to seven years. The centre will be available to children from all parts of Scotland and we intend that residential accommodation should be provided for children and accompanying parents who live outwith daily travelling distance.

The new centre will represent a valuable new resource for Scotland. It will extend options for parents of handicapped children and provide training facilities for staff from other special schools where elements of conductive education are used. It is hoped, also, that the centre will be able to give practical support to children who are home between visits to the Peto institute itself.

A site has not yet been chosen but an important consideration is that the centre should be within daily travelling distance for as large a number of potential pupils as possible. We hope to open the centre before the end of 1991.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Unemployment

14. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the level of unemployment in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: The unemployment figures released this morning are encouraging. They show that the number of people in the Province claiming unemployment benefit has fallen to 99,223.

Chief Constable

15. **Mr. Hayes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he next intends to meet the Chief Constable of Northern Ireland; and what matters he intends to discuss.

Mr. Cope: My right hon. Friend and I meet the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary regularly. Our meetings are confidential and it would not be right to disclose their content.

Republic of Ireland

16. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any plans to meet the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Brooke: It is currently planned that the next meeting of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference will take place in January. I have no plans at present to meet the Taoiseach. I paid him a courtesy call in Dublin before the last Intergovernmental Conference on 30 November.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

17. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will make a statement on his most recent meetings with political representatives in the Province regarding the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Brooke: I have met the leaders of all the main constitutional political parties in Northern Ireland in the months following my appointment, and the agreement was one of many subjects discussed at those meetings. The offer originally made by my predecessor to brief party leaders following meetings of the Intergovernmental Conference stands, and when requested I have given such briefings.

35. **Mr. Peter Robinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he is prepared to consider any alternative to the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Brooke: The Government are of course committed to the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and to the principles it embodies. I am always ready to consider constructive proposals particularly where they enjoy a wide measure of support.

24. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent discussion he has had regarding the Anglo-Irish Agreement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The last Intergovernmental Conference took place on 30 November. I have met the party leaders of all the main constitutional parties in Northern Ireland in the months following my appointment and the agreement was one of many subjects discussed at those meetings.

Conway Mill

18. **Mr. Hume:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the Government's reasons for refusing to fund the activities at Conway Mill in Belfast.

Mr. Brooke: As indicated in my predecessor's written reply of 9 February 1989 to my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) the Government's policy on the payment of public funds to community groups, where there is evidence that such payments could directly or indirectly further the aims of a paramilitary organisation, has been applied to groups operating in or out of Conway Mill because of the nature and extent of paramilitary influence within the mill.

Security

19. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

33. **Rev. Ian Paisley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Brooke: I refer my hon. Friend and the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross).

Small Businesses

20. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he next expects to meet representatives of small businesses.

Mr. Needham: While there are no firm dates at present, both my right hon. Friend and I regularly meet representatives of small businesses and small business owners in the course of our duties in Northern Ireland.

Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference

21. **Mr. John D. Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how often the Anglo-Irish Ministerial Council will meet during the first six months of 1990.

Mr. Brooke: I assume that the right hon. Gentleman is referring to the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference. We are planning to have around five meetings of the conference between 1 January and the end of July 1990.

Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference last met; and what subject was discussed.

Mr. Brooke: The Intergovernmental Conference last met on 30 November. The joint statement issued afterwards was placed in the Library and the Vote Office.

Youth Training Workshop

22. **Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what estimate he has made of how many youth training workshops in Northern Ireland are likely to remain solvent under the proposed block funding arrangements to be introduced in 1990.

Mr. Needham: I am satisfied that workshops should be able to remain solvent under the proposed block funding arrangements as long as their management committees take action to adjust their operations to improve efficiency and cost-effectiveness. They are currently being assisted by management consultants engaged by the Department of Economic Development to prepare business plans for the future including assessing costs against likely revenue. It will be up to the management committees to decide what action to take in light of the outcome of this process.

Cardinal O'Fiaich

23. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he next plans to meet Cardinal Thomas O'Fiaich to discuss terrorism in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Brooke: I have no immediate plans to do so.

Hare Coursing

25. **Mr. Kilfedder:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will introduce legislation to ban hare coursing in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: No.

Integrated Schools

26. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what response he has received to his proposals for integrated schools.

Dr. Mawhinney: A wide range of helpful responses has been made to the Government's proposals for integrated schools, as a result of which a number of detailed changes have been made in the draft order.

Planning Enforcement Notices

27. **Mr. Clifford Forsythe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many planning enforcement orders have been issued in the constituency of South Antrim in each of the last three years.

Mr. Needham:

Year	
1987	2
1988	4
1989 (to date)	5

De Lorean

28. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much money has been recovered from the investment in the De Lorean car company; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: As my predecessor informed my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) on 7 June 1988 and 28 July 1988 *Official Report* columns *463* and *529*, some £12·6 million has been recovered. A dividend is expected from the trustee of the De Lorean Motor Company, the United States company in bankruptcy. The recovery of further amounts will depend on the outcome of legal actions and inquiries in the United Kingdom, the United States and Switzerland.

Parade

29. **Mr. Ashdown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received concerning the life sentence review board and the upcoming Christmas paroles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: Representations on various aspects of the life sentence review process, including the constitution and functioning of the life sentence review board, have been received from time to time. We shall be considering these representations in the light of the Government's response to the recently published report of the House of Lords Select Committee on Murder and Life Imprisonment which included recommendations about the review system in Great Britain.

As regards this year's Christmas home leave schemes for life and determinate sentence prisoners, we have received several representations about the eligibility criteria and a few on behalf of individuals.

Roadworks (Belfast)

30. **Mr. Stott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what improvements to traffic flow he expects to result from the work currently taking place on the main road in Andersonstown, West Belfast.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A central lane is being inserted for right-turning vehicles leaving one free-flowing lane in each direction. This should significantly reduce traffic congestion.

Economy

31. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the economic future of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Cope: Northern Ireland is an integral part of the United Kingdom, and consequently its economic prospects are part of those set out by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Autumn Statement on 15 November 1989. In recognition of Northern Ireland's particular economic and social problems the Government continue to place a high priority on the wide range of enterprise, training and industrial development programmes which seek to strengthen the Northern Ireland economy.

Downe Hospital, Downpatrick

32. **Mr. McGrady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when capital funds will be released for the third stage of the Downe hospital, Downpatrick on the Downshire hospital site; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: Further development at the Downe hospital is a matter for the Eastern health and social services board in the first instance. The board has made no firm proposals on this matter.

Terrorism

34. **Rev. William McCrea:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how he plans to defeat terrorism in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Brooke: We will ensure that the security forces have all necessary moral and physical support to interdict terrorist operations, pursue the perpetrators, and bring them to justice in the courts. We have taken measures to cut off terrorist funds and supplies. These measures aimed directly at terrorism will be enhanced and supported by wider measures of political, economic and social policy, which aim to create a fair, just and prosperous society in which local people from all sides of the community play a major part in administering the Province through widely accepted local institutions.

South Down (Jobs)

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to increase job creation and industrial promotion in South Down in the next six months.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Government will continue to give high priority to economic development throughout Northern Ireland including South Down. Substantial resources have been made available to the Industrial Development Board and to the Local Enterprise Development Unit. Both these organisations will continue to be active in encouraging the establishment of new industry and the growth of existing businesses so as to secure viable long-term jobs for all areas of the Province.

Disabled Persons (Northern Ireland) Act

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the implementation of the Disabled Persons (Northern Ireland) Act; and whether he is in a position to announce dates for the implementation of those sections of the Act which have been implemented in the equivalent legislation in England, Wales and Scotland.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Sections 9, 10, 11 (except paragraph (4)) and 12 of the Disabled Persons (Northern Ireland) Act 1989 came into operation on 7 December 1989. Section 4 (except paragraph (b) 5, 6, 8(1) and 11(4) will be brought into operation as early as possible in 1990, thus bringing into effect in Northern Ireland all those provisions which have to date been implemented under the equivalent legislation in England, Wales and Scotland.

Consumer Protection

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what measures he is taking to strengthen the law on food safety and consumer protection; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: A Food Safety Bill, which proposes substantial changes to strengthen and update existing law on food safety and the protection of the consumer's interest in the food area, was introduced in Parliament on 22 November. In accordance with normal practice in the field of transferred legislation, comparable provision will be made for Northern Ireland by Order-in-Council under the Northern Ireland Act 1974.

Coal Premises, East Antrim

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give early consideration to the need to introduce additional measures to limit the development of coal-handling premises in residential areas of east Antrim.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. The present measures under planning legislation are adequate.

Governance

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has received any representations from any of the Northern Ireland political party leaders on the best way forward for the governance of the Province.

Mr. Brooke: The leaders of all the main constitutional political parties have given me their views about how political progress might best be made, and I hope to have further meetings with them.

Shorts Base

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on what date or dates the Department of the Environment roads service carried out inspections at the site of the new entrance and car park at the Shorts base at Lough Mann on the Downpatrick/Ballynahinch road in South Down.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 11 December 1989]:* On 8 December 1988.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what inspections were carried out by the Department of the Environment roads service into the new car park and entrance to the building under construction at the Shorts base on the Downpatrick-Ballynahinch road in South Down.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 11 December 1989]:* An inspection was carried out on 8 December 1988 examining visibility splays, sight distances, approach gradients and drainage.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recommendations the Department of Environment roads service made to the town and country planning service in respect of the new entrance and new car park to the building currently under construction at the Shorts base at Lough Mann situated on the Downpatrick-Ballynahinch road in South Down.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 11 December 1989]:* It was recommended that temporary approval be given to the car park for a period of 12 months and that the new entrance gates should be sited a sufficient distance from the edge of the carriageway to permit the largest vehicles which use the access to stop clear of the carriageway when the gates are closed.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what traffic surveys were carried out by the Department of the Environment roads service and RUC traffic branch adjacent to the new entrance at the Shorts base situated on the Downpatrick-Ballynahinch road in South Down.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 11 December 1989]:* No surveys have been carried out at this site. It is not normal practice to carry out a detailed traffic survey for an application of a temporary nature on to a class B road. The RUC traffic division was not previously consulted on this matter and is, therefore, not aware of any surveys being carried out.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the Department of the Environment roads service will furnish the town and country planning service with its report and decision on the new entrance and new car park at the Shorts base at Lough Mann situated on the Downpatrick-Ballynahinch road in South Down.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 11 December 1989]:* Recommendations were supplied to the town and country planning service for temporary approval on 22 December 1988. The roads service will deal with any further applications as and when they are received.

DEFENCE

Nuclear Submarines (Disposal)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on any implications for the disposal of decommissioned nuclear-powered submarines arising from the conclusion of the recent meeting of the London dumping convention.

Mr. Alan Clark: The meeting agreed that the principles of the LDC should be applied to the disposal at sea of all vessels whether or not they are entitled to sovereign immunity. Britain stated that, were decommissioned nuclear submarines to be disposed of at sea, the Government would apply requirements no less stringent than those which they would apply to comparable waste of other origin. I must emphasise that sea disposal is only one of the options that the Government are considering for the disposal of such submarines and no decisions have yet been taken.

Trident

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the latest estimate of Government spending on the Trident programme for each of the next three years; and on what date it is anticipated that this programme will be reviewed.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not the practice to make available long-term forecasts of year-by-year expenditure on projects. However, I can say that expenditure on the Trident programme is expected to be approximately £1,000 million in 1990-91, and approximately £4,000 million over the period 1990-91 to 1994-95. It is intended to announce a revised estimate for the Trident programme early next year.

Tornado (Toxic Emission)

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his estimate of the amount and type of toxic emission *(a)* per mile and *(b)* per minute of a Tornado jet.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The emissions from a Tornado aircraft's RB 199 engine include carbon monoxide, oxides of nitrogen, unburnt fuel and partially burnt fuel products, and smoke. The amount and mix of these products will depend upon a number of variable factors including the use of the after burner and the power setting of the engine. I understand there is no evidence to indicate that they present any hazard to the public during normal flying or ground operations.

Seaham Harbour Sea Cadets

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning the relocation of the Seaham Harbour sea cadets; and if he will pay a visit to the Seaham Harbour cadet corps.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The sea cadet corps is constitutionally not part of the Royal Navy but an independent voluntary civilian youth organisation with charitable status to which the Ministry of Defence makes an annual grant. I understand that the Seaham Harbour sea cadets are currently negotiating locally for a plot of land on which to erect new premises to replace their present temporary accommodation. My right hon. Friend has no plans at present to visit Seaham.

Bomb Disposal (Training)

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much it costs to train (1) an arms technician sergeant in bomb disposal, (2) a typical sergeant in the Royal Signals, and (3) a typical sergeant in bomb disposal of the RAF.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information requested by my hon. Friend is as follows: (1) £45,750, (2) £34,250 and (3) £57,500. In all cases these figures represent the accumulated costs of initial and subsequent training of a typical sergeant in the categories concerned, but they do not include the trainee's pay.

Royal Navy (Home Purchase Scheme)

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much the Royal Naval home purchase scheme costs; and how much it will cost to increase it from £3,500 to £12,000.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The estimated cost of the long service advance of pay scheme, used by married RN personnel to assist in house purchase, is £2·7 million for the current financial year. The extra net cost of raising the maximum advance available to £12,000 is estimated to be about £31 million over 10 years, of which the majority would be required in the first three years. This estimate takes no account of the effect of fluctuations in the housing market on demands for advances. The scheme is self-financing over the long term.

European Co-operative Long-Term Initiative

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much money Her Majesty's Government have committed to the European co-operative long-term initiative for defence; for what purpose; whether it will be reviewed before any binding financial commitment is made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: In common with other IEPG nations, the Government have not yet committed money to the European co-operative long-term initiative for defence (EUCLID) programme and will not do so until details of the collaborative programmes have been fully identified. It is expected that money should start to be committed during the course of 1990, as the collaboration programmes are agreed. I refer to the reply given to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) on 24 July 1989 at column *553*.

Research Agency

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made towards establishing a defence research agency under the Government's next steps initiative; and whether any decision has yet been taken on its status within the public sector.

Mr. Neubert: Since my predecessor's statement to the House on 16 March 1989 on the intention to establish a defence research agency (DRA), Mr. Nigel Hughes has been appointed chief executive (designate) following open competition; an MOD implementation team is taking work forward, with the chief executive (designate), to develop the organisation, procedures and infrastructure that will be needed within both the MOD and DRA; and we have been consulting the trades unions.

My Department has been considering the status of the DRA and how best to secure the necessary change. For the new and sharper relationship required, between the customers for and suppliers of defence research and project support, the DRA will need to be clearly distinct from the rest of the MOD, run on businesslike lines and with a trading relationship with its customers in MOD and elsewhere. At the same time, it must continue to make its key contribution as an independent and objective source of scientific and technical advice, in support of defence equipment procurement and related matters.

I believe that the best way forward is to establish the DRA as a Government trading fund within the Civil Service as quickly as possible. This would take the form of a distinct organisation answerable to the Secretary of State for Defence. Work will now be concentrated on putting this into effect.

As my predecessor told the House, a final decision on the move to agency status will depend upon successful completion of this work. Our target date remains April 1991.

Nuclear Warhead Test (Nevada)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the purpose of the nuclear warhead test conducted jointly with the United States of America in Nevada on 8 December; what was the yield of the test; whether any radiation was released above ground from the test; whether any military operational staff were radiologically contaminated; and what was the cost to the United Kingdom of this nuclear test.

Mr. Alan Clark: Beyond confirming that the yield of the test was within the planned range of 20-150 kilotons, and assuring the hon. Member that there was no release of radiation (and hence no contamination of any personnel whatsoever), it is not our practice to answer questions of this nature.

WE177 Bomb

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the weapon systems being considered by Her Majesty's Government as a replacement for the WE177 bomb.

Mr. Alan Clark: Discussions are taking place with both the United States and French Governments on options for the possible replacement of the WE177 free-fall bomb.

Nuclear Missiles

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions under the terms of the Anglo-United States agreement on the uses of atomic energy for mutual defence purposes of 1958, Her Majesty's Government have had with the United States Government concerning the Anglo-French co-production of nuclear air-to-surface missiles.

Mr. Alan Clark: Officials are discussing options for the delivery vehicle for the United Kingdom's future theatre nuclear weapon with both the United States and France. There are no plans for an Anglo-French collaborative programme which would fall within the scope of the United States/United Kingdom 1958 agreement.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has as to whether British Aerospace is currently conducting any feasibility studies into the possible development of a nuclear air-to-surface missile; and what discussions Her Majesty's Government have had with British Aerospace in respect of the possible development of such a missile.

Mr. Alan Clark: British Aerospace is one of the contractors involved in the assessment of options for the replacement of the WE177 free-fall bomb. No decisions on development can be taken until the current assessment studies are completed.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether, under the terms of the Anglo-United States agreement on the uses of atomic energy for mutual defence purposes of 1958, the United Kingdom can conduct any collaborative programme, involving the development and production of nuclear weapon systems, with any country other than the United States of America without the prior agreement of the United States Government.

Mr. Alan Clark: The United Kingdom is constrained by the terms of the non-proliferation treaty in collaboration with other countries on nuclear weapons. Additionally, under the terms of the 1958 United Kingdom-United States agreement, United States approval would be necessary if the information to be exchanged originated from the United States. The United States is subject to similar constraints with regard to United Kingdom information.

Equipment

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make available details of *(a)* main battle tanks, *(b)* artillery pieces, *(c)* armoured troop carriers, *(d)* combat aircraft and *(e)* combat helicopters in the United Kingdom's armed forces.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the NATO publication "Conventional Forces in Europe: The Facts", a copy of which is in the House of Commons Library.

General Dynamics

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what part the Defence Exports Services Organisation has played in offset banking arrangements involving the American company General Dynamics; and what is the nature of the arrangements.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Defence Exports Services Organisation has negotiated an industrial participation (offset banking) memorandum of understanding with General Dynamics. The purpose of the MOU is to encourage General Dynamics to offer British defence industry opportunities to bid for a share of the work on all its major defence programmes. The value of orders placed will be "banked" by General Dynamics for subsequent use, in part, to satisfy future offset obligation, imposed by the MOD when making any future purchases from the United States company.

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the involvement of the Defence Exports Services Organisation in the tour of Britain by the American company General Dynamics; and what support and assistance has been given in this venture by his Department.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Defence Export Services Organisation in association with the DTI, various regional development authorities and local chambers of commerce organised a series of seminars and presentations given by General Dynamics as part of its marketing strategy to obtain more suppliers from the United Kingdom defence industry in support of all its major defence programmes. The DESO participated to the extent that it also briefed companies on how they could qualify to bid for work under the industrial participation (offset banking) MOU which the MOD has with General Dynamics.

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met representatives of the American company General Dynamics; and what was discussed.

Mr. Alan Clark: My right hon. Friend has held no formal meeting with General Dynamics and, at the present time, has no plans to do so. Officials have met the company to discuss possible future orders for tanks for the British Army.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he or his officials have held or plan to hold any meetings with General Dynamics about future orders for tanks for the British Army; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: My right hon. Friend has held no formal meeting with General Dynamics and, at the present time, has no plans to do so. Officials have met the company to discuss possible future orders for tanks for the British Army.

Chieftain Tanks

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what numbers of new battle tanks he will order to replace Chieftain tanks now in service.

Mr. Alan Clark: This has yet to be decided.

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which companies have been asked to submit proposals for battle tanks to replace Chieftain tanks currently in service; and what deadlines for submissions have been applied to each company.

Mr. Alan Clark: Vickers Defence Systems, General Dynamics and Kraus Maffei have been invited to submit proposals. Details of these invitations are commercial in confidence, but action has been set in hand to enable us to meet our aim of making a decision by the end of 1990.

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which manufacturers have been informed by his Department of the precise number of battle tanks to be ordered to replace Chieftain tanks now in service.

Mr. Alan Clark: No decision on precise numbers of main battle tanks to replace Chieftain has yet been taken. Vickers Defence Systems, General Dynamics and Kraus Maffei have been invited to quote against option quantities.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he now expects to place the orders for new tanks for the British Army; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the projected date for his decision on the order of new battle tanks to replace Chieftain tanks currently in service.

Mr. Alan Clark: It is our intention to reach a decision on a tank to replace Chieftain by the end of 1990.

Ambulance Dispute

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the cost to each service of resources deployed on ambulance duties as part of the ambulance dispute since September.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is too early to provide an estimate of the extra costs to each service of resources deployed on ambulance duties, all of which will be met by the Department of Health. Costs for the first bill to the Department of Health, for the period up to 30 November, are still being collected.

Gun Fox Vehicles

Mr. Terry Fields: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many accidents have occurred of CVR(W) 30mm Gun Fox vehicles currently in use in Her Majesty's armed forces; how many personnel have been killed or injured in such accidents; what remedial steps have been taken to prevent accidents from occurring; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I will write to the hon. Member.

Garrison Stables

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many military personnel are employed in the garrison stables; how many horses are stabled there; how many of these horses are owned by his Department and how many by private individuals.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I assume my hon. Friend is referring to the Household Cavalry and the King's Troop. With regard to the former 187 horses are stabled at Hyde Park barracks; 180 belonging to MOD and seven to private individuals. In respect of the King's Troop, 120 horses are stabled at St. Johns Wood; 119 belonging to MOD and one to a private individual. The total strength of the Household Cavalry at Hyde Park is 401 and at King's Troop it is 189 and all personnel are involved with work associated with horses.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 15 December 1989

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Standing Committees

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many seats are reserved for staff and advisers for *(a)* the Government and *(b)* Opposition parties on the floor of Standing Committees.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Five places are made available for Government staff and advisers in Standing Committees; no such arrangement exists at present for Opposition parties.

NORTHERN IRELAND

MacBride Principles

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has on the adoption by companies in Northern Ireland of the MacBride principles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 7 December 1989]:* I am not aware that any company operating in Northern Ireland has adopted the MacBride principles.

Companies in Northern Ireland have to obey Northern Ireland law. They do not have to make available information beyond that which is statutorily required.

We are in favour of jobs and of justice and we have therefore consistently opposed the campaign based on the MacBride principles because it could adversely affect existing jobs, cut new investment and hit at the creating of the new jobs and extra employment opportunities that are needed in Northern Ireland.

Equality of opportunity in employment is best achieved through Northern Ireland law and effective action.

ENERGY

North Sea (Pipelines)

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what pipelines have been agreed to serve oil flow from developments in the North sea over the next four years; and if he will provide an estimate of the length of each pipeline and its tonnage of steel.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The following pipelines have been authorised to serve oil flow from developments in the North sea over the next four years. These pipelines have been laid but are not yet in operation.

Field and pipeline	*Approximate length kilometres*	*Approximate weight tonnes*
Kittiwake		
1 × 8 in flowline	2·0	144
Arbroath		
1 × 10 in flowline	8·3	596
1 × 10 in water injection	8·3	952
1 × 8 in gas lift	8·3	408
Linnhe		
1 × 6 in flowline	7·0	418
1 × 6 in gas lift	7·0	418
1 × 6 in water injection	7·0	418

In addition pipelines totalling 189 km in length and total approximate weight 39,700 tonnes have been approved in principle, although not yet authorised.

PRIME MINISTER

South Korea

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Prime Minister how many representations she has received regarding the methods by which cats and dogs are slaughtered for human consumption in South Korea.

The Prime Minister: I have received approximately 950 representations on the subject of human consumption of cats and dogs in South Korea.

Footwear Imports

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Prime Minister whether any decision was taken at the Strasbourg summit concerning the alteration of the voluntary restraint arrangements in respect of leather footwear imports from eastern Europe.

The Prime Minister: No. The Strasbourg summit discussions on European Community relations with eastern and central Europe did not cover such specific issues.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Ethiopia

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much food aid has been given to Ethiopia in the current year by Her Majesty's Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: This year under the United Kingdom food aid programme Her Majesty's Government are providing over 27,000 tonnes of food aid to Ethiopia with a value of £6·6 million. In addition, our share of the cost of the 74,000 tonnes of food aid allocated by the European Community to Ethiopia is some £3 million.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received since 1 August concerning food aid to Ethiopia; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Since 1 August there have been a number of appeals to the donor community to supply food aid for the hungry in Ethiopia. Since that time Her Majesty's Government have agreed to provide 21,700 tonnes of food aid with a value of £4·7 million in response to appeals that they have received from British voluntary agencies.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any proposals to increase food aid to Ethiopia; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Within the last two weeks I have approved a further 5,000 tonnes of food aid for the hungry in Ethiopia. This brings our total food aid to Ethiopia to over 27,000 tonnes this year. We will continue to monitor the situation very closely.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Violence

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to widen the types of crime covered by the categories *(a)* violent crime and *(b)* assault; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We have no present plans to do so, but we are always ready to consider proposals if the hon. Lady has any particular suggestions to make the law more effective.

Entry Clearance

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in how many cases over the most recent 12-month period for which figures are available applications for entry clearance for settlement in the United Kingdom by Pakistani citizens have been *(a)* granted, *(b)* refused, *(c)* followed by an application to enter the United Kingdom as a visitor to be present at the birth of the applicant's child, and *(d)* that application has been refused on the ground that an application had been made for settlement which had been refused.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The only information available is that in the 12 months ending 30 September 1989, 5,450 applications in Pakistan for entry clearance for settlement in the United Kingdom were granted and 2,010 were refused initially. A total of 9,190 applications for a visit entry clearance were refused in the same period because the applicant did not meet the requirements of immigration rules.

Prison Rules

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he has taken to ensure British prisons comply with recommendation 12(873) of European prison rules and in particular with regard to *(a)* part II, 10, 2, regarding preparation of reports on every prisoner, *(b)* part II, 14, 1, on individual cells, *(c)* part II, 14, 2, on night supervision, *(d)* part II, 11,1, on allocation of prisoners with regard to their age, status and medical needs, *(e)* part II, 11, 4, on detention of young prisoners under conditions which protect them from harmful influences, *(f)* part III, 52, on training of prison staff, *(g)* part III, 57, on inclusion of specialist staff, such as psychiatrists and *(h)* part IV, 100, 2 and 3, on availability of specialised institutions under medical management; and how many British prisons fulfil these conditions.

Mr. Mellor: The recommendation adopted by the Committee of Ministers in respect of the European prison rules states that

> "the governments of member states should be guided in their internal legislation and practice by the principles set out in the text of the European Prison Rules . . . with a view to their progressive implementation".

The Government comply with this recommendation.

Every establishment in Her Majety's prison service in England and Wales meets in full all the rules referred to specifically in the question, apart from those aspects of rule 14 which relate to the sharing of accommodation. On the latest available figures for the use of cellular accommodation designed for fewer prisoners than it currently holds over 70 prisons in England and Wales met its requirements. The current building programme provides for progressive reduction of overcrowding. Responsibility for prisons in Scotland rests with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he has taken to ensure British prisons comply with article 10 of the international covenant on civil and political rights.

Mr. Mellor: The United Kingdom ratified the International covenant on civil and political rights on 20 May 1976, subject to the reservation that where there is a lack of suitable facilities or where the mixing of adults and juveniles is deemed to be mutually beneficial the Government reserved the right not to apply article 10.2(b) and 10.3 so far as those provisions required juveniles who are detained to be accommodated separately from adults.

In England and Wales the statutory rules, and supplementary guidance issued from time to time in the form of standing orders and circular instructions (copies of which are available in the Library), comply with the principles of article 10 subject to that reservation. They are also reflected in the prison service's statement of purpose issued in November 1988.

Governors of all prison service establishments have been asked to ensure that a copy of the international convenant is freely available to prisoners and staff in prison libraries.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he has taken to ensure British prisons comply with resolution (73) 5 standard minimum rules for the treatment of prisoners adopted on 19 January 1973, and in particular with the stipulation regarding the medical examination of sick prisoners; and which British prisons fulfil this stipulation.

Mr. Waddington: The European standard minimum rules have been superseded by European prison rules adopted by the Council of Europe on 12 February 1987. The rules are not legally binding on member countries, but the prison service in England and Wales aims to reflect them in its policies and practice. Copies of the rules were sent to governors in 1988. There is no reasons to believe that any prison is failing to conform with the principles of prison rule 30(1) as regards the care of prisoners who fall sick.

Gallup Media Survey

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about the Gallup media survey conducted among right hon. and hon. Members; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: None.

Disabled People

Mr. Ron Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has received recent representations from the British Polio Fellowship calling for changes pursuant to the White Paper "Broadcasting in the 1990s", to benefit the disabled; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: I have received representations from a number of members of the British Polio Fellowship about programme quality and diversity in relation to commercial television. The provisions in the Broadcasting Bill relating to Channels 3, 4 and 5 give the Independent Television Commission the necessary powers to ensure the maintenance of proper standards in these areas.

Visas

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when Mrs. Saeeda Begum, date of birth 15 May 1968 ref. Imm/95359, the wife of Mr. Mohammed Jehangir, of Bradford, will be told by the post in Islamabad whether she is to be issued with a visa to join her husband.

Mr. Sainsbury: I have been asked to reply.

In accordance with the recent guidelines on the handling of representations by Members of Parliament in immigration cases, issued to Members on 14 December 1988, I have referred the question to the correspondence unit of the migration and visa department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The honourable Member will receive a reply from the unit as soon as possible.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Microwaves

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to assess the risk to consumers of using microwaves for primary heating of food products.

Mr. Maclean: The research results which we announced on 4 December have already led to improvements in instructions given by microwave oven manufacturers. These will lead in turn to improved evenness of cooking, irrespective of whether the oven is used for re-heating cook-chill foods or for cooking from raw. The potential risks of cooking from raw are less because the longer cooking time (including standing time) allows for greater conduction of heat through the food. When cooking from raw, consumers will in any case apply the tests normal in any kind of cooking to see whether food is cooked.

Porcine Somatotropin

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Caerphilly, of 6 December, *Official Report*, column *248*, on what grounds the veterinary products committee recommended refusal of porcine somatotropin.

Mr. Maclean: The veterinary products committee recommendation was based on its consideration of the data available at the time and submitted by the company. These did not show that the porcine somatotropin product concerned met the criteria for the issue of an animal test certificate.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Caerphilly of 6 December, *Official Report*, column *248*, whether he accepted the recommendations of the veterinary products committee in respect of porcine somatotropin; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Yes. In the event, the applicant company chose not to pursue the matter and withdrew its application.

Salmonella

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his estimate of the proportion of *(a)* turkeys and *(b)* chickens sold this Christmas that will have been contaminated by salmonella.

Mr. Maclean: The results of a survey carried out by the Public Health Laboratory in 1987 were that salmonella was isolated from 65 out of 101 samples (64·4 per cent.) of frozen whole chickens. No later figures are available.

The advice given to local authorities on the identification and rejection of carcases showing signs of salmonella enteritidis infection and the 19 measures which I announced to combat salmonella earlier this year should reduce the incidence of infection in poultrymeat. Thorough cooking and proper handling of poultrymeat should remove any risk.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Teacher Shortages

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement regarding the most recent Government figures for teacher shortages.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The most recent Government figures are those for January 1989 which I gave in my reply to the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) on 24 October 1989 at column *394*. The Department's September survey, which provided a broad indication of the start of term staffing situation, indicated that the position had not worsened since January. The Government will continue to take measures to attract teachers and reduce shortages.

Education Council

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the outcome of the meeting of the European Community Education Ministers in Brussels on 14 December; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: I represented the United Kingdom at the Education Council in Brussels on 14 December.

The Council agreed the extension of the European community action scheme for the mobility of university students—the ERASMUS programme—for a further five years from 1990-94, at an estimated cost of 192 million ecu (about £140 million) for the first three years of the new phase.

Education Ministers also discussed co-operation with the countries of eastern Europe, and, in particular, with Poland and Hungary. We had the benefit of a prior discussion with the Education Ministers from Poland and

Hungary. We recognised the importance of assistance in the field of education and training and agreed urgently to pursue proposals for the establishment of a European training foundation and the development of exchange and other programmes in these areas.

The Council also discussed technical and vocational education. We agreed conclusions inviting the Commission to review existing Community programmes in this area and to prepare proposals for further measures that might be desirable at Community level having regard to the principle of subsidiarity and the need to secure value for money.

Contracts

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many contracts over £92,500 have been let by his Department in the 1988-89 financial year and in the current financial year to date; how many of these were *(a)* automatically renewed and *(b)* open to competition through advertisement throughout the European Community.

Mrs. Rumbold: The number of contracts awarded by the Department and covered by the provisions of the EC supplies directive, for which the current threshold is £92,000, was three in the 1988-89 financial year and one in the current financial year to date. Of these, two were awarded following advertisement in the *Official Journal of the European Communities* and two were considered to be exempt from advertising and may have been awarded to the previous supplier.

Part-time Teachers

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps his Department is taking to encourage the recruitment of part-time teachers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The employment and deployment of teachers is the responsibility of local education authorities and schools. It is for them to decide whether to employ part-time staff. Our proposed education support grant programme for 1990-91 includes support for expenditure of over £2 million on local recruitment measures to attract back more former teachers and to recruit mature entrants. The invitation to bid suggested that LEA recruitment models might include the establishment of supporting and flexible working practices such as part-time work and job share.

Grant-maintained Status

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schools have now approached his Department seeking advice on the possibility of obtaining grant-maintained status.

Mrs. Rumbold: To date 79 schools have embarked on the process of applying for grant-maintained status and parents at 51 of them have voted in favour of proceeding with an application. My right hon. Friend has approved 32 and rejected nine applications for grant-maintained status. Decisions on the remaining applications will be taken on their merits in due course.

Teacher-Pupil Ratio (Durham)

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the teacher-to-pupil ratio in the Durham area in each year since 1979.

Mrs. Rumbold: The overall pupil-teacher ration in maintained schools in Durham local education authority area each year between 1979 and 1989 was as follows:

January each year	*Ration*
1979	18·7
1980	18·7
1981	18·5
1982	18·3
1983	18·6
1984	18·5
1985	18·5
1986	18·6
1987	18·7
1988	18·3
1989	18·3

Durham University

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has on consultations held between Durham university and Teesside polytechnic about the formation of a joint board to supervise medical studies at the new college of Durham university on Teesside.

Mr. Jackson: We are aware of the local discussions about the University of Durham's proposal to develop a new college of the University of Durham on Teesside, including most recently the development of an institute of health studies. However, no formal proposal has yet been made.

Zidovudine

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the progress of the Medical Research Council/INSERM trial of zidovudine; and what information he has as to progress on the similar trial undertaken in the United States of America.

Mr. Jackson: The latest available information is contained in the Medical Research Council's press notice of 20 October, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will update the figures of participants in the Medical Research Council/INSERM trial of zidovudine given in reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe on 6 June, *Official Report*, column *21*.

Mr. Jackson: The number of participants enrolled in the MRC/INSERM trial of zidovudine up to 13 December 1989 was 659 in the United Kingdom and 618 in France.

Student Loans

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretry of State for Education and Science what assessment he has made of the extent to which students whose parents are classified as semi-skilled would be unlikely to undertake higher education following the introduction of the Government's student loan scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The Government's proposals have been designed to apply to students in a variety of circumstances. Top-up loans mean more money for students. The Government are confident that the increase in resources will make higher education more attractive to students from all backgounds.

Grammar Schools

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretry of State for Education and Science if he will make it his policy to set up an educational trust to promote the formation of grammar schools.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The Government's policy is not to impose any particular pattern of secondary school provision on LEAs. It would therefore not be appropriate to set up a trust to promote the formation of grammar schools. Any statutory proposals put forward by local education authorities for the formation of grammar schools would be considered on their merits.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Company Taxation

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total tax benefit due to offsetting capital losses against capital gains tax *(a)* for industry as a whole and *(b)* for privatised industry, for each of the last 10 years at constant prices.

Mr. Lilley: I regret that the information requested is not available centrally.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total tax benefit due to unclaimed capital allowances *(a)* for industry as a whole and *(b)* for privatised industries, for each of the last 10 years at constant prices.

Mr. Lilley: I regret that data at this level of detail are not available centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Overseas Entertainers (Taxation)

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the amount of withholding tax deducted from overseas entertainers for each of the years 1987-88, 1988-89 and estimated for 1989-90, for *(a)* the music industry, *(b)* the film industry, *(c)* sport and*(d)* other; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: The special scheme for deducting tax at source from payments to non-resident entertainers and sportsmen yielded £6·9 million net (after repayments) in the period 1 May 1987 (when it took effect) to 31 March 1988, £12·4 million net in 1988-89 and £8·7 million net for the eight months to 30 November 1989. A breakdown of these figures into the categories specified could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Advertising

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps are being taken to eliminate inefficiency in Government advertising campaigns; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: The National Audit Office reported to Parliament on 5 December on publicity services for Government Departments and the Select Committee on Public Accounts examined witnesses on 11 December. I await the report from the Select Committee and in the meantime officials are examining the recommendations of the National Audit Office.

Valuation Services

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans the Government have for valuation services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: In the light of studies carried out by an interdepartmental group of officials, the Government have taken the following decisions affecting the Government's valuation services and the management of Government property.

First, a project team under Treasury leadership will investigate how best to set up consistent and compatible databases for each of the Government's main property estates, to be used both for purposes of capital asset management and for assessment of Government contributions in lieu of rates. The team will begin work shortly.

Secondly, Departments will by April 1991 be "untied" for valuation work which does not need to be undertaken in-house. Such work will be considered for market testing and contracting-out. Valuations for the purposes of assessing liability to business rates and other taxes will continue to be done in-house.

Thirdly, in general valuation services provided by Government valuers, whether to Government Departments or to other bodies, should be charged for. The aim is to introduce charging from April 1991.

Finally, the deployment of Government valuers will continue broadly as now, except that the Inland Revenue will take over from April 1991 responsibilities for valuation of the Government's estates for rating purposes from the Treasury's rating of Government property department, which will cease to exist from that date. Consideration will be given to establishing parts of the Government's valuation services as executive agencies.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Family Courts

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Attorney-General if the Lord Chancellor will consider bringing forward an amendment to the Courts and Legal Services Bill *[Lords]* to establish a family courts system.

The Attorney-General: No, the Government hope to make further progress on family matters in the Courts and Legal Services Bill, but improvements in the procedure and jurisdictional arrangements for family proceedings can be achieved only in step with reform of the substantive law. It would not be feasible to set up a family court until the substantive law has been unified. The Children Act marked the first step in an ordered programme of reform.

Legal Aid (Northern Ireland)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Attorney-General if he will indicate for each of the last three years the numbers of persons who have received legal aid in Northern Ireland.

The Attorney-General: The number of persons who have received legal aid certificates in each of the last three financial years is as follows:

Financial year	*Legal aid certificates civil proceedings*	*Legal aid certificates criminal proceedings*	*Total*
1986-87	13,108	27,685	40,793
1987-88	15,283	25,802	41,085
1988-89	14,099	22,520	36,619

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Attorney-General if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* to show by reference to each council area in Northern Ireland, or similar geographical area the number of persons who received legal aid in each of the last three years.

The Attorney-General: Information regarding persons in receipt of legal aid is held on a Northern Ireland basis and cannot be provided in any other format.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Attorney-General if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* to show for each of the last three years the sums paid in legal aid to *(a)* solicitors and *(b)* barristers by each council area in Northern Ireland.

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave on 28 November at column *179*. All information concerning sums paid out in legal aid fees to solicitors and barristers is held on a Northern Ireland basis and cannot be provided in any other format.

Water Pollution (Camelford)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Attorney-General, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North of 1 December, *Official Report*, column *451*, what delay is anticipated as a result of the Director of Public Prosecutions taking over the Camelford water pollution case; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The proceedings for public nuisance instituted by the Director of Public Prosecutions are returnable at Bodmin magistrates court on 9 January 1990 and on that date the proceedings instituted on behalf of the Bodmin Angling Association will also be before the court. Decisions about subsequent adjournments and the length thereof comprise part of the judicial functions of the magistrates and it would be inappropriate for me to speculate.

Barristers

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General what posts in Government and the senior Civil Service are reserved to barristers.

The Attorney-General: The duties of the Attorney-General and the Solicitor-General require that they be members of the Bar.

The only post in the Civil Service at present reserves to barristers is that of Permanent Secretary to the Lord Chancellor and Clerk of the Crown in Chancery. However the Courts and Legal Services Bill introduced in the House of Lords on 6 December would also enable solicitors and members of the Lord Chancellor's Department of the prescribed standing to be appointed to that post.

WALES

Influenza

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the availability of influenza vaccine in Wales.

Mr. Grist: In the advice issued to all family practitioner committees and district health authorities in September, general vaccination to control the spread of influenza was not recommended. However, it was advised that persons at special risk (for example, those with chronic pulmonary, heart or renal disease) should be considered for vaccination.

There are at present adequate supplies of the vaccine already in Wales, or available from the stocks held centrally by the manufacturers, to ensure that all individuals in the special risk category are vaccinated if they wish.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the current levels of influenza attacks in Wales.

Mr. Grist: An increase in influenza reports from general practitioners was noted in the second week of November. The first practices to report large numbers of cases were in East Dyfed, Mid Glamorgan and West Glamorgan. Practices in Clwyd, Gwent, Gwynedd and South Glamorgan began to report increased numbers of cases by the beginning of December.

The pattern of reporting has been firstly an increase in cases in children followed within two weeks by an increase in adult cases. The rates in children in practices in Mid Glamorgan and West Glamorgan declined in the past week but the incidence in adults has yet to show a reduction.

If the current outbreak behaves as did the smaller outbreak which affected south Wales in 1988-89 it would be expected that the incidence in children will substantially decline by the end of December. In adults, however, the outbreak is developing more slowly and its course is therefore difficult to predict.

Data supplied from the public health laboratories at Cardiff, Swansea and Rhyl indicate the main virus responsible for this outbreak is influenza A, although there are other viruses circulating among young children. Many adults would be expected to have a degree of immunity to the strain.

Veterinary Officers

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the district veterinary officers for every district in Wales.

Mr. Grist: Mr. D. R. Williams is the regional veterinary officer (RVO) for Wales and Mr. D. Summers is the deputy regional veterinary officer (DRVO). The Welsh Office Agriculture Department is divided into five agricultural divisions. The following is a list of divisional veterinary officers (DVOs) in Wales:

Mr. M. E. T. Watts DVO
WOAD Animal Health Division
Llanishen
Cardiff CF4 5ZB

Mr. G. B. Rees DVO
WOAD Animal Health Division
Bolero Camp
Park Road
Ruthin
Clwyd LL15 1NP

Mr. E. M. Davies DVO
WOAD Animal Health Division
Picton Terrace
Carmarthen
Dyfed SA31 3BT

Mr. H. T. Morris DVO
WOAD Animal Health Division
Crown Buildings
Penrhallt
Caernarfon
Gwynedd LL55 1EP

Mr. D. L. Pugh Acting DVO
WOAD Animal Health Division
Government Office
Spa Road East
Llandrindod Wells
Powys LD1 5HA

Earnings

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* tables showing the proportion of all part-time employees who are *(a)* manual and *(b)* non-manual earning less than (i) £4·16, (ii) £4·32, (iii) £3·12 and (iv) £2·80 per hour for (1) men, (2) women and (3) all part-time employees, excluding overtime shift and payment-by-results premia, for Wales and in each county in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information requested is not readily available and could be compiled only at disproportionate cost.

Development Board for Rural Wales

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the proposals of the Development Board for Rural Wales to spend £12 million on developing new factories and business skills.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Development Board for Rural Wales' outline plans for 1990-91 will be announced in the public expenditure White Paper next January. Detailed final figures will be published in the Supply Estimates when they are presented to Parliament in March.

The allocation of provision between individual activities is largely a matter for the board.

Rural Schools

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assistance is given to rural country authorites in the allocation of central Government grant to take account of the increased cost of providing schools in sparsely populated areas.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Rate support grant is distributed to county and district councils in accordance with formulae which are agreed with the Welsh Consultative Council on Local Government Finance. Account is taken of the additional costs associated with the provision of services in sparsely populated areas by rural local authorities. Revenue support grant will be distributed taking account of similar considerations.

School Transport

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received concerning additional support from central Government for rural local education authorities in the provision of school transport; and if he will make a statement about present levels of support.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: None. As with other services provided by county councils, expenditure is supported through the revenue support grant mechanism.

Accidents at School

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will provide statistics showing the number of *(a)* fatalities and *(b)* other accidents involving serious injury in schools in Wales in each of the years 1979 to date; if he has any proposals to require teachers to attend first aid courses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts *[holding answer 4 December]*: The data requested are not available for years before 1981.

The Health and Safety Executive has since then received reports under statutory regulations which indicate that in the period covered there have been four fatal incidents—one to an employee in 1984 and three to pupils, one in each of 1981, 1984 and in 1986-87. Changes in the regulations in 1985 resulted in data becoming available in respect of major incidents not involving death and they indicate that in 1986-87 and 1987-88 some 31 and 59 employees and 195 and 318 pupils in those years respectively were involved in reportable incidents. The increase resulted from declarations following the issue of guidance on uniform reporting standards issued to all local education authorities by the education services advisory committee.

The guidance note "Arrangements for First Aid Provision in Schools and Colleges" prepared by the Department of Education and Science and the Welsh Office in consultation with interested bodies was issued to chief education officers in England and Wales in September 1987. This gave guidance to establish information reporting standards.

First aid facilities are looked at by Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools as part of its normal process of inspection of schools, and I know that it will have regard to the findings of a recent report on this matter.

All LEAs offer first aid training. The great majority of teachers have some basic knowledge of first aid. Specialist teachers of all practical subjects will have received first aid training and physical education teachers in particular will have received substantial training.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Free Elections, Warsaw Pact

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the information he has on the dates of free general elections currently agreed or expected in the Warsaw pact countries.

Mr. Waldegrave: Democratic elections are expected in the German Democratic Republic on 6 May 1990 and in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Bulgaria by June 1990. The

Soviet Union held multi-candidate elections in March 1989. In Poland semi-democratic elections were held in June 1989. The round table agreements provide for full democratic elections in four years' time.

European Proliferation Information Centre

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration he has given to the recent application to his Department by the European proliferation information centre for financial support.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Department has recently written to the European proliferation information centre (EPIC) agreeing to a meeting to discuss financial support and suggesting that EPIC prepare a detailed funding application.

Non-proliferation Treaty

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to encourage additional countries to join the nuclear non-proliferation treaty; and what information he has concerning attempts by the United States of America and the Soviet Union to convince additional states to join the treaty.

Mr. Waldegrave: We regularly raise the question of accession to the treaty with non-parties at various levels. The three depositary powers of the treaty, (the United Kingdom, the United States and the Soviet Union) attach importance to the widest possible adherence to the treaty, and frequently discuss with each other their efforts towards this end.

Comecon (High-Technology Exports)

Mr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has formed any policy in response to the call by the parliamentary assembly of the Western European Union on 7 December to reduce restrictions on high-technology exports to Comecon countries.

Mr. Maude: COCOM's role is the protection of the strategic interests of the members of the broader Western alliance. It is not an economic embargo. With our COCOM partners, Her Majesty's Government will continue to base export licensing decisions on strategic assessments which take account of geo-political and technological realities. This means assessing whether a potential export could make a significant contribution to the military capability of the proscribed destinations and their production of modern armaments.

We will also fully contribute to the continuous review of the COCOM export control lists to ensure that items of genuine relevance to Western security are controlled (not necessarily prevented from export) and those that are not are amended or deleted from the lists.

Ethiopia

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action Her Majesty's Government are taking to assist in resolving the ongoing military conflict in Ethiopia between the Addis Ababa regime and its opposition; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have been in contact with the parties to the conflict to urge them to negotiate a peaceful settlement. We have also taken diplomatic action with our EC partners, the USA and the USSR.

China

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what diplomatic representations Her Majesty's Government are making to the Chinese Government about granting fair trials to those jailed for their political ideology; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: At the Madrid European Council we and our EC partners called on the Chinese authorities to admit independent observers to attend the trials of those arrested for their part in the democracy movement. The Presidency, on behalf of the Twelve, has made subsequent representations to the Chinese authorities.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received concerning the release of political prisoners in China; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: Since the events of June, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has received 19 letters from hon. Members and 69 letters from the public about the release of political prisoners in China. Of these, 12 letters from hon. Members and 50 letters from the public were related to a specific detainee in Tibet.

Vietnamese Boat People

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is *(a)* the cost to date to the Revenue of the forced removal of the Vietnamese boat people from Hong Kong and *(b)* the estimated cost of removal of all the boat people.

Mr. Maude: There has been no forced removal of any boat people from Hong Kong. The cost to Her Majesty's Government of the first repatriation operation was approximately £30,000. It is impossible at this stage to estimate the cost of removing from Hong Kong all boat people screened out as non-refugees.

European Monetary Union

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* the terms of any motion of the House, together with its date and context, which contained words giving specific assent to the principle of economic and monetary union within the European Community.

Mr. Maude: The terms of all motions of this House are printed in the *Official Report.*

HEALTH

Breast Milk (Chernobyl)

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether his Department has undertaken, funded or is aware of any research to discover if human breast milk has been effected by radioactive contamination in the United Kingdom following the Chernobyl accident.

Mr. Freeman: The continuing precautionary measures taken by the Department and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food following the Chernobyl reactor accident are designed to ensure that radioactively contaminated food does not enter the food chain. In additiona, a programme of whole-body monitoring tests commissioned by Government has shown that the levels of radioactivity taken up by people in the areas most affected by fallout from Chernobyl were very low and of minimal radiological significance.

North Middlesex Hospital

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) at what stage there will be consultation with *(a)* staff, *(b)* users and *(c)* the wider community regarding his decision to allow the North Middlesex hospital to opt out of the National Health Service;

(2) if he will take steps to ensure that residents of Tottenham will continue to get a service from the North Middlesex hospital after it has opted out;

(3) what estimate he has made of the knock-on effect when the North Middlesex hospital opts out of the National Health Service on the resources to be allocated to St. Ann's hospital;

(4) what information he has as to the policy of Haringey health authority on self-governing status for its hospitals;

(5) what is his policy with regard to the entertaining of applications for self-governing status from hospitals within district health authorities which have voted against the promotion of such applications;

(6) whether he has received any indications of interest in self-governing status for the North Middlesex hospital.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: One hundred and eighty-eight units, including North Middlesex hospital, have expressed interest in National Health Service trust status. There is no question of any hospital "opting out" of the National Health Service. Haringey health authority will be responsible for planning and securing a comprehensive range of services to meet the health care needs of its resident population. In doing this it will contract with a range of service providers, including National Health Service trusts. The revenue funding of individual hospitals such as North Middlesex and St. Ann's will be determined in the main by the service contracts they secure with health authorities.

The decision on whether to submit a formal application for National Health Service trust status, when Parliament has approved the necessary legislation, is a matter for the sponsors of the expression of interest in the unit concerned. We have had no representations from Haringey health authority. When formal applications are prepared, regional health authorities will ensure that they are given local publicity and will seek the views of all those with an interest, including health authorities, staff, patients, general practitioners, community health councils and the local community. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will consider these views alongside the application, before deciding whether to approve it.

Midwives

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many midwives are currently practising in the National Health Service;

(2) how many midwives are currently practising who are qualified at grade level E and at level G as sisters;

(3) how many midwives first qualified in each of the last five years;

(4) how may vacant posts for midwives there are in each of the regions.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: At 30 September 1988 there were 19,600 wholetime equivalent qualified midwives employed in the National Health Service in England. Information for September 1989 is not yet available, therefore it is not possible to give the number of midwives in post paid on grade E and G. The numbers of newlyqualified midwives in England added to the register held by the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting in each of the last five years are:

Year ended 31 March	*Number*
1985	2,106
1986	2,599
1987	3,820
1988	2,523
1989	2,432

The figure for 1987 includes some midwives who registered their midwifery qualification for the first time in 1987 although they obtained it in a previous year. The figure is not therefore comparable with those for the other years.

Information on vacancy levels is not collected centrally.

Doctors

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give for each year since 1980 the total number of doctors employed by the National Health Service and express this as a percentage of the 1980 figure.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information is given in the table:

	Total Doctors	*Expressed as a percentage of base year: 1980*
1980	63,130	—
1981	64,612	102·3
1982	65,591	103·9
1983	66,910	106·0
1984	67,282	106·6
1985	68,194	108·0
1986	68,839	109·0
1987	69,532	110·10
1988	70,866	112·3

Notes: Includes permanent paid and honorary staff; excludes locum staff, hospital practitioners and clinical assistants in the hospital and community health services. Includes general medical practitioners.

General Practitioners

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many general practitioners were practising on the Isle of Wight in 1979 and 1989; and what was the ratio of patients to doctors in 1979 and 1989.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The number of unrestricted principals practising on the Isle of Wight at 1 October 1979 was 56, compared with 69 at 1 October 1988 (the latest date for which information is available). The respective ratios of patients to doctors were 2,134:1 in 1979 and 1,889:1 in 1988.

Population Statistics

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how the resident population of a health district is assessed; and whether the student population, where substantial, is included in the resident population.

Mr. Freeman: The estimated population of a health district includes all those usually resident there, whatever their nationality; students are taken to be resident at their term-time address and members of Her Majesty's and non-United Kingdom armed forces in England and Wales are included at their station. The current series of estimates is derived from the 1981 census of population and then updated annually to allow for subsequent births, deaths, and migration (including students). In addition, annual adjustments are also made for changes in the numbers of stationed armed forces and their dependents, and boarding school children.

Ambulance Service

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list in the *Official Report* the scales of pay for ambulance staff in the categories *(a)* ambulanceman/woman, *(b)* qualified ambulanceman/woman, *(c)* leading ambulanceman/woman under (i) the current rates of pay and (ii) those now offered by the management side on 5 December and effective from 1 April.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information is given in the table:

	Current rate	*New rates from 1 April 1989*	
		Basic	*Extended trained*[3]
	£	£	£
1. *Outside London*			
Leading ambulanceman/woman	10,888	11,868	12,368
Qualified ambulanceman/woman	10,093	11,001	11,501
Ambulanceman/woman	7,340	8,001	—
2. *London Ambulance Service*			
Leading ambulanceman/woman	10,888 +981 LW[1]	[2]13,305	[2]13,805
Qualified ambulanceman/woman	10,093 +981 LW[1]	[2]12,384	[2]12,884
Ambulanceman/woman	7,340 +981 LW[1]	[2]9,232	—

[1] London weighting (LW) is currently paid separately and does not count for overtime purposes.

[2] New all-inclusive London salary to count in its entirety for all purposes including the calculation of payments for overtime worked.

[3] Extended trained (to National Health Service training authority standard).

Hospital Services

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the annual savings made across the National Health Service in England and Wales since competitive tendering was introduced for catering, cleaning and laundry services; and if he will express this as a percentage of the total cost of these services.

Mr. Freeman: Overall annual saving arising from the competitive tendering initiative for National Health Service catering, cleaning and laundry services in England amount to some £110 million—around 17 per cent. of previous costs.

Information about Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Nuts

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if his Department has analysed dry nuts imported from Greece and Turkey to check them for radioactivity at levels above those advised by the European Commission as tolerable for consumption.

Mr. Freeman: In the interests of the consumer, port health authorities are continuing to monitor certain imported food (including dry nuts) for radioactive contamination caused by the Chernobyl nuclear accident. United Kingdom monitoring has not detected excess contamination levels in dry nuts over the last year.

Aminoacid Isomerisation

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what actions are being taken by his Department to evaluate the reports by G. Lubec, C. H. R. Wolf and B. Bartosch, of the paediatrics department of the university of Vienna, concerning aminoacid insomerisation and microwave exposure as reported in *The Lancet* of 9 December, a copy of which has been sent to him: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food gave to the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) on 13 December at column *698*. The views expressed are held jointly by the Ministry and this Department.

Self-governing Hospital, Bassetlaw

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the expenditure incurred by Bassetlaw health authority in the last 12 months on newspaper advertising for public relations purposes and other official publications primarily to promote the idea of a self-governing trust for the health authority and Bassetlaw hospital.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This is a matter for the local health authority and the hon. Member may like to write to the chairman of Bassetlaw health authority for the information.

Mr. James Butler

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the cost of the legal advice sought by Bassetlaw health authority following its refusal to pay Mr. James Butler an early pension following his redundancy; and what advice was given.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This is a matter for the local health authority and the hon. Member may like to write to the chairman of Bassetlaw health authority about it.

NHS (Inflation)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what allowances are being granted to hospitals throughout the country to compensate for the difference between the Government forecast of and the actual inflation rate in the National Health Service: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Health authorities operate under the cash planning system and are expected to meet all pay and price increases and develop services within the total resources available to them. Additional funds are not normally provided to take account of higher than expected inflation or other unforeseen demands. This year alone we have provided an additional £1 billion for hospital and community services (HCHS) compared with 1980-89. They have also benefited from the effect of reduced superannuation contributions and new cost improvemens. Next year the total resources available to the HCHS will increase by over £1·3 billion.

Charity Donations

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on the amount of charity donations used by health authorities towards Health Service funding.

Mr. Freeman: NHS trust funds may be used for any purpose relating to the Health Service subject to the specific terms of individual trusts. The 1988-89 summarised account of trust funds held by regional and district health authorities and special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals and special trustees record total expenditure of £122·6 million excluding transfers to reserve (subject to audit). This sum includes some expenditure which would not have been appropriate for Exchequer funding.

Great Ormond Street

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans the Government have to finance the Great Ormond Street children's hospital.

Mr. Freeman: The Hospitals for Sick Children special health authority, of which Great Ormond Street children's hospital is part, received an initial revenue cash limit for 1989-90 of some £44·0 million. Subsequent additions to this have included £0·4 million to help meet the costs of the review body awards for doctors, dentists, nurses, midwives and the professions allied to medicine, and £0·1 million towards the costs of implementing the NHS review. The overall revenue allocation for the London postgraduate special health authorities for 1990-91 will increase by 2·27 per cent. in real terms. Detailed initial revenue cash limits for individual special health authorities will be issued in the new year.

Charity Donations

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what regulations cover the use by health authorities of charity donations for Health Service funding.

Mr. Freeman: The management and use of NHS trust funds is a matter for the appointed trustees in accordance with general trust and charity law. Health authorities have powers under sections 90 to 96 of the National Health Service Act 1977 (as amended) to accept, hold and administer any property on trust for all or any purposes relating to the Health Service and to engage in fund-raising activities for providing or improving any services.

Guidance to health authorities on the extent and use of fundraising powers and the management and accounting for trust funds is set out in health circulars HC (80)11 and HC (85)6.

Alternative Medicine

Mr. Rost: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will itemise the draft European Community directives currently under consideration relating to alternative and complementary medicine; what representations he is making in Brussels to ensure their acceptability; and what consultations are taking place and with which representatives of United Kingdom bodies likely to be affected by such directives.

Mr. Freeman: The services of the commission have under consideration proposals relating to the harmonisation of requirements for the marketing of homeopathic products. These have been the subject of preliminary discussion with member states. United Kingdom interests will have the opportunity to comment on any proposals for draft directives following their formal publication by the commission.

Mr. Rost: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will itemise the expenditure on research funding and other financial support allocated to alternative and complementary medicine; and what percentage this represents of total funding by his Department on the medical research budget.

Mr. Freeman: As far as research is concerned I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) on 27 November at column *102*. The Department has given a grant of £60,000 over two years to the Research Council for Complementary Medicine towards the council's central adminstrative expenses.

Mr. Rost: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what increased role he anticipates for alternative and complementary medicine resulting from the pending structural reforms in the National Health Service;

(2) what is his assessment of the impact of his proposed reforms in the National Health Service on a wider availability of alternative and complementary therapies, for patients within the National Health Service.

Mr. Freeman: We have no proposals to make alternative and complementary therapies more widely available within the NHS.

Medical treatment provided under the NHS must by law be prescribed by a medical practitioner. Such practitioners can offer to use alternative or complementary therapies in their treatment of patients, but the wider use of such methods within the NHS depends upon those who use them persuading more of their fellow practitioners of the benefits and effectiveness of such treatment.

Hospices

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what contribution he is prepared to make to the costs of voluntary hospices.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There will be a substantial increase in funds to health authorities next year, so that they can contribute more to the voluntary hospice movement. We are allocating £8 million to health authorities in 1990-91, specifically earmarked for terminal care provided by voluntary organisations. This will bring the total contribution from public funds up to nearly £20 million a 70 per cent. increase over the *1988-89* figure. Health authorities will use this money to increase the contribution they already make to voluntary hospices and similar organisations which provide palliative care and support for patients with terminal illnesses and their families.

These extra funds are a clear mark of the Government's strong support for the hospice movement. They are also an important step towards creating a closer partnership between the NHS and the movement. The Government's objective is to work towards a position in which the contribution from public funds available to voluntary hospices and similar organisations matches that of voluntary giving. This will provide a clear basis on which to plan ahead.

We are deeply appreciative of the high standard of continuing care that has been developed and provided by the independent hospice movement and welcome its growing partnership with the National Health Service in caring for people who are terminally ill and their families.

HIV

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the conclusions drawn from the expert symposium jointly organised by the health departments and the Health Education Authority on 24 November.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Health Departments and the Health Education Authority organised an expert symposium on 24 November to assess the current and future spread of HIV and AIDS in the United Kingdom. The proceedings will be published early in the new year. The clear conclusion of the symposium was that AIDS is a major threat throughout the world. There are three major modes of HIV transmission, all of which are now well-established in the United Kingdom. These are:

sexual intercourse, between men and between a man and woman.

sharing of infected needles and syringes during injecting drug misuse.

transmission from mother to unborn child.

Complacency must be avoided in our efforts to combat HIV and AIDS. There is still much to discover, but the long incubation period when a person is infectious with no obvious sign of illness, together with the usually fatal outcome of the disease, mean that it would be foolhardy to depart from a precautionary approach. We must establish the facts, we must plan, and we must educate.

In the light of this the Government remain committed to providing a framework for response which encourages effective and responsible action among statutory and voluntary bodies, and individuals. The five main aims of our strategy are:

To stem the spread of HIV infection through public awareness campaigns, community-based prevention initiatives, and improved infection control procedures;

To improve understanding of the epidemiology of HIV infection, how it is transmitted, the natural history of the disease, and how HIV-related illness can be prevented and treated;

To provide appropriate diagnostic, treatment, care and support services for those affected by HIV:

Through a range of measures to foster a climate of understanding and compassion, to discourage discrimination, and to safeguard confidentiality, within the wider context of public health requirements;

To foster and encourage the full and continuing exchange of information between countries, and to encourage countries not to adopt coercive and discriminatory measures.

Yellow Card System

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the estimated proportion of adverse reactions that are reported through the yellow card system.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 14 December 1989]:* Doctors are asked to report all suspected adverse reactions to new drugs but only serious reactions to established drugs. Exact reporting rates are not known but a number of studies and questionnaires have indicated that they rarely exceed 10 to 15 per cent.

Peto Institute

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about United Kingdom support for the international Peto institute.

Mr. Scott: I have been asked to reply.

We continue to value conductive education as practised at the Peto institute in Budapest and welcome the Hungarian Government's plans to build a new international institute in response to increasing demand from a number of countries as well as the United Kingdom.

We recognise that there is a wide and effective range of services for disabled children in this country and we believe that increased availability of conductive education would be a valuable addition to those services.

Conductive education is an educational system based on a whole person approach, which aims to develop children with a motor disability to enable them to participate fully in mainstream education. The professional input comes from one individual, the conductor, who takes the child through the whole range of processes connected with development. The conductor's role integrates some of the knowledge and skills of a number of separate professional groups, for example, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, teachers and nurses. Close and active parental involvement is an important feature of the system.

We have concluded that the best way forward is to enter into an agreement with the Hungarian Government that in return for a financial contribution towards the capital costs of the new institute the United Kingdom would have guaranteed access to a proportion commensurate with our contribution of the available places both for children to receive conductive education and for trainees to be trained as conductors. In this way we would secure the continuing availability of conductive education for United Kingdom children in Budapest while building up a nucleus of trained conductors to provide this service in the United Kingdom.

We have therefore agreed to provide a total of £5 million from Government funds over the next four financial years towards the capital costs of the new institute subject to conclusion of a satisfactory agreement covering access for the children and trainee conductors, and to satisfactory progress with construction. In addition, we will be seeking to stimulate interest in the private and voluntary sectors with a view to supplementing the Government contribution by a similar amount raised from these sources. Officials will be taking forward the detailed negotiations with the Hungarian authorities early in the new year.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many *(a)* applications were made, *(b)* allowances were granted, *(c)* reviews undertaken and *(d)* allowances were reviewed and then withdrawn with respect to the attendance allowance in each of the years 1985 to 1989.

Mr. Scott: The information is in the table.

Attendance allowance:
Number of new claims, awards reviews and allowances withdrawn 1985 to 1989

Year	*New claims*	*Awards*	*Reviews*	*Allowances withdrawn*
1985	277,017	184,599	41,995	22,985
1986	286,889	174,064	42,648	23,701
1987	319,667	208,693	58,273	22,717
1988	361,720	207,863	56,087	25,141
[1]1989	276,981	176,346	51,731	20,563

[1] To 30 September 1989.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what new guidance has been issued in the last two years regarding eligibility for attendance allowance; (2) what new guidance has been issued in the last two years regarding the review of attendance allowance.

Mr. Scott: Guidance about the eligibility criteria for attendance allowance and about the review of decisions is issued by the independent attendance allowance board in its "Handbook for Delegated Medical Practitioners". Copies of the handbook published in July 1988, and copies of a revised version issued to delegated medical practitioners in October 1989, are in the Library. The published edition took account of the changes introduced by the Social Security Act 1988 for people whose disabilities pose a risk of substantial danger at night, and the 1989 version incorporates new or revised guidance about thalassaemia in children, cystic fibrosis, the assessment of substantial danger, claimants who are at risk of falling and those who refuse to undergo medical examination.

Benefits

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much a single man aged 22 years *(a)* living with parents and *(b)* living in a council flat received in unemployment benefit and supplementary benefit with or without income support if he was unemployed on 1 April in each year between 1979 and the current year; and if he will express these payments in real terms taking 100 as the base for 1 April 1979.

Mr. Scott: The information is in the table.

	1 April 1979	*1 April 1980*	*1 April 1981*	*1 April 1982*	*1 April 1983*	*1 April 1984*	*1 April 1985*	*1 April 1986*	*1 April 1987*	*1 April 1988*
1. Unemployment Benefit—Standard personal benefit rate[1]	£15·75	£18·50	£20·65	£22·50	£25·00	£27·05	£28·45	£30·45	£30·80	£31·45
2. Value of 1. in real terms taking 100 as the base for 1 April 1979	100·0	96·5	96·1	95·7	102·2	105·2	103·5	107·5	104·3	102·5
3. Supplementary Benefit—single non-householder aged over 18; ordinary scale rate plus the standard non-householder rent addition	£13·90	£16·35	£19·20	£21·15	£23·65	£24·55	£25·75	£27·50	[2]£23·85	[2]£24·35
4. Value of 3. in real terms, taking 100 as the base for 1 April 1979[4]	100·0	96·6	101·3	101·9	109·6	108·7	108·3	112·7	94·6	93·1
5. Supplementary Benefit—single householder ordinary scale rate[3]	£15·55	£18·30	£21·30	£23·25	£25·70	£26·80	£28·05	£29·50	£29·80	£30·40
6. Value of 5. in real terms, taking 100 as the base for 1 April 1979[4]	100·0	96·7	100·4	100·2	106·5	106·0	105·5	108·1	105·7	103·9

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[1] Excludes any earnings-related supplement. This was phased out in June 1982.

[2] The non-householder rent addition was no longer applicable to claimants under aged 25.

[3] Excludes housing costs. Actual housing costs were added into the benefit calculation until 1982-83 after which they were met via housing

benefit.

[4] The figures for 1 April 1979 to 1 April 1983 inclusive have been adjusted to take account of the fact that benefit was uprated by the retail price index less housing costs from November 1983.

1 April 1989	£
1. Unemployment Benefit-Standard personal benefit rate	32.75
2. Value of 1 in real terms, taking 100 as the base for 1 April 1979	98·8
3. Income Support personal allowance for person aged 18-24	26.05
4. Value of 3 in real terms, taking 100 as the base for 1 April 1979	94·6
5. Income Support personal allowance for person aged 18-24	26·05
6. Value of 5 in real terms, taking 100 as the base for 1 April 1979	84·6

Gross Expenditure

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give gross spending for his Department *(a)* in cash terms and *(b)* in real terms using April 1979 as 100 both (i) as a percentage of gross domestic product and (ii) per 100,000 of the population for each year from 1978 to 1989, inclusive.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is set out in the table.

	1978-79	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
DSS total expenditure: (£ million)												
Cash	16,437	19,416	23,483	28,582	32,451	35,159	38,119	41,487	44,424	46,263	47,162	50,200
In 1978-79 prices	16,437	16,625	16,990	18,835	19,944	20,645	21,324	22,025	22,815	22,564	21,446	21,334
Expenditure per 100,000 population: (£ million)												
Cash	30·1	35·5	42·9	52·1	59·3	64·2	69·4	75·3	80·5	83·6	85·0	90·3
In 1978-79 prices	30·1	30·4	31·0	34·4	36·4	37·7	38·8	40·0	41·3	40·8	38·6	38·4
Percentage of GDP	9·5	9·4	9·9	11·0	11·4	11·4	11·5	11·5	11·5	10·8	9·9	9·7

Benefit Offices

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list each of his Department's benefit offices based in *(a)* each local authority and *(b)* each constituency indicating which are (i) national insurance offices, (ii) income support area offices, (iii) integrated local officers and (iv) caller offices.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I regret that the information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Local Office Evaluation

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the eight local offices participating in "Delivery of Service in the 90s".

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The offices are:—

Blackpool South
Cowdenbeath
Ealing
East Kilbride
Glasgow (Maryhill)
Glasgow (Rutherglen)
St. Helens
Southampton

Computerisation

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish his latest estimate of the savings, in cash and staff terms, from the computerisation programme for each year to and including 1995.

Mr. Scott: The latest estimate of cumulative staff savings resulting from the computerisation of social security benefits is shown below. The figures (at 1988-89) prices are for both this Department and the Department of Employment.

	£ million	*Posts*
1989-90	42	4,000
1990-91	80	7,500
1991-92	160	15,000
1992-93	195	18,000
1993-94	220	20,000
1994-95	220	20,000

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security to what extent his Department's *(a)* budget and *(b)* staffing level has been cut for the year 1990-91 in the light of savings achieved through computerisation.

Mr. Scott: The Department's administration budget for 1990-91 was settled during the recent public expenditure survey. Details will be published early in the new year in the public expenditure White Paper.

The provision for 1990-91 reflects the wide range of the Department's activities, including our major computerisation programme.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what *(a)* manually held and *(b)* computer-held information on individual claimants his Department's officers and officials are *(a)* required and *(b)* permitted to pass to a third party; and to whom it is passed.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Information passed to third named in legislation is limited to that which is necessary for carrying out statutory functions such as the collection of contributions, payment of benefit, operation of the occupational pension scheme, registration and payment of, and awarding benefit in respect of, the community charge and operation of the housing benefit rebate scheme.

In other circumstances, where there is no statutory function, requests for information from social security records made by other Government Departments are considered only if the information would prevent the duplication of public funds, would help the prosecution of a serious crime, would meet the welfare needs of the individual concerned or would be in the public interest.

Information may be required under the terms of an order of a court of law and the information required under the terms of that order is provided to the court.

Information may also be disclosed in confidence to the police in cases which involve serious crime.

Where the individual concerned provides written consent to information being provided to a third party, the request will normally be met.

Internal Market

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans his Department has *(a)* nationally, *(b)* regionally and *(c)* at local office level to adjust the benefit service to respond to completion of the internal market in 1992.

Mr. Scott: I do not expect that the completion of the internal market in 1992 will require any changes to the benefit service provided by the Department.

Research Projects

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what research projects, are currently being carried out under total or partial sponsorship of his Department; whom they are being carried out by; and when they will be completed and published.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The table details the research projects currently being carried out under total or partial sponsorship by the Department; by whom they are being carried out and the latest information on completion dates.

Most research studies are expected to result in publication. Within this general expectation, no decisions have yet been made with the researchers about the content and timing of publication of many of the studies currently in progress. However, two studies on the income and expenditure of disabled people and the living standards of unemployed families are due to be published early in 1990 by Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

Project title	*Contractor*	*Completion date*
Survey of incomes in and out of work	Social and Community Planning Research	March 1990
Econometric analysis of the Survey of incomes in and out of work	Universities of Warwick and Oxford	Late 1991
National Child Development Survey[1]	City University	Late 1992
The dynamics of lone parent families	York and Bath Universities	August 1990
Operation of the Social Fund	Social Policy Research Unit (SPRU) York University	March 1991
Housing Benefit Review Boards	SPRU	October 1990
Consumer Consultative Committees	University College of North Wales and the Welsh Consumer Council	October 1990
Monitoring the Lewisham Direct Access Hostel	Campbell and Devore Associates	February 1990
Placement of long-term Resettlement Unit Residents	Newcastle University	February 1990
Perceptions of Family Credit	SPRU	February 1990

Note:

[1] This project is co-founded by several government departments, and the Economic and Social Research Council.

Family Credit

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security why he has reduced his estimate of the number of families eligible for family credit to 500,000.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The figure of 500,000 was announced on 17 March 1989 in a reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham), at column *391-92*, as the estimate of the eligible population during 1988, and was obtained from a special examination of family expenditure survey returns for April to December 1988. It relates to employees only. A technical note setting out the basis of the estimates was placed in the Library on 24 April 1989.

Estimates of the number of eligible families for any period since 1988 will be possible only when information from the 1989 family expenditure survey becomes available.

War Widows' Pensions

Mr. Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what he expects his Department's maximum possible expenditure, at 1979 prices, to be on war widows' pensions in the year 1989-90.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The latest estimate is that 1989-90 expenditure on war widows' pensions will be £193,729,000 (£82,331,204 at 1979 prices). This does not, of course, include any payments made by the Ministry of Defence or the recently announced special payments.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will place in the Library each week the temperature information he receives from the Meteorological Office for the purposes of regulation 2 of the Social Fund Cold Weather Payments (General) Regulations 1988.

Mr. Scott: Yes.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether officers of his Department are authorised to pass information about individual claimants or members of their households to local authorities for the purpose of poll tax registration.

Mr. Scott: Yes, under the terms of the Community Charge (Information Concerning Social Security) Regulations 1989 and the Community Charges (Information Concerning Social Security) (Scotland) Regulations 1988.

Family Incomes

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing child benefit expenditure broken down into *(a)* gross income bands, *(b)* gross equivalent income bands and *(c)* net equivalent income bands, showing the number of children falling into each band.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 24 November 1989]:* Information about the income of families receiving child benefit is not routinely collected. The following figures relating to the distribution of gross and net income are made on the basis of sample survey data which are subject to normal sampling and response variations. The equivalised income bands shown in the tables do not necessarily reflect the actual incomes of couples with children; they represent their incomes equivalised to the incomes of couples without children. Tables *(b)* and *(c)* do not therefore show the number of children falling within actual income bands for couples with children since their actual incomes will generally be higher than the equivalised amounts shown. Thus, for a married couple with two children aged nine and 11, the actual income is likely to be 150 per cent. of the equivalised amount and for a married couple with three children aged nine, 11 and 13, 175 per cent. of the equivalised amount.

(a) Gross Income

Income bands £	*Number of children (000s)*	*Child benefit expenditure (£ million)*
Under 5,000	490	185
5-10,000	3,340	1,260
10-15,000	2,625	990
15-20,000	2,520	950
20,000 and above	3,035	1,145
Total	12,005	4,525

(b) Equivalised gross income

Income bands £	*Number of children (000s)*	*Child benefit expenditure (£ million)*
Under 5,000	1,845	695
5-10,000	4,325	1,630
10-15,000	3,195	1,205
15-20,000	1,505	565
20,000 and above	1,130	425
Total	12,005	4,525

(c) Equivalised net income

Income bands £	*Number of children (000s)*	*Child benefit expenditure (£ million)*
Under 5,000	2,145	810
5-10,000	5,950	2,245
10-15,000	2,600	980
15-20,000	860	325
20,000 and above	450	165
Total	12,005	4,525

Notes:

1. Estimates do not sum due to rounding.
2. Estimates are based on the 1985 and 1986 FES uprated to 1989-90 earnings and benefit levels.
3. Gross income is the family's total income from all sources including benefits.
4. Equivalence scales are calculated giving a married couple a value of 1·00.

Electricity and Gas Payments

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many households, from data taken for the Annual Statistical Enquiry in 1987, 1988 amd 1989, are having weekly deductions made from their supplementary benefit or income support, as appropriate, for electricity and how many for gas *(a)* under £2 per week and *(b)* in each £1 band above £2 per week up to £30 per week.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 4 December 1989]:* The information is in the table.

Amount of deductions[1]	*Gas*		*Electricity*	
	1987	[2]*1988*	*1987*	[2]*1988*
0·01- 2·00	2,500	2,000	4,500	4,500
2·01- 3·00	2,000	4,000	7,000	5,500
3·01- 4·00	6,500	7,500	10,000	9,000
4·01- 5·00	7,500	9,000	13,500	12,500
5·01- 6·00	13,000	12,500	14,000	13,500
6·01- 7·00	15,000	16,000	16,500	15,500
7·01- 8·00	15,500	16,500	17,000	13,500
8·01- 9·00	17,000	19,500	14,000	11,500
9·01-10·00	17,500	18,000	11,500	11,500
10·01-11·00	12,000	13,500	10,000	9,500
11·01-12·00	10,000	12,500	9,000	8,500
12·01-13·00	7,000	6,000	7,000	6,500
13·01-14·00	5,000	6,500	7,000	7,000
14·01-15·00	2,500	2,500	4,000	4,500
15·01-16·00	2,500	2,000	5,500	3,500
16·01-17·00	1,000	500	2,500	3,000
17·01-18·00	500	1,000	2,500	3,500
18·01-19·00	500	500	1,500	1,500
19·01-20·00	500	500	2,000	1,500
20·01-24·00[3]	500	1,000	3,000	4,000
24·01-30·00	500	Nil	1,000	1,000
30·01 & over	Nil	Nil	Nil	500
TOTAL	138,000	152,000	163,000	[4]152,000

[1] Deductions cover the cost of current consumption and, where necessary, a specific amount to clear an outstanding bill. Numbers of cases have been rounded to the nearest 500.

[2] Data for 1989 are not yet available.

[3] For figures over £20 per week the bands have been amalgamated as shown, since in single pound bands most would contain no cases or less than 500. The method by which these estimates are obtained does not imply a high level of precision for such numbers.

[4] Columns may not total to sum due to rounding.

Source:

Annual Statistical Enquiries May 1987, May 1988.

EMPLOYMENT

Social Fund

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the United Kingdom share of European social fund allocation for each year from 1979 to 1990 by percentage and total.

Mr. Eggar: The European social fund allocation to the United Kingdom for each year from 1979 to 1989 (the latest year available) is listed in the table by total and percentage.

European social fund
Allocations to the United Kingdom (figures have been rounded)

Year	*Amount (£)*	*per cent. of fund*
1979	105	25·4
1980	135	23·3
1981	141	24·8
1982	257	29[illegible]
1983	321	29·5
1984	353	31·6
1985	308	23·7
1986	280·5	16·4
1987	435·5	18·8
1988	405·3	19·1
1989	418	18·1

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether any transitional period has been allowed for running down European social fund training schemes experiencing a reduction of grant as a result of the introduction of new criteria in 1990.

Mr. Eggar: Historically all schemes have had to make fresh applications each year for European social fund support with no guarantee of subsequent funding. This remains the situation for at least the first year of the new European social fund arrangements. As yet, the amounts for the United Kingdom in future years is not known and, therefore, the effect on individual schemes cannot be gauged.

Contracts

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many contracts over £92,500 have been let by his Department in the 1988-89 financial year and in the current financial year to date; and how many of these were *(a)* automatically renewed and *(b)* open to competition through advertisement throughout the European Community.

Mr. Eggar: The number of contracts awarded by the Department of Employment group and covered by the provisions of the European Economic Community supplies directive, for which the current threshold is £92,00, was 12 in the 1988-89 financial year and 14 in the current financial year to date. Of these, seven were awarded following advertisement in the *Official Journal of the European Communities* and 19 were considered to be exempt from advertising and may have been awarded to the previous supplier.

Accountancy Firms

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many outside accountancy firms are employed by his Department; whether such employment is subject to any guidelines; and whether he takes steps before employing an accountancy firm to discover whether that firm has been censured by Department of Trade and Industry inspectors in their inquiries under the Companies Act.

Mr. Eggar: The Training Agency has two accountancy firms under contract at present; no other accountancy firms are currently employed by my Department. Accountancy firms are invited to tender for the provision of advisory services to Departments on the basis of their suitability to provide the relevant advice. In making such appointments consultations are carried out as necessary, and where appropriate in the light of advice given by Treasury on consultancy appointments.

Durham Jobcentre

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the highest and lowest rates of pay for jobs advertised at the Durham jobcentre.

Mr. Eggar: On 12 December the highest rate of pay for a job advertised at the Durham jobcentre was £175 per week and the lowest £86 per week.

Benefit Offices

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list each of his Department's benefit offices based in *(a)* each local authority and *(b)* each constituency.

Mr. Eggar: This information is available only at disproportionate cost.

Executive Agencies

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress his Department has made towards establishing executive agencies; and what is the timetable for completion.

Mr. Eggar: On 1 December the Secretary of State announced his intention that the employment service should become a next steps agency from 2 April 1990. The ES is the largest and most important area of Government work to be created as an agency so far, employing over 35,000 staff and with a budget approaching £1 billion.

In line with all other Government Departments, the Employment Department is committed to a rolling review of other areas of work to identify possible agency candidates.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide a revised and updated table providing the information published in the *Official Report* on 28 February, columns *171-176*.

Mr. Nicholls: The tables show the work force in employment, male and female, full-time and part-time, for each quarter since 1980 with actual and percentage changes by quarter and year.

Table 1 workforce in employment in Great Britain
Seasonally adjusted

Thousands

		Males			*Females*	
	Full time	*Part time*[1]	*All*	*Full time*	*Part time*	*All*
December 1979	..	..	15,006	5,997	3,883	9,880
March 1980	..	..	14,958	5,959	3,907	9,866
June 1980	14,030	856	14,886	5,906	3,913	9,819
September 1980	..	..	14,731	5,871	3,868	9,738
December 1980	..	..	14,558	5,809	3,837	9,647
March 1981	..	..	14,387	5,765	3,814	9,579
June 1981	13,389	843	14,232	5,726	3,796	9,521
September 1981	..	..	14,118	5,706	3,806	9,512
December 1981	..	..	14,012	5,676	3,802	9,478
March 1982	..	..	13,957	5,702	3,776	9,478
June 1982	13,016	869	13,885	5,676	3,768	9,443
September 1982	..	..	13,810	5,628	3,764	9,392
December 1982	..	..	13,721	5,628	3,713	9,341
March 1983	12,796	868	13,664	5,358	3,977	9,335
June 1983	12,740	895	13,635	5,379	4,032	9,411
September 1983	12,761	982	13,743	5,416	4,143	9,559
December 1983	12,762	1,039	13,801	5,458	4,214	9,672
March 1984	12,802	1,030	13,832	5,496	4,240	9,736
June 1984	12,831	1,045	13,875	5,524	4,261	9,785
September 1984	12,880	1,048	13,928	5,556	4,297	9,853
December 1984	12,895	1,077	13,972	5,573	4,335	9,908
March 1985	12,910	1,062	13,972	5,609	4,342	9,951
June 1985	12,878	1,085	13,963	5,628	4,363	9,990
September 1985	12,868	1,096	13,963	5,640	4,419	10,059
December 1985	12,826	1,112	13,938	5,650	4,413	10,064
March 1986	12,786	1,086	13,872	5,658	4,429	10,087
June 1986	12,707	1,137	13,845	5,658	4,479	10,137
September 1986	12,709	1,167	13,876	5,683	4,543	10,225
December 1986	12,667	1,198	13,865	5,720	4,573	10,293
March 1987	12,676	1,200	13,876	5,740	4,604	10,344
June 1987	12,744	1,262	14,006	5,833	4,652	10,486
September 1987	12,853	1,297	14,150	5,916	4,690	10,606
December 1987	12,929	1,330	14,259	6,015	4,711	10,726
March 1988	13,043	1,308	14,351	6,109	4,699	10,809
June 1988	13,089	1,317	14,406	6,166	4,710	10,877
September 1988	13,157	1,305	14,462	6,223	4,754	10,977
December 1988	13,128	1,355	14,483	6,250	4,781	11,032
March 1989	13,160	1,389	14,549	6,286	4,842	11,129
June 1989	13,143	1,427	14,570	6,319	4,868	11,187

[1] Prior to September 1984 figures for part-time male employees are only available from the Census of Employment. For dates prior to 1984 census, the approximate estimates have been derived by the interpolation of the proportion of male employees who were part-time on the census dates. The estimates have only been made for June of each year from June 1979 to June 1982, but are quarterly from March 1983 to June 1984.

.. = Not Available.

Note:

Male part-time figures are not seasonally adjusted.

Table 2 workforce in employment Great Britain
Seasonally adjusted

Change over previous quarter

Thousands

		Males			*Females*	
	Full time	*Part time*[1]	*All*	*Full time*	*Part time*	*All*
December 1979	..	..	0	19	22	42
March 1980	..	..	−47	−38	24	−14
June 1980	..	..	−72	−53	7	−46
September 1980	..	..	−155	−35	−46	−81
December 1980	..	..	−173	−62	−30	−92
March 1981	..	..	−172	−44	−23	−67
June 1981	..	..	−154	−39	−19	−58
September 1981	−89	−26	−114	−20	10	−9
December 1981	..	..	−106	−30	−4	−35
March 1982	..	..	−55	26	−26	0
June 1982	..	..	−72	−26	−8	−34
September 1982	..	..	−75	−48	−4	−51
December 1982	..	..	−90	0	−51	−51
March 1983	..	..	−57	−270	264	−5
June 1983	−56	27	−29	21	55	76
September 1983	21	87	108	37	111	148
December 1983	1	57	58	42	71	113
March 1984	40	−9	31	38	26	64
June 1984	29	15	43	28	21	49
September 1984	49	4	53	32	36	68
December 1984	15	29	44	17	38	56

		Males			Females	
	Full time	*Part time*[1]	*All*	*Full time*	*Part time*	*All*
March 1985	15	−16	−1	36	7	43
June 1985	−32	24	−8	19	21	39
September 1985	−11	10	0	12	56	69
December 1985	−41	16	−25	11	−6	5
March 1986	−40	−26	−66	7	16	23
June 1986	−79	52	−27	1	50	50
September 1986	2	29	31	24	64	88
December 1986	−43	31	−12	37	31	68
March 1987	9	2	11	20	30	51
June 1987	68	63	131	94	48	142
September 1987	109	35	144	83	38	120
December 1987	76	33	108	98	22	120
March 1988	114	−22	92	95	−12	83
June 1988	47	9	56	57	11	68
September 1988	67	−12	55	57	43	100
December 1988	−29	50	21	27	27	55
March 1989	32	34	66	36	61	97
June 1989	−17	38	21	32	26	59

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[1] Prior to September 1984 figures for part-time male employees are only available from the Census of Employment. For dates prior to 1984 cencus, the approximate estimates have been derived by the interpolation of the proportion of male employees who were part-time on the census dates. The estimates have only been made for June of each year from June 1979 to June 1982, but are quarterly from March 1983 to June 1984.

. . = Not available.

Note:

Male part-time figures are not seasonally adjusted.

Table 3 workforce in employment in Great Britain

Seasonally adjusted

Percentage charge over previous year *Thousands*

		Males			Females	
	Full time	*Part time*[1]	*All*	*Full time*	*Part time*	*All*
December 1979	. .	. .	·0	·3	·6	·4
March 1980	. .	. .	−·3	−·6	·6	−·1
June 1980	. .	. .	−·5	−·9	·2	−·5
September 1980	. .	. .	−1·0	−·6	−1·2	−·8
December 1980	. .	. .	−1·2	−1·0	−·8	−·9
March 1981	. .	. .	−1·2	−·8	−·6	−·7
June 1981	. .	. .	−1·1	−·7	−·5	−·6
September 1981	−·7	−3·0	−·8	−·3	·3	−·1
December 1981	. .	. .	−·8	−·5	−·1	−·4
March 1982	. .	. .	−·4	·5	−·7	·0
June 1982	. .	. .	−·5	−·5	−·2	−·4
September 1982	. .	. .	−·5	−·8	−·1	−·5
December 1982	. .	. .	−·6	·0	−1·4	−·5
March 1983	. .	. .	−·4	−4·8	7·1	−·1
June 1983	−·4	3·2	−·2	·4	1·4	·8
September 1983	·2	9·7	·8	·7	2·7	1·6
December 1983	·0	5·8	·4	·8	1·7	1·2
March 1984	·3	−·9	·2	·7	·6	·7
June 1984	·2	1·4	·3	·5	·5	·5
September 1984	·4	·4	·4	·6	·8	·7
December 1984	·1	2·7	·3	·3	·9	·6
March 1985	·1	−1·4	·0	·6	·2	·4
June 1985	−·2	2·2	−·1	·3	·5	·4
September 1985	−·1	·9	·0	·2	1·3	·7
December 1985	−·3	1·5	−·2	·2	−·1	·0
March 1986	−·3	−2·3	−·5	·1	·4	·2
June 1986	−·6	4·8	−·2	·0	1·1	·5
September 1986	·0	2·6	·2	·4	1·4	·9
December 1986	−·3	2·7	−·1	·7	·7	·7
March 1987	·1	·1	·1	·4	·7	·5
June 1987	·5	5·2	·9	1·6	1·1	1·4
September 1987	·9	2·8	1·0	1·4	·8	1·1
December 1987	·6	2·5	·8	1·7	·5	1·1
March 1988	·9	−1·7	·6	1·6	−·3	·8
June 1988	·4	·7	·4	·9	·2	·6
September 1988	·5	−·9	·4	·9	·9	·9
December 1988	−·2	3·8	·1	·4	·6	·5
March 1989	·2	2·5	·5	·6	1·3	·9
June 1989	−·1	2·7	·1	·5	·5	·5

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[1] Prior to September 1984 figures for part-time male employees are only available from the Census of Employment. For dates prior to 1984 census, the approximate estimates have been derived by the intepolation of the proportion of male employees who were part-time on the census dates. The estimates have only been made for June of each year from June 1979 to June 1982, but are quarterly from March 1983 to June 1984.

.. = Not Available.

Note:

Male part-time figures are not seasonally adjusted.

Table 4 workforce in employment in Great Britain
Seasonally adjusted

Change over previous year *Thousands*

		Males			*Females*	
	Full time	*Part time*[1]	*All*	*Full time*	*Part time*	*All*
December 1979	..	..	47	68	114	181
March 1980	..	..	−3	40	88	128
June 1980	..	..	−83	−54	76	22
September 1980	..	..	−274	−107	7	−100
December 1980	..	..	−447	−188	−45	−233
March 1981	..	..	−572	−194	−93	−286
June 1981	−641	−13	−654	−180	−118	−298
September 1981	..	..	−613	−165	−61	−226
December 1981	..	..	−547	−133	−36	−169
March 1982	..	..	−430	−63	−39	−102
June 1982	−373	26	−347	−50	−28	−78
September 1982	..	..	−308	−78	−42	−120
December 1982	..	..	−291	−48	−89	−137
March 1983	..	..	−293	−344	202	−142
June 1983	−276	26	−250	−297	265	−32
September 1983	..	..	−67	−212	379	167
December 1983	..	..	80	−170	501	331
March 1984	6	162	168	138	262	401
June 1984	91	149	240	145	228	374
September 1984	119	66	185	140	154	294
December 1984	133	38	172	115	122	237
March 1985	108	32	140	113	103	215
June 1985	47	41	88	103	102	205
September 1985	−12	47	35	84	122	206
December 1985	−69	35	−34	77	78	155
March 1986	−124	24	−100	49	87	136
June 1986	−171	52	−119	31	116	147
September 1986	−158	71	−87	43	123	166
December 1986	−160	86	−74	69	160	229
March 1987	−110	114	4	82	175	257
June 1987	37	125	162	175	174	348
September 1987	144	130	274	234	147	381
December 1987	262	132	394	295	138	433
March 1988	367	108	475	369	95	465
June 1988	345	55	400	333	58	391
September 1988	304	8	312	307	64	371
December 1988	199	25	224	236	70	306
March 1989	117	81	198	177	143	320
June 1989	54	110	163	153	158	311

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[1] Prior to September 1984 figures for part-time male employees are only available from the Census of Employment. For dates prior to 1984 census, the approximate estimates have been derived by the interpolation of the proportion of male employees who were part-time on the census dates. The estimates have only been made for June of each year from June 1979 to June 1982, but are quarterly from March 1983 to June 1984.

.. = Not Available.

Note:

Male part-time figures are not seasonally adjusted.

Table 5 workforce in employment in Great Britain
Seasonally adjusted

Percentage charge over previous year *Thousands*

		Males			*Females*	
	Full time	*Part time*[1]	*All*	*Full time*	*Part time*	*All*
December 1979	..	..	0·3	1·1	3·0	1·9
March 1980	..	..	0·0	0·7	2·3	1·3
June 1980	..	..	−0·6	−0·9	2·0	0·2
September 1980	..	..	−1·8	−1·8	0·2	−1·0
December 1980	..	..	−3·0	−3·1	−1·2	−2·4
March 1981	..	..	−3·8	−3·3	−2·4	−2·9
June 1981	−4·6	−1·5	−4·4	−3·1	−3·0	−3·0
September 1981	..	..	−4·2	−2·8	−1·6	−2·3
December 1981	..	..	−3·8	−2·3	−0·9	−1·8
March 1982	..	..	−3·0	−1·1	−1·0	−1·1
June 1982	−2·8	3·1	−2·4	−0·9	−0·7	−0·8
September 1982	..	..	−2·2	−1·4	−1·1	−1·3
December 1982	..	..	−2·1	−0·8	−2·3	−1·4
March 1983	..	..	−2·1	−6·0	5·3	−1·5
June 1983	−2·1	3·0	−1·8	−5·2	7·0	−0·3
September 1983	..	..	−0·5	−3·8	10·1	1·8
December 1983	..	..	0·6	−3·0	13·5	3·5
March 1984	0·0	18·7	1·2	2·6	6·6	4·3

	Males			*Females*		
	Full time	*Part time*[1]	*All*	*Full time*	*Part time*	*All*
June 1984	0·7	16·7	1·8	2·7	5·7	4·0
September 1984	0·9	6·7	1·3	2·6	3·7	3·1
December 1984	1·0	3·7	1·2	2·1	2·9	2·4
March 1985	0·8	3·1	1·0	2·0	2·4	2·2
June 1985	0·4	3·9	0·6	1·9	2·4	2·1
September 1985	−0·1	4·5	0·3	1·5	2·9	2·1
December 1985	−0·5	3·2	−0·2	1·4	1·8	1·6
March 1986	−1·0	2·3	−0·7	0·9	2·0	1·4
June 1986	−1·3	4·8	−0·9	0·6	2·7	1·5
September 1986	−1·2	6·5	−0·6	0·8	2·8	1·7
December 1986	−1·2	7·8	−0·5	1·2	3·6	2·3
March 1987	−0·9	10·5	0·0	1·5	3·9	2·5
June 1987	0·3	11·0	1·2	3·1	3·9	3·4
September 1987	1·1	11·2	2·0	4·1	3·2	3·7
December1987	2·1	11·0	2·8	5·2	3·0	4·2
March 1988	2·9	9·0	3·4	6·4	2·1	4·5
June 1988	2·7	4·3	2·9	5·7	1·2	3·7
September 1988	2·4	0·6	2·2	5·2	1·4	3·5
December 1988	1·5	1·9	1·6	3·9	1·5	2·8
March 1989	0·9	6·2	1·4	2·9	3·0	3·0
June 1989	0·4	8·3	1·1	2·5	3·4	2·9

[1] Prior to September 1984 figures for part-time male employees are only available from the Census of Employment. For dates prior to 1984 census, the approximate estimates have been derived by the intepolation of the proportion of male employees who were part-time on the census dates. The estimates have only been made for June of each year from June 1979 to June 1982, but are quarterly from March 1983 to June 1984.

. . = Not Available.

Note:

Male part-time figures are not seasonally adjusted.

Mr Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, if he will publish in the *Official Report* tables showing the proportion of all part-time employees who are *(a)* manual and *(b)* non-manual earning less than (I) £4·16, (ii) £4·32, (iii) £3·12 and (iv)) £2·80 per hour for (1) men, (2) women and (39 all part-time employees, excluding overtime, shift and payment by results premiums, for Great Britain and in each county and standard economic region in England, and in each London borough.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not readily available and could be compiled only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will update the table published in the *Official Report* on 20 July, columns *321-326,* showing the number of male and female full-time and part-time workers on adult rates and the estimated average earnings in each case, and the number of full-time and part-time workers who were temporarily employed in each case; and what estimate he is able to make of similar data for the self-employed and for workers on non-adult rates.

Mr. Nicholls: Such estimates as are possible for 1989 are provided in the following table:

Great Britain

	Numbers employed *millions*	*Numbers on adult rates* *millions*	*Average Gross earnings of those on adult rates* *£ per week*	*Numbers not on adult rates* *millions*	*Average Gross earnings of those not on adult rates* *£ per week*
1989					
Males					
Full-time employees	10·8	10·4	269·5	0·3	109·5
Part-time employees	0·9	0·8	81·1	0·1	—
Self-employed	2·3	—	—	—	—
Full-time	2·1	—	—	—	—
Part-time	0·2	—	—	—	—
Females					
Full-time employees	5·9	5·7	182·3	0·2	95·9
Part-time employees	4·3	4·2	69·2	0·1	29·7
Self-employed	0·8	—	—	—	—
Full-time	0·4	—	—	—	—
Part-time	0·4	—	—	—	—

[1] Apart from the numbers employed, which relate to June 1989, the figures relate to April 1989.

[2] Denotes data either not available or no reliable estimate possible.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his estimate of the proportion of wages council employees throughout the wages council sectors, broken down by *(a)* collective agreement and *(b)* industry, earning below (i) £4·16, (ii) £4·32, (iii) £3·12 and (iv) £2·80 per hour, excluding overtime, payment by results and shift premiums.

Mr. Nicholls: The information is not readily available and could be compiled only at disproportionate cost.

Earnings

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate the number of *(a)* part-time and *(b)* full-time employees earning below (i) the PAYE threshold and (ii) the national insurance contributions lower earnings limit in 1989 and for each year since 1979.

Mr. Nicholls: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Action for Jobs

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when the Action for Jobs campaign began and ended.

Mr. Eggar: The Action for Jobs campaign was launched on April 8, 1986. The campaign ended on July 16, 1988, with the conclusion of the Action for Jobs south-west regional campaign.

Deaths and Injuries (Coal Industry)

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the number of miners employed by British Coal or by contractors engaged by British Coal who were killed or seriously injured in accidents in the mine in each of the last 10 years; and what is the number of such accidents per 100,000 shifts worked in each of those years.

Mr. Nicholls: The information for the 10-year period 1979 to 1988-89 is provided in the table.

Year	*Fatal*[6]	*Rate per 100,000 manshifts*[7]	*Major injury*[6]	*Rate per 100,000 manshifts*[7]
1979	46	0·09	473	1·03
1980	42	0·08	512	0·09
1981	35	0·07	[1]815	1·75
1982	38	0·08	865	1·96
1983	30	0·07	824	2·01
1984-85[3]	22	n.a.	378	n.a.
1985-86[5]	28	0·08	715	2·23
1986-87[5]	15	0·05	[2]952	3·50
1987-88[5]	9	0·04	729	3·28
1988-89[4,5]	18	0·08	684	3·35

[1] Introduction of NADO Regulations 1980 on 1 January 1981 widened the accident categories.

[2] Introduction of RIDDOR Regulations 1985 on 1 April 1986 further widened the accident categories.

[3] Figures for 1984-85 cover a 15-month period which included a period of industrial dispute and as such are not comparable with any other year.

[4] Provisional figures.

[5] Excludes licensed coal mines.

[6] Figures include accidents both to British Coal employees and to contractors.

[7] Manshifts counted are only for British Coal employees and do not include manshifts worked by contractors. The rate per 100,000 manshifts is, therefore, higher than the true rate.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Petrol Supply

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received concerning the Monopolies and Mergers Commission inquiry into the supply of petrol by wholesale; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The Monopolies and Mergers Commission has been investigating the supply of petrol and is due to report by 20 December. While that inquiry is in progress it would not be appropriate for Ministers to take account of any representations. Representations should be made to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission direct and this advice is given to anyone who approaches the Department.

Monopolies and Mergers Commission

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many qualified scientists and engineers are employed on the staff of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Redwood: Five staff of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission are qualified scientists or engineers.

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many qualified scientists and engineers are members of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Redwood: Two regular members of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission are qualified engineers. In addition, one member of the telecommunications panel has both scientific and engineering qualifications.

Portugal

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what further steps Her Majesty's Government have taken, or proposes to take, following the removal of excise tax discrimination in the spirits sector in Portugal, to press for the removal of the remaining value added tax discrimination.

Mr. Redwood: Following representations by the Government, the European Commission examined the compatibility of Portugal's VAT structure with EC law. The Commission has not found the system to be discriminatory, but it remains a matter of concern to the United Kingdom and my Department is preparing further observations on Portuguese VAT for the Commission to consider.

Development Assistance

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what sources of grants from public funds are available for the development of safe harbours, fishing quay facilities, tourist development and rural infrastructure in the south-west;

(2) what sources exist for grant aid from the European Community for the development of safe harbours, fishing

quay facilities, tourist development and rural infrastructure; and whether north Devon would be eligible for such grants.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The following sources of grants from national public funds and from the European Comumunity are available for the named sectors:

(i) Developments are eligible for support from the European regional development fund if they are located in an area designated for objective 1, 2 or 5(b) of the Community structural funds, provided the Community support framework for the area so provides. The assisted areas of Devon and Cornwall are designated for objective 5(b), the development of rural areas. The North Devon constituency is, however, not in the assisted areas.

(ii) The European social fund (ESF) provides grants throughout the Community for employment and training measures for the long-term unemployed, and those aged under 25 who have left full-time education (objectives 3 and 4 of the funds). If measures connected with the sectors listed are aimed at people within these groups, they are eligible for ESF support subject to the European Commission's decision on funding priorities.

(iii) The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food gives grants to farmers in all areas of England for the development of tourist accommodation and other on-farm tourist developments. Grant of up to 50 per cent. is available under section 2 of the Fisheries Act, 1955 for the development of fishing facilities by non-profit making organisations. Support for certain fishing quay facilities is available from the European Commission throughout the Community under regulations 355/77 and 2321/88; the Commission pays up to 25 per cent. and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food up to 8 per cent. of the total cost.

(iv) Consultancy grant under the DTI Enterprise Initiative is available to eligible businesses which meet the appropriate scheme criteria in respect of the development of safe harbours, fishing quay facilities and tourist development in the south-west. In addition regional selective assistance is available for such developments in the assisted areas of Devon and Cornwall and regional enterprise grant in the development areas of Cornwall.

(v) The Rural Development Commission offers grants and loans to economic and tourism projects and grants to environmental improvement schemes in rural development areas. Urban programme funding is available for suitable tourism projects of benefit to inner areas in the two urban programme authorities of Plymouth and Bristol. Derelict land grant is available for the reclamation of derelict land to provide sites for development and infrastructure.

(vi) Transport supplementary grant is available to all local highway authorities to assist with capital expenditure on roads and traffic management projects. In assisted areas, grants under the Industrial Development Act 1982 are available to both private developers and local highway authorities for new roads to developments which will lead to a real increase in employment.

Textiles and Clothing

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the countries in which Britain was in deficit as regards textiles and clothing and the value of the deficit in pounds sterling for 1988, 1987, 1986 and 1985.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A list of countries and deficits for 1987 and 1988 is given in the attached table. Extraction and provision of data for 1986 and 1985 could be undertaken only at disproportionate cost.

Overseas trade in textiles and clothing[1]
1987

Country	*Deficit*[2] *£ million*
Afghanistan	1·5
Argentina	0·2
Austria	62·2
Bangladesh	13·9
Belgium/Luxembourg	286·5
Belize	0·3
Botswana	0·7
Brazil	14·0
Bulgaria	0·6
China	100·7
Colombia	2·0
Costa Rica	0·3
Cuba	0·1
Cyprus	13·6
Czechoslovakia	8·3
Egypt	8·6
El Salvador	0·2
Federal Republic of Germany	294·9
France	31·3
German Democratic Republic	0·3
Greece	73·6
Hong Kong	583·6
Hungary	5·6
India	213·4
Indonesia	25·3
Iran	13·6
Israel	90·1
Italy	499·8
Kampuchea	0·1
Lesotho	0·2
Macao	29·9
Madagascar	2·6
Malawi	3·9
Malaysia	22·5
Malta	3·6
Mauritius	26·1
Mexico	9·2
Nepal	7·3
Netherlands	125·0
Niue and Tokelau	0·1
North Korea	0·1
Pakistan	108·5
Peru	2·3
Philippines	32·5
Pitcairn	0·1
Poland	15·0
Portugal	291·6
Puerto Rico	3·6
Romania	15·8
Sao Tome and Principe	0·1
Singapore	24·4
South Africa	5·0
South Korea	238·3
Spain	22·2
Sri Lanka	17·8
Swaziland	0·6
Switzerland	64·0
Taiwan	104·3
Tanzania	1·9
Thailand	57·6
Tunisia	0·1
Turkey	120·3

Country	*Deficit*[2] *£ million*
Uruguay	4·1
Yugoslavia	15·9
Zimbabwe	6·8

1988

Country	[2]*Deficit* *£ million*
Afghanistan	1·8
Argentina	0·4
Austria	78·2
Bangladesh	23·6
Belgium/Luxembourg	327·5
Belize	1·0
Botswana	0·2
Brazil	13·4
Burkina	0·1
Cameroon	0·6
China	98·0
Colombia	2·6
Costa Rica	0·4
Cyprus	18·5
Czechoslovakia	8·2
Denmark	13·4
Egypt	6·7
El Salvador	1·5
Federal Republic of Germany	393·3
France	40·5
German Democratic Republic	1·7
Greece	66·6
Hong Kong	659·3
Hungary	6·8
India	214·2
Indonesia	44·6
Iran	4·8
Israel	95·3
Italy	523·7
Lesotho	0·2
Macao	29·3
Madagascar	2·7
Malawi	3·2
Malaysia	29·9
Maldives	0·1
Malta	2·6
Mauritius	33·4
Mexico	11·9
Mongolia	0·1
Nepal	8·8
Netherlands	107·7
Pakistan	110·4
Peru	2·7
Philippines	31·1
Poland	19·9
Portugal	303·2
Puerto Rico	3·5
Romania	18·3
Singapore	31·4
South Korea	260·5
Spain	10·6
Sri Lanka	21·1
Surinam	0·1
Swaziland	0·4
Switzerland	60·8
Taiwan	100·5
Tanzania	1·7
Thailand	70·6
Turkey	161·0
Uruguay	1·8
Yugoslavia	14·8
Zimbabwe	8·2

[1] Divisions 65 and 84 of the Standard International Trade Classification.

[2] Excludes deficits of less than £50,000.

Footwear

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the countries with which Britain was in deficit as regards footwear and the value of the deficit in pound sterling for 1988, 1987, 1986 and 1985.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A list of countries and deficits for 1987 and 1988 is given in the attached table. Extraction and provision of data for 1986 and 1985 could be undertaken only at disproportionate cost.

Overseas trade in footwear[1]

Country	[2]*Deficit* *£ million*
1987	
Austria	3·7
Brazil	39·2
Bulgaria	0·6
China	3·7
Cyprus	0·6
Czechoslovakia	8·9
Denmark	4·8
Federal Republic of Germany	9·7
France	22·7
Greece	2·6
Hong Kong	27·5
Hungary	2·4
India	6·7
Indonesia	7·4
Israel	1·3
Italy	261·8
Macao	2·2
Malaysia	0·2
Mexico	0·4
Pakistan	2·2
Philippines	5·2
Poland	16·2
Portugal	65·1
Romania	0·9
South Africa	0·4
South Korea	50·9
Spain	72·0
Sri Lanka	0·2
Switzerland	3·7
Taiwan	69·5
Thailand	9·4
Yugoslavia	2·4
1988	
Argentina	0·2
Austria	2·3
Belgium/Luxembourg	1·1
Brazil	54·7
Bulgaria	0·5
China	3·5
Cyprus	0·5
Czechoslovakia	7·9
Denmark	4·1
Federal Republic of Germany	14·7
France	22·3
Greece	1·3
Hong Kong	25·9
Hungary	2·0
India	19·7
Indonesia	14·3
Israel	0·8
Italy	244·1
Lesotho	0·1
Macao	2·9
Malaysia	0·6
Mexico	0·6
Morocco	0·7
Netherlands	0·1
Pakistan	3·5
Philippines	4·3
Poland	16·6
Portugal	76·1

Country	[2]Deficit £ million
Romania	0·4
South Africa	0·5
South Korea	75·9
Spain	87·5
Sri Lanka	0·1
Switzerland	4·0
Taiwan	73·5
Thailand	18·0
Tunisia	0·1
Turkey	0·2
Uruguay	0·1
Yugoslavia	3·5

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[1] Division 85 of the Standard International Trade Classification.
[2] Excludes deficits of less than £50,000.

Research and Development

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on his evaluation of the European Commission proposed framework programme in research and technological development —1990 to 1994 [Com(89) 397 Final]; and what benefits will accrue to the United Kingdom from this programme in the fields of *(a)* information and communication technologies, *(b)* industrial and materials technologies, *(c)* environmental sciences, *(d)* life sciences and technologies, *(e)* energy and *(f)* human capital and mobility.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science has asked me to reply as I represent Her Majesty's Government on matters of science and technology policy in Europe. I refer the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy to the recent statement I made to the House in opening the debate on Europe Community research and development. (*Hansard*, volume 163, No. 16, Monday 11 December 1989—column *814*.)

Bananas

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the annual tonnage of dollar banana import quotas allocated to United Kingdom independent companies in each of the past five years.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 13 December 1989]:* The following tonnages of dollar banana import quotas have been allocated to United Kingdom independent companies during the past five years:

	Tonnes
1989	30,000
1988	25,000
1987	27,299
1986	21,075
[1]1985	24,475

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[1] The quota period was from 1 October 1984 to 31 December 1985.

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what percentage of the dollar banana import quota has been allocated to Scottish-based importers in each of the last five years.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 13 December 1989]:* Allocations are based on past trade, not on geographical location.

During 1988 and 1989, Scottish-based importers were allocated 6·5 per cent. of the independents' dollar banana quota.

Figures for earlier years could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

General Dynamics

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what support or assistance his Department has given to the American company General Dynamics in connection with its current tour of Britain.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 14 December 1989]:* In co-operation with the Ministry of Defence, Defence Export Sales Organisation and the Defence Manufacturers Association, my Department assisted General Dynamics Corporation in organising a seminar in London on 5 December 1989.

The objective of the seminar, which was well attended by more than 100 representatives of British companies, was to advise on the best methods of securing business from all General Dynamics' operating divisions, and exploiting the "offset banking" (industrial participation) agreement negotiated by the Ministry of Defence with the company.

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met representatives of the American company General Dynamics; and what was discussed.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 14 December 1989]:* Neither the Secretary of State nor I have met representatives of General Dynamics since we were appointed to the DTI.

RECHAR

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if contributions to mining areas from the European Community RECHAR plan will be to cover further proposed job losses in mining areas; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has information on the distribution of funds by the European Community under the RECHAR scheme; whether areas other than those who qualify for regional aid will receive assistance; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if the European Community RECHAR plan will help to improve environmental problems in the derelict mining areas; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what assistance the European Community RECHAR fund will provide to help attract new investment into the area of Molefield district council; and if he will make a statement;

(5) what information he has about the special European Community plan called RECHAR which is designed to help rundown coal mining areas; how it will apply to the Normanton constituency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 14 December 1989]:* The European Commission announced on 2 August 1989 its decision in favour of RECHAR, an initiative for Community structural fund grants for areas affected by job losses in coalmining. The Government have welcomed this decision.

The Commission has subsequently decided on an indicative financial allocation for RECHAR of 300 million ecu for the five years 1990 to 1994. Details of which areas will be eligible for RECHAR, the measures eligible for grant and the criteria for financial allocations, have not yet been settled. A further Commission decision is expected soon.

The hon. Member's interests will be borne in mind in my Department's discussions with the Commission about its forthcoming decision.

SCOTLAND

Health Service Expenditure

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for Scotland for each year since 1974-75 (i) total National Health Service expenditure, (ii) current expenditure on the hospital and community health services, (iii) capital expenditure on the hospital and community health services, (iv) expenditure on the family practitioner services, (v) expenditure on centrally funded National Health Service services, and (vi) expenditure on personal social services, giving each in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* adjusted using the relevant pay and prices index and *(c)* adjusted using the gross domestic product deflator; and if he will place in the Library details of the methods used to make these adjustments.

Mr. Rifkind: The information in the format requested is not fully available. As I indicated to the hon. Member in my letter of 30 March 1988, there is no index which relates to the movement of pay and prices within the Health Service in Scotland. The Department of Health maintains indices for pay and price movements in England, but the composition of expenditure on hospital and community health services in Scotland—particularly the proportions accounted for by the various categories of staff costs—differs from that in England. Details of gross expenditure, broken down by service, in both cash terms and adjusted by the gross domestic product deflator, are given in the tables.

(i) Total National Health Service Expenditure

At 1988-89 prices

	£ million cash	*Adjusted by the GDP deflator*
1974-75	458	1,809
1975-76	603	1,894
1976-77	685	1,898
1977-78	777	1,891
1978-79	893	1,964
1979-80	1,064	2,003
1980-81	1,343	2,137
1981-82	1,531	2,219
1982-83	1,660	2,244
1983-84	1,773	2,289
1984-85	1,901	2,339
1985-86	2,015	2,352
1986-87	2,144	2,421
1987-88	2,328	2,497
1988-89	2,591	2,591

(ii) Hospitals and community health services: current expenditure

At 1988-89 prices

	£ million cash	*Adjusted by the GDP deflator*
1974-75	323	1,276
1975-76	421	1,322
1976-77	479	1,327
1977-78	549	1,336
1978-79	627	1,379
1979-80	749	1,410
1980-81	964	1,534
1981-82	1,081	1,567
1982-83	1,154	1,658
1983-84	1,227	1,584
1984-85	1,307	1,608
1985-86	1,380	1,611
1986-87	1,474	1,665
1987-88	1,605	1,721
1988-89	1,783	1,783

(iii) Hospitals and community health services: capital expenditure

At 1988-89 prices

	£ million cash	*Adjusted by the GDP deflator*
1974-75	30	118
1975-76	39	122
1976-77	37	103
1977-78	38	93
1978-79	51	112
1979-80	58	109
1980-81	59	94
1981-82	84	122
1982-83	92	124
1983-84	99	128
1984-85	107	130
1985-86	119	139
1986-87	104	117
1987-88	107	115
1988-89	117	117

(iv) Family practitioner services

At 1988-89 prices

	£ million cash	*Adjusted by the GDP deflator*
1974-75	80	316
1975-76	109	342
1976-77	129	357
1977-78	145	352
1978-79	167	367
1979-80	197	370
1980-81	246	391
1981-82	281	407
1982-83	322	435
1983-84	347	448
1984-85	382	470
1985-86	402	469
1986-87	440	496
1987-88	485	520
1988-89	545	545

(v) Centrally Financed Services

At 1988-89 prices

	£ million cash	*Adjusted by the GDP deflator*
1974-75	25	99
1975-76	34	107
1976-77	40	111
1977-78	45	110
1978-79	47	103
1979-80	61	115
1980-81	74	118
1981-82	85	123
1982-83	92	124
1983-84	100	129
1984-85	106	130
1985-86	114	133
1986-87	125	141
1987-88	130	139
1988-89	146	146

(vi) Social Work Services At 1988-89 prices

	£ million cash	*Adjusted by the GDP deflator*
1974-75	77	304
1975-76	93	292
1976-77	118	327
1977-78	123	299
1978-79	149	328
1979-80	189	356
1980-81	239	380
1981-82	263	381
1982-83	285	385
1983-84	302	390
1984-85	323	397
1985-86	348	406
1986-87	356	402
1987-88	417	447
1988-89[1]	466	466

[1] provisional outturn

NHS Patients

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many patients were treated in the Scottish Health Service in 1978-79; and how many were treated last year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In 1978-79 6,024,165 patients were treated and in 1988-89 6,873,112—an increase of 848,947.

Contracts

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many contracts over £92,500 have been let by his Department in the 1988-89 financial year and in the current financial year to date; and how many of these were *(a)* automatically renewed and *(b)* open to competition through advertisement throughout the European Community.

***Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The number of contracts awarded by Scottish Office and covered by the provisions of the EC supplies directive, for which the current threshold is £92,500, was one in the 1988-89 financial year and three in the current financial year to date. Of these, two were awarded following advertisement in the *Official Journal of the European Communities* and two were considered to be exempt from advertising. One of the exempt contracts was awarded to the previous supplier and one to a new supplier.

Agricultural Colleges

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has now given consideration to the conclusions and recommendations of the report by the Williams committee into the future of the Scottish agricultural colleges; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: Following receipt of the report of the Williams committee, I have listened carefully to the views of interested persons and organisations on it, and have given consideration to the report's conclusions and recommendations.

I welcome the report, and am very grateful to Sir Alwyn Williams and his colleagues on the committee for producing such a very carefully considered document to a tight timetable.

I agree with the central recommendations of the report that the three Scottish agricultural colleges and SAC Ltd should be merged into one corporate body comprising a single national college, which would retain the functions of education, R and D and advisory services, under the management of a single board of directors and an executive director. I would at the same time confirm the Government's long-term commitment to the retention of the existing college centres across Scotland at Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Auchencruive.

I believe that detailed questions of management structure and location of facilities should be for the new board of directors to consider in the first instance, including the question of the most appropriate location for the headquarters. But I believe that the name should be the Scottish agricultural college. I also consider it important that there should be some form of local body, deriving its authority from the new board, based on each campus and responsible for maintaining links with the local community. I wish to see the role of executive director separated from that of campus principal.

I agree that the new national Scottish agricultural college should continue to occupy the middle tier of agricultural education in Scotland, but that there should be a shift in the nature of the provision towards higher education. With the exception of certain specialist courses, non-advanced further education provision should be phased out over a period of time yet to be determined. Advanced-level education should continue to be provided.

As for schools of agriculture, I am not minded to accept the Williams recommendation that these should cease to exist. While some restructuring of the relationship between the present colleges and their neighbouring universities will be an inevitable consequence of the establishment of a single national college, I attach the greatest importance to allowing the strong academic links and the productive sharing of resources established between colleges and universities to continue both now and in the long term. I would therefore in particular wish to see the concept and title "School of Agriculture" carry on at both Aberdeen and Edinburgh provided that the school was in future headed jointly by its respective campus principal and by a professor at the university. I expect the Scottish committee of the UFC to offer me advice on the balance of provision in agricultural education between the college and the universities, recognising that the universities' main strength lies in the sciences and that of the college in technological and vocational subjects.

I agree that the Government should continue to support research and development in the new college, alongside applied and near-market work funded by industry and other bodies. This support will include funding of policy-related work and some strategic research. I attach considerable importance to the new college improving the management of its research programmes through central direction.

I agree that the new college should continue to provide advisory services, and that there should be a clear statement by my Department of the work to be funded by Government. I particularly welcome the recommendation that the new college should be encouraged to expand the range of services that it can offer to facilitate rural prosperity, although it should not seek to offer a fully comprehensive service to the whole of rural society: it will be essential for other agencies and bodies to continue to provide services appropriate to their remits. I accept that the new college should offer a "gateway" service, so that through the development and maintenance of close contact with other agencies, the knowledge acquired can be used to guide farmers and other interests to the appropriate organisation for advice, grant aid and other services. Further detailed consideration of how such a service could be provided will require discussion with my Department and other interests.

I have noted the recommendations related to the veterinary investigation service. These will require further consideration and I will return to them at a later date.

I believe it is important, in the interests of the staff, students, and users of services, that my Department, the board of SAC Ltd. and the governing bodies of the three colleges should move rapidly towards early implementation of the main recommendations. I know that the present board shares my view that I should make an early announcement of a part-time chairman for the new board. I will be looking thereafter to the early appointment of the directors of the board and the executive director. Arrangements for future appointments will be discussed with the new board.

I wish to record my very considerable appreciation to the chairman of SAC Ltd., Mr. Watson Peat, the chairmen of the college governing bodies, Mr. Barbour, Mr. Ferguson and Mr. Lennox, the members of the governing bodies, the senior management of SAC Ltd. and the colleges, as well as all their staff for the way they have responded so positively to the changes initiated by Government policies over the last five years. I believe that the changes which I have announced today will provide a stable structure for improving on that record of achievement into the next century.

Homelessness

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he is going to take to deal with the problem of homelessness in Scotland following the publication of Shelter's annual survey on homelessness.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has already taken action to deal with the problems of homelessness and will continue to do so.

I should point out that the Shelter survey fails to provide a reasonable basis on which to assess Government policies. The extent of homelessness alleged by the Shelter survey is greater than that indicated by the statistics published by the Scottish Development Department. These statistics, which are compiled from returns made by local authorities, record that in 1988-89 about 25,000 households applied to local authorities under the homelessness provisions of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987; about 9,500 were assessed by local authorities as homeless and a further 7,500 as potentially homeless. Moreover, these figures are very similar to those for 1986-87 and 1987-88.

The Government are committted to maintaining an effective statutory framework for dealing with homelessness and will continue to ensure that local authorities and other bodies involved are properly resourced to meet the challenge of homelessness. The capital resources allocated to local authorities take full account of homelessness. I announced earlier this month an increase of £64 million in the provisional net allocations to local authorities for capital expenditure on the HRA block in 1990-91, compared with the equivalent figure for this year. In addition, the measures the Government have taken to expand the housing association movement and to revive the private rented sector will be of particular benefit to the homeless. We are continuing to provide financial assistance to organisations in the voluntary sector which are concerned with homelessness.

I am also encouraging local authorities to make use of their powers in the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988 to provide cash incentives to persuade tenants to move into the private sector, thus releasing housing for homeless families. Experience of such schemes in England has shown that they are a worth while and cost-effective means of helping the homeless.

The Government will continue to monitor homelessness closely and will take all necessary action to ensure that housing provision in Scotland matches housing needs more closely.

Earnings

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* tables showing the proportion of all part-time employees who are *(a)* manual and *(b)* non-manual earning less than (i) £4·16, (ii) £4·32, (iii) £3·12 and (iv) £2·80 per hour for (1) men, (2) women and (3) all full-time employees, excluding overtime, shift and payment-by-results premia, for Scotland and in each regional authority and borough.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Goats

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will revise the set-aside scheme so as to accommodate fibre-producing animals such as cashmere and angora goats.

Mr. Rifkind: I refer the right hon. Member to the reply which my hon. Friend the Minister for Home Affairs and the Environment in Scotland gave to the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) on 7 November 1989, at column *488*.

Training Schemes

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the Training Agency has referred any cases of the misappropriation of funds on employment training schemes to the police or procurator fiscal judicial.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 14 December 1989]:* No cases of misappropriation of funds have arisen to date on employment training. Where such cases occur they would be considered in accordance with Training Agency guidelines and where appropriate referred to the police. Thereafter it is for the procurator fiscal to decide whether a criminal prosecution is appropriate in any particular case.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any information about the qualifications for employment obtained by those on employment training schemes.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 14 December 1989]:* This information is not currently available, but the Training Agency has initiated a 100 per cent. follow-up survey of employment training leavers which should eventually provide information about vocational qualifications obtained by trainees.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what checks are made to ensure that the trainers on employment training schemes are properly qualified.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 14 December 1989]:* All supervisory staff of employment training providers are required to be competent to undertake such work and in addition these training providers are expected to have plans to develop and update the skills of their staff. Compliance with these requirements is examined during the ongoing programme monitoring carried out by Training Agency staff and is a prerequisite for attainment of approved training organisation status.

Lung Cancer

Mr. Eadie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the deaths of males and females in Scotland from lung cancer in every year since 1979 to the nearest available date giving the respective ages and the parliamentary constituencies they resided in.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 11 December 1989]:* Information in the form requested—listing individual deaths—could be supplied only at disproportionate cost. I have, however, arranged to provide the number of deaths from cancer of the trachea, bronchus and lung from 1979 to 1988, classified by parliamentary constituency, age and sex. There are some 4,000 such deaths a year in Scotland, so the detailed information is lengthy and I shall therefore have it placed in the Library.

DEFENCE

Disturbance Allowance

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what level of disturbance allowance is currently payable to members of the Armed Forces moving home.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The current rates of disturbance allowance payable to members of the armed forces on moving home are as follows:

	Officers (£)	*Soldiers (£)*
1. Married Personnel		
Higher rate[1]	1,200	900
Lower rate[2]	689	517
Special rate[3]	310	232
Child element[4]	95	95
2. Single Personnel		
Higher rate[1]	900	675
Lower rate[2]	517	388
Private rented accommodation rate[5]	297	223

[1] The higher rate is payable to homeowners, who move to a new home on posting to a new duty station. Single homeowners must be aged over 30 years, except for the Navy, where the limit is aged over 25 years. There are no age restrictions for married personnel.

[2] The lower rate is payable:

(1) To married personnel—when, as a result of a posting, the family is moved to: a residence at a new duty station which is a public married quarter; their own home, which they are reoccupying; their first ever purchase of a private home; or private rented accommodation, where they previously occupied either a public married quarter or private rented accommodation at the old duty station.

(2) To single personnel—when they re-occupy their own home; on first ever occupation of their own home; or, where public accommodation is not available and they are required to move into private rented accommodation and no other accommodation allowance is paid.

[3] The special rate is payable for second or subsequent moves from accommodation, which has been occupied by the family, while remaining at the same duty station, for example, to enable major repairs or renovation of a married quarter to take place.

[4] The child element is payable in adition to disturbance allowance in respect of each child changing school as a result of a house move.

[5] The private rented rate is payable, where an individual chooses to occupy private rented accommodation for personal reasons.

Note:

Rates of disturbance allowance are currently under review with new rates due to come into effect on 1 January 1990.

EEC (Expenditure)

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what each member state of the EEC spends on defence per head of its population.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to Cm. 675-I (Statement on the Defence Estimates 1988) page 39, where the information requested is given for each NATO country. My Department does not hold such information on the Republic of Ireland.

Wind Chill

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the locations in the United Kingdom for which the Meteorological Office can readily supply information regarding average daily temperatures allowing for a wind chill factor; and if he will make a statment.

Mr. Neubert: Wind chill factors which essentially relate to humans or animals in outdoor conditions can be calculated in a number of ways. The simplest involves temperature and wind speed. Such data are received hourly by the Meteorological Office every day of the year from 97 stations in the United Kingdom.

I will write to the hon. Member listing the name and location of each of these stations.

Operational Matters (Comment)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what criteria the Government apply when deciding whether to comment on operational matters; and if he will make a statement on the means by which parliamentary scrutiny is provided over operational matters.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Ministers are accountable to Parliament for all matters related to the armed forces. The extent to which it is possible to comment on the detail of operational matters will depend on security considerations.

Battle Tanks

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has commissioned a survey of hon. Members' opinions on the procurement of battle tanks to replace Chieftain tanks currently in service.

Mr. Alan Clark: No.

Nuclear Tests

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those nuclear tests since May 1979 of which he has knowledge, their location and kilotonnage and the countries that performed them.

Mr. Archie Hamilton *[holding answer 8 December 1989]:* The Government do not hold such information in an unclassified form. The details of all British nuclear tests are included in the US Department of Energy publication "Announced United States Nuclear Tests", copies of which have been placed in the House of Commons Library. Other organisations, such as the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, provide their own estimates of the numbers of nuclear tests.

ENVIRONMENT

Waste Recycling

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to introduce initiatives to encourage waste minimisation and recycling schemes.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We intend to bring forward measures to encourage waste minimisation and recycling by ensuring the proper costing of waste disposal and requiring waste collection and disposal authorities to pay particular attention to recycling as part of their waste management programmes. In addition, we will continue to support projects such as the recycling city in Sheffield which are developing innovative ways of collecting and processing household recyclables.

Seals

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures are being taken to tighten up monitoring of killing of seals by fishermen in British waters in defiance of international protection agreements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The United Kingdom fulfills its obligations under international conventions in respect of seals by means of the current measures under the Conservation of Seals Act 1970.

Additional measures were taken in December 1988 to extend the close season for common and grey seals in England and Wales and common seals in Scotland. These measures remain in force.

In addition, we are currently considering possible ways of securing voluntary reporting about seals shot under the defensive provisions or outside the close season of the 1970 Act.

City Heliport

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department has been consulted with respect to the proposed development of a heliport adjacent to the Cannon Street railway bridge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: My Department has been informed of the proposed development and has received a copy of the planning application submitted to the Corporation of the City of London only this week.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the noise impact upon the Palace of Westminster arising from the construction of the proposed City of London heliport.

Mr. Moynihan: None.

Noise

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to update Department of Environment circular 10/73 on planning and noise and the noise insulation regulations 1975.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 13 December 1989]:* We are considering the need to update Department of the Environment circular 10/73 on planning and noise as part of the review of noise legislation announced on 5 December by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. The Noise Insulation Regulations 1975 are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment in relation to his forthcoming campaign on community charge benefit and transitional relief, what considerations led him to conclude that it is necessary to have a publicity proposal going beyond what could be achieved by way of parliamentary announcement and ministerial speech; what is the precise goal and precise target audience of his campaign; what considerations led him to choose the balance of publicity between various media in order to achieve this goal and target; what is that balance; how much is planned to be spent on the campaign; and how the results of the campaign are to be measured, distinguishing between publicity effects and non-publicity effects.

Mr. Chris Patten *[holding answer 13 December 1989]:* Levels of awareness of the community charge benefit system, especially among groups most likely to include potential claimants, indicated that a wider dissemination of information was required than would have been achieved by a parliamentary announcement and speech.

The campaign will be spread between television, the press and radio, with a preponderance in the first two media, to reach the main target audiences effectively. Research is planned both before and after the campaign to measure its effectiveness and impact. The cost has to remain commercial in confidence for the time being, but we will provide costs in due course. For other parts of the question, I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 7 December, *Official Report*, volume 163, column *322.*

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce final details of the community charge transitional relief scheme.

Mr. Chris Patten *[pursuant to his reply, 22 November 1989, c. 4]:* I have decided, in the light of representations from the individual local authorities, that the profile of revenue support grant (RSG) payments next year should be advanced. Authorities will receive 25 per cent. of their entitlement to RSG in the first two months of the financial year. This is equivalent to an additional £400 million in April and £390 million in May compared with what they would have received if the profile of RSG grant had reflected a pattern of uniform income and expenditure throughout the year. I hope that local authorities will endeavour to issue community charge bills next April which reflect entitlement to both community charge benefit and to transitional relief. However, if authorities experience any delay in issuing community charge bills as a consequence of the community charge transitional relief scheme, these advance payments of about £800 million will be sufficient to ensure that their cash flow is not disadvantaged by the introduction of the scheme.

PSA

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when a proper valuation of the Property Services Agency will be carried out; and at what cost.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 13 December 1989]:* It is too early to say.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who is to vet staff at royal palaces when the Property Services Agency is dissolved.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 13 December 1989]:* When PSA is privatised the responsibility for any aspects of this activity in which PSA is currently involved will remain within Government.

Urban Development

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give a breakdown of urban development grant, urban renewal grant and city grants approval in the 57 urban programme areas and elsewhere in the United Kingdom to the end of November; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 14 December 1989]:* Three hundred and eighty-five urban development, urban regeneration and city grants totalling £247·2 million have been approved for projects within the 57 priority areas.

A further 21 grants totalling £6·2 million have been approved elsewhere, including projects in former priority areas.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 163**

SESSION 1989–90

4th December—15th December 1989

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes and cannot therefore, be used in conjunction with the daily part or weekly Hansard. For these versions use the Fortnightly Index.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr. Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speaker's rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Mr. Speaker and his deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

Opposition Day Debates, Estimates Day Debates and Standing Order No. 10 applications are listed under those respective headings and under subject headings too.

The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions.*

Abbreviations

Bills 1R=first reading, 2R=second reading, Money res=money resolution, Com=Committee stage, Rep=Report stage, 3R=third reading, amendt/amendts=amendment/amendments, *=matter taken formally, without debate.

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